

AN EXPLORATION OF PENNSYLVANIA CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS, 2006-2007

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With the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*, signed into law on January 8, 2002, schools nationwide have been challenged to improve student achievement. Several middle and junior high schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania were identified as being in need of Corrective Action in 2006 based upon data from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). These schools were required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to create Corrective Action plans using the *Getting Results! Framework for School Improvement*. Coding the Corrective Action Plans, the researcher analyzed how middle and junior high schools addressed the NCLB policy requirement for change at the school level. The result of this study was the identification of five key areas that schools should address when looking for improvement: communication, instructional practices, curricular cohesion, remediation and safety nets, and school climate.

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1 INTRODUCTION

On the surface, the *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB) accountability guidelines appear clear-cut:

- States will establish academic achievement goals by setting academic standards in core subjects and measuring progress using tests aligned to state standards.
- States will set annual progress goals for school improvement, so all students can reach proficiency, and no child is left behind.
- Schools will be identified as needing improvement if they are not meeting these goals (United States Department of Education, 2004).

In practice, the guidelines have been more challenging for the states and schools to implement.

In addition to setting goals for progress, the states are charged with defining testing, accountability measures, and teacher quality (Karwasinski & Shek, 2006). While the NCLB declares intent for greater local control, just the opposite typically occurs when the state and, ultimately, the federal administrators accept or reject a district's efforts at student achievement. Some politicians tout the origin of school accountability in *No Child Left Behind*. While the involvement of the federal government in the day-to-day operations in the schools has grown, the origin of school accountability hardly is found in this piece of legislation.

In this study, the researcher sought to answer one main question: How do schools deal with the need for change? To answer this question, the researcher studied middle and junior high

schools that had reached the level of Corrective Action in 2006. These schools created plans using a framework provided by the State of Pennsylvania. Aside from this tool, no other support was provided as these schools attempted to create a plan for improvement.

While the plans detail the strengths and weaknesses defined by the schools, they do not define the final outcomes of these plans. In other words, while the school personnel completed a plan for the school, the plans do not include proof that what was planned actually occurred.

1.1 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Because this study relies heavily on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's framework for school improvement, this study references the terminology and operational definitions defined by the Department of Education (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003). The table below identifies these key terms cited within this study.

Table 1***Operational Definitions***

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)	The measure of accountability based on the number of students who meet the minimum level of proficiency in reading and math as measured by the each year. In the state of Pennsylvania, the criteria for meeting AYP include academic performance, attendance or graduation rate, and test participation for each group: all students and students in the focus subgroupings of race/ethnicity, special education, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students.
Assessment	System of collecting data through the use of standardized tests in order to determine information about individual students and cohorts of students.
Corrective Action	A level of school or district has not made adequate yearly progress for four or more consecutive years.
Disaggregated Data	Test results are sorted into groups of students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English fluency.
Making Progress	A school that was previously in either School Improvement or Corrective Action has made AYP for one year.
Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA)	The PSSA is a standards-based criterion-referenced assessment used to measure achievement of the academic standards established in Chapter 4 of Title 22 of the Pennsylvania Code.
Safe Harbor	A reduction of the percentage of below-proficient students by 10% or more without meeting the standard achievement targets.
School Improvement	Not meeting AYP targets for two or three consecutive years.
Standard Achievement Targets	The minimal percents of students who achieve proficiency on state assessments.
Subgroups	Required groups of students held accountable for performance, participation, attendance, and graduation under NCLB. Federally required subgroups are: all students, English language learners, economically disadvantaged students, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP); and the major/ethnic subgroups.
Warning School	A school that fell short of the AYP targets but has another year to achieve them without consequences.

2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Educational accountability in the United States did not begin with the *No Child Left Behind* legislation of 2001, signed into law in 2002. Rather, with each new interest in the way that schooling was conducted throughout the twentieth century, a greater emphasis on explanation of the actions and required changes developed. Initially, interests in public schools came from those they served: the students. Education was a means of a better life, and thus education was completed for a students' betterment in society. The guardians of their children's futures, parents accepted the responsibility of supervising the accountability of the schools to provide adequate education. When parents sent their children to school, they expected that the education would somehow provide future employment. Realizing this, business leaders soon forced greater accountability on schools as leaders expected students to have certain skills in order to enter their workforce. Accountability, arguably, was to those who were educated, as vocational programs expanded, and to business leaders, who hired those newly educated in the public schools. With the advent of world war, military leaders quickly became the voice of accountability, as educated troops were needed to lead operations. As a growing world power, the United States, as a country, had the desire to remain dominate, leading to the accountability of schools to the nation as a whole.

Ironically, the current age suggests a return of accountability to those with the original interest in education: the students. The very name of the current legislation, *No Child Left Behind*, suggests that schools are accountable to those they educate. Yet, while students may be the recipients of the education, the local, state, and federal governments are those funding said education. As money may appear to pour into schools, the local, state, and federal governments expect a level of accountability for the expenditure of that money. In other words, the issues of “why” and “how” dominate the federal role in education through two main avenues: why do institutions providing education need additional monies and how are the institutions using these monies; why are students to be educated and how should the education be conducted.

In order to answer these questions, the federal law of *No Child Left Behind* has offered the aforementioned accountability guidelines. As these guidelines have been interpreted by the state governments and school leaders, their effects can best be described as clouded. Some schools sit on lists identifying excellence in education, while other schools struggle to demonstrate gains across the spectrum of diversity of their student bodies. Any educated observer can surmise that this legislation does not necessarily guarantee that no child will be left behind.

Theories as to why the federal government has officially declared a greater role in the day-to-day education of students can be found in the history of education in the United States as well as in the study of the role of government and politics. Two of these theories are discussed in section 2.2 of this literature review. A history of accountability in the United States in section 2.3 of this literature review will trace the growth of accountability through the twentieth century. In an attempt further to assimilate the impact of greater federal accountability, a history of

accountability in the state of Pennsylvania will show the additional influences from the state level on public education.

In conclusion, school accountability is not a new idea. Understanding the impact of accountability historically can help the student of education to focus forward in an attempt to meet the challenges of “no child left behind.” In the end, it is the results of the accountability that ultimately are the focus of this study.

2.1 DEFINITION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to establish the rationale of this literature review, the researcher must first set the definition of accountability as it applies to education. In researching the working definition of accountability, the researcher defines being accountable to mean being responsible to provide evidence that something is conforming to the requirements placed upon it. While this might appear to be a vague definition, the idea of accountability in education is in many ways a vague idea, difficult to articulate and difficult to standardize.

2.2 TWO EXPLANATIONS OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN EDUCATION

As previously stated, educational accountability is not a novel issue. Since the creation of public education and the allotment of money from state and federal sources, politics has been a driving force in education. Burlingame(1988) suggests that as long as money is plentiful, political issues remain hidden; as soon as money is limited, political conflict emerges. Further, Burlingame

observes that fiscal concerns, more than curriculum, district organization or other concerns, will cause the greatest voter unrest. Because of the diversity of students in any given public school population, local control and monies are not always sufficient to give the most equal of educations to all students.

From this, the idea of “cooperative federalism” emerges. Cooperative federalism is a term used to describe the relationship between the local, state, and federal government in terms of funding and programs. Rabe and Peterson (1988) outline the evolution of cooperative federalism into a three-stage process:

Stage one: Delegation to the local level

Stage two: The Feds toughen up

Stage three: Toward More Mature Program Operation (p.474).

Rabe and Peterson (1988) further explain these ideas as when the federal government decides an ambition, most likely the local government will take the money, use it for traditional activities, or use it in place of revenue that would have had to be generated locally. In stage two, the federal government, realizing that funds are being diverted from the original intent, begins to tighten regulations in order to “force conformity with federally defined structures and standards” (p.474). In other words, direct control took precedence over local wishes. Last, after many complaints by local constituents, the federal government modifies the guidelines and expectations. This results in a balance of power between local and federal governments (Rabe & Peterson, 1988).

Wirt and Kirst (1982) defined six alternative modes of federal action for public schools:

1. General aid: Provide no-strings aid to state and local education agencies or minimal earmarks such as teacher salaries.

2. Stimulate through differential funding: Earmark categories of aid, provide financial incentives through matching grants, fund demonstration projects, and purchase specific services.
3. Regulate: Legally specify behavior, impose standards, certify and license, enforce accountability procedures.
4. Discover knowledge and make it available: Have research performed; gather and make other statistical data available.
5. Provide services: Furnish technical assistance and consultants in specialized areas or subjects.
6. Exert moral suasion: Develop vision and question assumptions through publications, speeches by top officials. (pp.278-279).

Through these methods, the federal government attempts to accomplish the original goal of the intervention.¹

2.3 ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH LEGISLATION AND FUNDING

As high schools began to grow as places for vocational preparation in the early twentieth century, pressure on schools to perform expanded. In 1912, the Committee on Industrial Education “directly related concerns about developing human capital to fears of foreign

¹ In Section 3.0-3.9, a discussion of federal laws, the Smith-Hughes Act, Financial Assistance for Local Educational Agencies Affected by Federal Activities (PL 81-815, PL 81-874), Brown vs. the Board of Education, NDEA, ESEA and Title I, ESAA, P.L. 94-142 and IDEA, and NCLB, shows the growing role of the federal government in funding public education. However, the management of this role could be excessively cumbersome, if not impossible. Consequently, certain patterns exist for this management.

competition” (Spring, 1990, p. 212). The report generated by the committee identified two types of capital in the world: land, machinery, and money and human capital – “the character, brains, and muscle of the people... We are twenty-five years behind most of the nations that we recognize as competitors” (Spring, p. 212).

The Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 was the first attempt by the federal government to influence the curriculum of public schools. It began the idea that schools are to be accountable for the preparation of students for their future vocations. Initially, the government did provide some monies, in the form of grants, with the Smith-Hughes Act for schools to create their vocational preparation programs (U. S. Department of Education). Later, the Financial Assistance for Local Educational Agencies Affected by Federal Activities (PL 81-815 and PL 81-874) provided monies for building schools (U. S. Department of Education). However, until the National Defense of Education Act of 1958 (NDEA), federal intervention in public schools was mainly legislative. At this point, much like described by Wirt and Kirst (1982), federal intervention became linked by money and initiative, and ultimately resulted in greater accountability by the schools as they accounted for the effects of the federal monies.

First, when the question of the effects of education on greater government efforts surfaced:

The categorical nature of aid given under NDEA reflected the government’s negative feelings toward professional educators and its decision to take responsibility for establishing policies that would served other national policies, such as defense... As a consequence, the NDEA became a means by which the federal government could control local educational policy simply by offering money for the establishment of specific educational programs. (Spring, 1990, p. 335)

With this law, formal accountability was not demanded. In other words, schools were expected to conform to the regulation without demonstrating proof of their efforts.

Next, as previously described, cooperative federalism originated with the 1965 program Title I under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The federal monies allocated for this program were to be utilized to allow economically disadvantaged students to achieve academic success. This Act provided federal funding for “children designated as educationally deprived” (Spring, 1990, p. 347) . In its passing, the federal government attempted to right the educational inequity stemming from socioeconomic disparity in the fight against poverty through academic accountability and related services.

The goal of equality in special education resulted in the increase in special education accountability with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975. Much more formally regulated, schools had to provide a paper trail in the form of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) to demonstrate their compliance with the law for each student. Obviously, the goal of special education was quite costly. While originally 40% of the expenditures for educating a child with special needs were provided by the federal government, by 1982, only 9-15% was funded. Despite this, the local government remained responsible for adhering to the federal guidelines. Failure to adhere to the guidelines meant risking the loss of all federal funding (Rabe & Peterson, 1988). According to the Committee on Education and the Workforce, “For FY 2005, IDEA Part B Grants to States are funded at nearly \$10.6 billion, the largest amount ever allocated for special education.” However, the federal share of the cost of educating a pupil with a disability is only 18.7% (Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2005, p. 9). In special education law, the need for federal funds, however small a portion of the total cost of special education, resulted in the compliance with accountability for the monies.

Federal funds for general education further developed with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This Act allotted \$13,000,000 in Federal Funds for grants to public schools focused on improvement in the following areas: school readiness, school completion, student achievement and citizenship, teacher education and professional development, mathematics and science, adult literacy and lifelong learning, safe, disciplines, and alcohol and drug-free schools, and parental participation (Congress, 1994). This funding came at the level of accountability Rabe and Peterson classified as Stage One. This act, however, can be directly linked to the next level of federal action.

All public schools in the United States now face the regulations of *No Child Left Behind*, federal legislation that defines the level of accountability in today's schools. This level of accountability arose from the idea that funding was not producing results. "Since 1965, more than \$321 billion in federal funding has been spent to help schools provide the best education possible for disadvantaged students. Under the old law, schools continued to receive this funding whether or not their students learned to read or perform basic math skills" (United States Department of Education, 2004). This rationale for reform continues: "Under *No Child Left Behind* we must ensure that every child learns, and that starts with setting measurable goals and standards for every school"(United States Department of Education, 2004). By declaring the goal that all children be proficient by 2014, the federal government has set the bar at a level that is arguably impossible to achieve.

In conclusion, drawing on the theoretical framework of Rabe and Peterson (1988), one could suggest that the age of government intervention in education has or is about to reach a new level. While politicians tout NCLB as stage one local control, schools are experiencing stage two toughening of federal control while hoping for stage three. In applying the framework of Wirt

and Kirst, the general aid of Goals 2000 has morphed into mode three, regulation. In addition, while politicians exert the moral suasion of “no child being left behind,” research and statistical data inundate educators who are required to use scientifically researched methodology in their classrooms.

How has such an extreme shift in government intervention come to be? A study of the historical rationale for this move is the basis of the next section of this literature review: A History of Federal Accountability.

2.4 A HISTORY OF FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY – THE ROOTS OF THE CURRENTS *NCLB* ACCOUNTABILITY

School accountability is not an idea born at the end of the twentieth century. Its roots intertwine much deeper into the very beginnings of the growth of public schools. Trends in the history of education throughout the twentieth century set the stage for the events leading to increased accountability at the turn of the twenty-first century.

A study of the history of education in America could begin as early as the colonial period in America. However, educational practices were inconsistent and far from widespread throughout the colonies. It wasn't until Horace Mann's efforts in Massachusetts in the 1830's that public education reformation began. Mann's principles included:

- (1) Citizens cannot maintain both ignorance and freedom;
- (2) This education should be paid for, controlled, and maintained by the public;
- (3) This education should be provided in schools that embrace children from varying backgrounds;
- (4) This education must be

nonsectarian; (5) This education must be taught using tenets of a free society; and (6) This education must be provided by well-trained, professional teachers. ("Horace Mann," 2012)

The idea that education could be for the masses, not just for the religious or the rich, provided a forum for the foundation of public education. In order to gain an understanding of the role of the *federal* government in education, the study of the history of education beginning in 1890 offers a better picture.

Good (1956) divides the history of education in America into two main periods: the colonial period (1607-1787) and the national period (1787-). Further, writing in the mid-fifties, he named the period post-1890 as the period of science and democracy, a time in which national aid to vocational education, compulsory attendance, propaganda, and efforts to renew public interest and support began.

At the beginning of this period, attendance in schools was not mandatory. "About 1890... the average enrollment was less than one hundred pupils to a school; and only three per thousand of the whole people were attending high schools. ...by 1930 not three but more than forty per thousand of the population were in attendance"(Good, 1956, p. 235). Despite the lack of compulsory education, as the period of science and technology advanced, attendance in high schools increased.

What caused this growth in American schools and what effect did this growth have on the role of the federal government in education?

2.4.1 Industrialization and Child Labor

Two main factors caused the growth of the school population at the end of the 19th century. First, increased immigration brought larger numbers of children to the United States. Second, changes in industry and child labor laws increased the number of children in schools. These two causes of population growth in American schools resulted in competing interests and, eventually, federal legislation.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a great influx of immigrants forced a shift from rural to urban in America's population. Many immigrants relocated to urban areas, and the resulting shift in education was a greater emphasis on the social function of education. Schools began to provide the social services these new citizens needed. These changes included the introduction of health programs, community activities, and playgrounds. "Educators tried to change the school curriculum to solve the perceived social problems caused by the loss of values of a small-town, rural society" (Spring, 1990, p. 153).

Though there was an increase in the social role of the school, a competing interest was that of the business spectrum. Business needed strong workers, and leaders of industry saw schools as a potential breeding ground for this workforce. Consequently, business leaders felt schools needed to be organized to improve capital as a means of economic growth. Spring (1990) argues that many groups in society could support the expansion of educational programs because these programs could resolve many social programs. .

In addition to the social efforts of the interested parties, progress toward the development of human capital continued. Race, gender, and economic status became the next focus areas. *Who* was going to school had a direct impact on who was graduating prepared to enter the

workforce. In response, in 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act led to the development and expansion of vocational education. Vocational education was defined as “a series of controlled and organized experiences arranged to prepare a person for socially useful employment”(Russell, 1938, p. 13).

The Smith-Hughes Act was also the definitive ignition of the definition of education as a national interest meriting federal intervention (Spring, 1990, p. 213). “...in 1914 the Congress by resolution authorized the appointment of a Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education...early in 1917 Congress passed the Smith-Hughes Act providing Federal funds for distribution to the States for vocational education in public schools of less than college grade”(Russell, 1938, p. 16). In addition to providing funds, the Act created “a federal board responsible for oversight of the funds” (Russell, 1938, p. 27). Eventually this role was transferred to the Federal Office of Education.

In connecting the federal influence with the state oversight, states were required to file a plan for operation of their program. The plans were required to be updated every five years, but could change whenever needed. (Russell, 1938). The author of the report did note that:

The Smith-Hughes Act is an outstanding example of specificity in legislation. The funds are rigidly allocated among the various fields in vocational education. The proportion of the pupils’ time to be devoted to vocational subjects is specifically stated. Directed or supervised practice is required and the number of months which the school course and the practical work shall continue are specified. The number of hours per week to be devoted to vocational subjects by the pupils in full-time schools, and the number of hours per year for part-time pupils are definitely stipulated. (Russell, 1938, pp. 38-39).

Notably, even at this early date, federal education aid came with many stipulations.

Despite its specificity, the language of the Smith-Hughes Act became the basis of a major shift in the way society and government viewed schools. Schools became places of career preparation. Differentiation in education to allow for equality of opportunity meant a major shift in thinking. (Spring, 1990). From this language, the Smith-Hughes Act “reinforced a dual system of education – a differentiated curriculum – by clearly separating vocational training from academic training and providing federal money to accomplish that task” (Spring, 1990, p. 214).

While on the surface this might sound beneficial to all school students, from another author’s perspective, the Act did little more than to cement segregation in American schools. “Southern congressmen led the way in drafting [the act], arguing that it would benefit the region’s African American population. Like other education funds, most of this money eventually went to White schools, but the link between manual training and Black schooling was firmly established (Rury, 2002, p. 167). In other words, vocational training was perceived by some to be little more than a way to differentiate classes of citizens.

To this point in the history of education in the United States, elementary schools were the primary place of learning. With a need for better vocational preparation for the increased number of students, the definition of American education began to be more clearly defined.

When the cities had developed a standard elementary school, when the associations of secondary schools and colleges had defined the nature of the high school, and when the Association of American Universities after 1900 had produced a list of approved colleges, the stakes were set. It could no longer be said that the basic terms of American education were undefined. The meaning of the words ‘secondary school’ and ‘secondary education’ was becoming clearer (Good, 1956, p. 257).

Therefore, the need for greater career preparation led to the growth of America’s high schools.

2.4.2 Compulsory Education

Another change came almost simultaneously to the discussion of the role of education in the twentieth century. Compulsory education laws, coupled with child labor laws first enacted by the states, were criticized by some and supported by many.

Critics of the idea of compulsory education believed that the state should not have a right to interfere with the authority of the parent. Proponents countered with “Public education is in the public interest”(Good, 1956, p. 257). The over-employment of children caused competition for jobs with adults.

At the turn of the century, compulsory education was not a new idea. The citizens of Massachusetts required schools under laws of 1642 and 1647, but compulsory attendance was not required in any state until the Rhode Island Child Labor Law of 1840. “With the development of factory systems and the resulting rapid expansion of the organized labor movement, child labor laws and compulsory school attendance moved in consort. The interaction may be either sequential or overlapping, providing for the child to attend school as a condition of employment” (Alexander & Jordan, 1973, pp. 8-9).

As previously stated, child labor created competition for adult labor. It may not be surprising then that organized labor was the most effective opposition to the misemployment of children. “They were against child labor because children competed with adults for jobs but also because the treatment of working minors was often harsh and harmful”(Good, 1956, p. 38). Alexander supports this fact with “...such laws provide the child with the full opportunity to prepare for a better livelihood than he could have without education. They also serve to protect his health during adolescence”(Alexander & Jordan, 1973, p. 17).

The push for compulsory education led to three federal laws that did not require compulsory education, potentially stripping the state governments of their power, but did require changes to child labor rules. The Beveridge-Parsons bill (1906), the Keating-Owen bill (1916), and the Child Labor Tax Act (1919) essentially imposed rules on interstate trade of items made with child labor (Good, 1956; Reed, 1927).

Though the later two laws were declared unconstitutional shortly after their passing, they achieved the desired effect on child labor and compulsory education almost immediately. “In 1910...Between 50 and 60 per cent of the school population was eliminated by 14 years of age with maximum educational attainment represented by the sixth grade. Statistics for 1920...indicate about 50-50 elimination and retention at 16 years of age with approximately 50 per cent completing at least the eighth grade. Throughout both decades, there was steady increase in elimination from employment. The most radical change in school attendance statistics, however, is found in the post-war period and on the secondary level where an almost unbelievable increase in enrollment has taken place” (Reed, 1927, p. 13).

By 1918, all states had a compulsory education law, but the law was often opposed by teachers. Why? The laws meant “they would have to deal with problem children” (Spring, 1990, p. 245). Ironically, one of the reasons for child labor laws and compulsory education was the physical and mental results of early employment.

...the very existence of defects among wage-earning youth were presumed to be prima facie evidence that they resulted from employment. Graphic portrayals of physically stunted young laborers proved to be a most effective method of focusing the attention of the public upon the necessity for protective legislation. They also served as trumpet calls to modern Vashtis who were ready to lead the oppressed child wage earners of America

into a promised land of workless days. Simultaneously, however, school surveys and specialized health surveys were indication that physical defects were common to a large percentage of youth in all walks of life and that they were in evidence, as a rule, long before the minimum legal age for employment. (Reed, 1927, p. 60)

Consequently, “In forty-seven states, a child could be exempted from compulsory attendance because of mental, emotional, or physical disability”(Alexander & Jordan, 1973, p. 15).

However, the “idleness” created by the conflict in the laws forced teachers and schools to deal with the “problem” of students with physical or mental disabilities.

Most schools dealt with the “problem” by creating special classrooms for those students identified as “disciplinary” or “backward,” in an attempt to maintain classroom order. During the 1920’s, schools broadened the spectrum of labels in special classes, including the labels of “Vocational,” “Prevocational,” and “Mentally Handicapped.” (Spring, 1990, p. 246).

Over time, “As the states moved toward requiring special education programs in the local school districts, special provisions and exemptions from compulsory attendance statutes concerning physically or mentally handicapped students were repealed or amended. Instead, emphasis was placed on providing these students with special programs *in* the schools rather than exempting them *from* school”(Alexander & Jordan, 1973, p. 19).

Nevertheless, in the end, compulsory education was to become the American way. Thus, the creation of more “useful activities” in the schools began to take the place of outside activities of the past. “If children are spared injurious work outside they should do more wholesome work in school. Such opportunities have been provided by the introduction of manual training, industrial arts, household arts, school gardens, 4-H Clubs, pre-trade and trade training, and the cooperative plans under which the pupil works in industry for a short period and then devotes an

equal period to his studies in the school”(Good, 1956, p. 383). So began the growth of high schools and vocational training.

2.4.3 Vocational Education and the High School

In the nineteenth century, high school was for the elite. Somewhere between twenty and thirty percent of children attended high school in the late nineteenth century depending on the vicinity of the location of the high school to its potential population of students. “The early high schools arose in three or more ways: by establishment according to a definite plan; by the transformation of an academy into a public high school; and by the gradual development of advanced work in an elementary school until a separate organization was formed.”(Good, 1956, p. 237). With more students to flood the schools, the formation of high schools increased rapidly.

Obviously, the creation of new high schools placed a burden on the communities in which they were created. “The 1890’s, just when pupils began to flock to the schools, were such a time. High school attendance doubled during that decade, and staffs had to be increased at a time when boards of education were in financial straits. Several large city boards dismissed their principals, and proposed a shorter school year and the dropping of the more expensive studies. The old charges were renewed: the high school is not necessary, is undemocratic, and, most important, too expensive”(Good, 1956, p. 252).

However, this burden did not stop the growth of secondary education. In Pennsylvania, for example, “There were over 100 high schools in the state by the end of the century...A law of 1901 authorized the creation of township and union high schools”(Good, 1956, p. 246). The

main issue was not the need for secondary schools but rather the curriculum and course offerings in the schools.

As schools became more closely tied to business at the beginning of the twentieth century, pressure for the schools to be “an institution that provided credentials for getting a job” came from both parents and students (Spring, 1990, p. 197). Thus, the modern high school was born. It provided differentiated curriculum to serve different vocational aspirations and activities such as clubs, student government, organized athletics, and social events. All were meant to teach youth to cooperate in an industrial society (Spring, 1990). Consequently, the school attendance in high schools grew from 202,963 students attending public high schools in 1890, to 6,545,991 students in 1940 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2002; Spring, 1990).

Not all minority groups were a part of this social change. Rury notes that African Americans were primarily lost in the development of vocational education in that the idea of vocational education was not to be for the betterment of the individual. Rather, vocational education was a means to an end in the industrialization process (Rury, 2002). While the federal government had imposed minimally in the development of vocational education, philanthropic reformers from the north furthered the efforts in the south. “The philanthropic reformers who presided over the Southern education movement were similar to other twentieth century urbanite who demanded an organized and efficient agricultural sector to supplement the emergent industrial nation” (Anderson, 1988, p. 290). These leaders identified the need for African American vocational education not for the betterment of the person or the person’s life situation but rather the balance and stability of the United States’ economic system.

Meanwhile, the question progressed as to how, exactly, to define the role of the school as a vocational institution. This was not a new notion in American education. “After the Civil War

vocational and activity courses were introduced... Manual training evolved into industrial arts education. Commercial courses were aided by the expansion of business and the invention of the typewriter about 1868, and numerous business machines later. There were other courses in agriculture, home economics, fine arts, and music, and series of new fringe studies and activities” (Good, 1956, p. 460).

The bigger issue was how to determine which students should receive vocational training and which students should pursue a more classical curriculum in preparation for college study. Scientific management and vocational guidance became the method of choice. Tests were given to help find students’ strengths as matched to certain vocations. Whole structures of social life were created to “guide students into their proper place in the corporate structure” (Spring, 1990, p. 217). However, educators argued that the educational needs of the students were not being addressed. “Educational guidance was defined as helping students select educational programs that match their interests, abilities, and future occupations” (Spring, 1990, p. 218). This guidance stretched the role of counselor to create a total educational approach for the student.

In addition, as the population of high school students grew, the need for earlier differentiation surfaced. Consequently, from this combination of educational, vocational, and scientific management was born the junior high schools. “The junior high school was to bridge the gap between the elementary and high school, making the transition easier. It was to save time. It was to retain pupils in school (1) by offering work that was more interesting and useful than the work of the upper elementary grades and (2) by entering the pupils in a new school before the usual end of the compulsory attendance period at age fourteen. It was to offer some choice of studies, exploratory and orientation courses, individual instruction, and more expert guidance” (Good, 1956, p. 441). In fact, the creation of the first Junior High school, Indianola

Junior High School in Columbus, Ohio, was approved by the Columbus Board of Education in 1909. Its creation was the result of Columbus school officials hoping “that new schools, consisting of the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, might better prepare students for the rigors of high school and keep a larger percentage of students enrolled in school” (“First Junior High School in the United States,” 2006). This was Columbus Board of Education’s attempt to improve the 52% dropout rate of students before grade 10. “By that time, in 1910 or 1920, it had come to be believed that as many children as possible should attend high school, hence the need for the bridge” (Good, 1956, pp. 257-258).

Ultimately, the role of education in America had shifted toward the goal of career preparation.

2.4.4 Social Disruption: The Effect of the World Wars and the Depression on Education

During the period of WWI, the legislation, as previously identified in this paper, supported the growth of high schools and vocational training programs. Legislators, businesspersons, and parents supported this growth, so long as there were jobs to accommodate the newly trained upon their graduation.

With the onset of the Great Depression, businesses’ involvement in education slipped. “...businesspersons temporarily lost interest in vocational education during the depths of the Depression. Nonetheless, the vocational curricula continued to prosper because the federal government made them key elements of policy to restore national economic health...” (Giordano, 2004, p. 144).

Roosevelt's *New Deal* included specific legislation aimed at America's youth and schools. This part of the *New Deal* was the National Youth Administration, or the NYA. "There were three requirements for receiving NYA aid: that the student could not remain in school without financial help; that he must be certified as a person of good character; and that he must have good academic ability." Many could not afford to stay in school anyhow, and often colleges refused the money because of the fear of federal control of higher education (Good, 1956, p. 516).

However, this legislation was not enough to protect the schools from further criticism. Involvement in another war was imminent, and the military voiced its opinion about the education of American youth.

Before the United States entered World War II, the government had begun to advise teachers about their wartime responsibilities. At the same time, it supplied them with materials for discharging their new responsibilities...The leaders of professional educational organizations helped the government develop and distribute wartime educational materials. Spurred by patriotism as well as good business sense, scholastic publishers joined in this effort. The three groups also supported special wartime programs. The most popular of these programs were modeled after the military services or the defense industries into which they were designed to lure young men and women. (Giordano, 2004, p. 30)

The pre-war curriculum also included a push for physical education. After criticism by the U.S. Secretary of the Navy, the public agreed that physical conditioning was essential to modern warfare (Giordano, 2004).

With the start of the war, accountability took the face of civic responsibility and practicality in the face of war. The deficiencies of young soldiers became even more apparent.

The war also reflected the state of education in high school. The flight from academic and liberal studies...was increased by the war. Examinations by the armed services produced results that at least confirmed earlier reports. Two-thirds of the college freshmen in a large number of colleges failed the arithmetic test for admission to the Naval Reserve Officers' Training Corps; and most of the failures were not 'near misses,' but were far below the passing mark. Only one-fourth of these 4,000 freshmen had taken more than one and one-half years of high school mathematics, and only 400 or 10 percent had studied trigonometry. (Good, 1956, p. 507)

These deficiencies did not matter in the sense that schools continued to "expand their vocational programs to train individuals for the many positions that had been vacated by civilians that were still available in the armed services...the Army was seeking inductees who had been trained in the high schools as automotive mechanics, electrical engineers, electricians, instrument technicians, locksmiths, machinists, physicists, radio operators, radio technicians, surveyors, telegraph operators, and telephone technicians..." (Giordano, 2004, p. 28).

Expanding these vocational programs to fit the needs of the military and businesses was a challenge for high schools during the war era. "Some developed special career programs that were carefully geared to the extraordinary wartime employment. For example, the Handbook on Education and War (1943) advised school administrators to develop "intensive vocational courses" that embodied specific military and industrial occupations. The U.S. Army indicated that such preparation, even though it could be appropriate for vocational schools, was not suited for most high-school programs. Therefore, it recommended that high-school teachers develop

‘orientation courses’ about army life. These general courses could be supplemented effectively with health, hygiene, physical education, English, and mathematics... recommended that teachers combine it with their traditional academic coursework in science, mathematics, industrial arts, and drafting” (Giordano, 2004, p. 29).

Not only did schools need to prepare students differently, they had to prepare students more quickly. “The accelerated high-school programs that became popular during the Second World War were based on narrow, course-focused view of curriculum... In fact, the U.S. Commissioner of Education acknowledged that the prewar defense industries had exerted pressure to reduce the periods for training workers. This pressure increased significantly after America entered the war” (Giordano, 2004, p. 141).

Education during the war effort helped to grow different populations of students, to change the way compulsory education was actualized, and to change the curriculum in schools. Women and people with disabilities were encouraged to help with the war effort (Giordano, 2004, pp. 63-65). As the war continued, rural youths, who were dropping out of school at an alarming rate, were encouraged to aid in farming, especially in 1944. Flexible scheduling allowed students to complete school at the same time as they aided the war effort (Giordano, 2004, pp. 66-67). “Mathematics and science assumed greater prominence... State leaders from school offices and teachers’ associations formulated a list of critical curricula programs that they urged the U.S. Office of Education to approve. The first item on this list recommended ‘courses in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, general mathematics, and in some cases navigation, mechanized warfare, and industry.’” (Giordano, 2004, p. 152). This list of standard curricula outlined the changes to come.

After World War II, a conflict in school curriculum began to emerge. Criticism of schools suggested the fear of communism. Some charged that “education is too general, theoretical, idealistic, and liberal; but also that it is too narrow, practical, and vocational” (Good, 1956, pp. 539-540).

Meanwhile, the return of the soldiers resulted in a birthing boom that filled elementary schools. The sudden increase in students meant schools needed to grow rapidly to accommodate the influx of students. “Local schools were seriously pressed for space and for money to educate the increasing number of children born in the baby-boom period after World War II” (Spring, 1990, p. 333). The *Financial Assistance for Local Educational Agencies Affected by Federal Activities* provided assistance for construction but did little to influence the academics in those schools (United States Department of Education).

As the cost of education exploded, the belief that schools should not be funded through taxation began to surface. For example, Good notes that a prominent owner of several daily newspapers, Robert Cyrus Hoiles, declared “...that school tax is a violation of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Ten Commandments. He is for private schools and proposes that the people should ‘buy education as they buy bread.’” (Good, 1956, p. 541).

As the costs of education soared, so did the questions of who should be educated and where students should be educated.

2.4.5 The Civil and Student Rights Movement

While the nation focused on education as a means of defense, more students were enrolled in schools. Further, the idea of where these students were going to school began to play a part in the

school accountability race. Prior to this period, schools were seen as places meant to replicate the existing social divisions. “The purpose of schooling... was to prepare each group for its inevitable social destination...” (Rury, 2002, p. 168).

This “social destination” was a caste system where large portions of the United States population had little to say in how the government, and consequently day-to-day life, was run. “In the late 1940s... the situation of black Americans was truly deplorable: millions of blacks were poor, illiterate, oppressed, ground down... blacks could not vote in much of the South; they had no share in government or the system of justice” (Friedman, 1997, p. 63). Essentially, the education system was set to create another generation of oppressed people.

Then, with the court ruling of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* in 1954, the idea of “separate but equal” was found not to be the case. Kateb writes:

Equal opportunity is all well and good, but it is not a sufficiently weighty moral idea to combat legal segregation, which is institutionalized racism. Nor is denial of equal opportunity a very good way to measure the psychological effects of segregation. The point becomes clear when we look at one of the most famous sentences in the opinion: ‘To separate them [black students] from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone.’ (Kateb, 1997, p. 93)

Separating students based on their physical differences was not adequate because it limited their ability to be part of the community in a way inherently oppressive.

When the federal government addressed the issue of separate, but not equal, there was immediate outcry in the south. Political leaders vowed to fight the ruling (Rury, 2002, pp. 181-

182). However, the court was firm. “The court said that education has become the foundation of good citizenship; and therefore, although public education has been the function reserved to the states, the federal government will step in and will outlaw the acts of states when that is considered necessary for the laying of a solid foundation” (Good, 1956, p. 538).

When the needed change did not happen voluntarily, the federal government increased its role in education; federal mandate and military forces began the integration. Ironically, though typically deemed a southern problem, segregation in schools in the North rose while the southern integration continued. The main cause of this was the increasing numbers of African Americans relocating to the large cities of the North (Wirt & Kirst, 1982). With bussing of students to address involuntary school integration, the problem of segregation only grew (Spring, 1990). Consequently, in 1972, the Emergency School Aid Act, ESAA, was created to further the desegregation efforts. From this funding, school districts created magnet schools, schools focused on a certain core subject (The Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium, 2004).

In the 1960’s, the focus on the inequality in schools stretched from racial divisions to economic funding. The idea that separate was not equal led to the argument that the method of school finance, namely the local control and funding of public schools led to vast differences in available resources and services. “As many observers quickly came to realize, this was a source of school inequality nearly as great as formal systems of segregation, even if disparities were considerably less than had existed in the past” (Rury, 2002, p. 191). In response, the federal government continued to expand its influence over public schools. In 1965, President Lyndon Johnson oversaw the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a part of which was Title I.

This act provided “federal dollars to schools with significant numbers of students from poverty backgrounds” (Rury, 2002, p. 191).

Racial and economic inequalities were not the only things causing physical and academic segregation in schools. The earlier question of how to educate students with disabilities continued to cause growing debate which lead to federal law.

The 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142) was passed, furthering the federal government influence over local control. Supported by a growing body of research first presented in the early 1960s, educators and parent groups began to push for the integration of students with special needs into the rest of the school population (Rury, 2002).

”The Act set forth extraordinarily ambitious objectives and a regulatory framework of unprecedented complexity and detail for a federal education program” (Rabe & Peterson, 1988). Schools were charged with providing free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment (Douvani & Hulsey, 2002a). Procedures necessary for districts to comply with this federal act included identification processes and consultation with parents in creating the IEP (individualized education plans). However, “mainstreaming” and LRE, least restrictive environment, were not defined by this law, only suggested. In P.L. 94-142 became IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, with the 1990 revision to the law. This revision led to the mandated vocational preparation of students with disabilities. The 1997 revision to the law led to the required transition plans to be created at the student’s age of 14 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005a). In the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, special education teachers must be highly qualified in any core subjects that they teach (Committee on Education and the Workforce, 2005). Ultimately, the goal of this federal legislation seems to be that all students, regardless of disability, would receive an education equal to that provided to other students.

In conclusion, beginning in the mid-twentieth century school accountability took the appearance of availability of appropriate education and opportunities. Communities could not separate students they deemed inadequate for public education, and just providing some education was inadequate to meet the needs of those students. Though not explicitly stated, *Brown vs. the Board*, ESEA, and the special education legislation were just the beginning of greater involvement by the federal government in the daily educational process in all public schools in the United States.

2.4.6 Cold War and NDEA

In the late 1950's, a new problem threatened America: The Cold War. Americans confronted the idea that Russia was advancing in military power, technological advancement, and specialized research and education much more rapidly than the United States. In 1947, James B. Conant, the first chair of the National Science Foundation, coined the idea of "The Dilemma of American Education." This dilemma grappled with the question: "How do you make treatment equal but at the same time make provisions for channeling superior human resources into need occupations?" (Spring, 1990, p. 327).

Prior to this period, the benefits and uses of science and technology were on the minds of legislators. "Between 1938 and 1941, the National Resources Committee published a three-volume report, *Research – a National Resource*, which surveyed scientific activity in government, industry, and the universities. The committee recommended that the federal government establish closer relations with scientists and sponsor more research within the government and outside it" (Schaffter, 1969, p. 6).

However, major legislation was not passed until the creation the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1950. The act of 1950 described the functions of the Foundation, which were: to develop policy for the promotion of basic research and education in the sciences, to appraise the impact of research upon industrial development and general welfare, to initiate and support research in connection with national defense, to award scholarships and fellowships, to foster interchange of scientific information, to evaluate research programs, to establish special commissions, to maintain a register of scientific and technical personnel, and to initiate a program of weather study (Schaffter, 1969).

With Sputnik's launch in 1957, the race against the Soviets to be the first to the moon resulted in an educational movement suggested at least a decade earlier. The federal government passed the NDEA, the National Defense Education Act, a piece of legislation meant to ensure development of skills necessary for national defense. Initially, federal monies were provided to colleges and universities for the training of the students who indicated a desire to teach in elementary or secondary schools, or who had an aptitude for science, mathematics, engineering, or a modern foreign language (United States Department of Education; University of California Berkeley, 1998). Essentially, the act proposed ensuring the education of America's best students to win the war on space exploration. For the first time, the federal government identified a focus in curriculum through the use of money.

Despite the push for greater science and technology education through hundreds of millions of dollars in funding, the NSF and NDEA proved not to be enough. Research suggested that this push for the advancement of science and technology "actually discouraged the most able students from entering these fields" (Kriegbaum & Rawson, 1969, p. 318). Students in the United States were falling behind the students in other countries.

2.4.7 A Nation at Risk

The growth of the current accountability movement hit a spurt in the early 1980's. Preaching that excessive federal spending on education was not yielding results, Ronald Reagan believed that by reducing federal control through regulation, higher standards could be maintained through federal leadership. In his 1982 State of the Union Address, Reagan spoke:

If [state governments] want to continue receiving federal grants in such areas as transportation, education, and social services, they can use their trust fund money to pay for the grants or, to the extent they choose to forego the federal grant programs, they can use their trust fund money on their own, for other purposes. There will be a mandatory pass-through of part of these funds to local governments. (Reagan, 1982)

This shift in federal control of money to local use of money meant local control but higher accountability.

Reagan called for a special commission to study the practices in school funding and achievement, and that commission created *A Nation at Risk*. This document noted declining achievement in schools and called for massive reform with higher academic standards of performance (Rury, 2002). The Commission reported, “that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report defined the risk in terms of labor and industry, intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths, and freedom. The risk was identified by a comparison of American students to other students internationally on 19

academic tests. Researchers calculated that 23 million American adults and 13 percent of all 17-year-olds were functionally illiterate. Additionally, the average achievement of high school students on most standardized tests was lower than the average achievement of students in the 1950s. Last, business and military leaders complained that they were spending millions on costly remedial training of basic skills (Lund & Wild, 1993, p. 10).

In studying the educational process itself, “The Commission found four aspects...warranting concern: content, expectations, time and teaching” (Lund & Wild, 1993, p. 10). Of these, the most comprehensive recommendations were the seven that dealt with teaching. The recommendations ran from the competence of teachers to salaries and contracts, and from incentives to teacher preparation and support programs (Lund & Wild, 1993). As for the content, expectations, and time, they were deemed worthy of greater focus as “All, regardless of race or class or economic status, are entitled to a fair chance and to the tools for developing their individual powers of mind and spirit to the utmost. This promise means that all children by virtue of their own efforts, competently guided, can hope to attain the mature and informed judgment needed to secure gainful employment, and to manage their own lives, thereby serving not only their own interests but also the progress of society itself” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The report further delineates the expectations of high student achievement and content specific standards by subject meant to provoke high student achievement. Last, the report presented the idea that “The Federal Government has *the primary responsibility* to identify the national interest in education,” and further states the federal government’s needed role in funding (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

The effect of this Commission’s report was slow to happen. It was not until almost five years later that a response was created. At that point, a business leadership organization, the

Business Roundtable, comprised of the top officers of 200 major corporations created its Ad Hoc Committee on Education to identify actions its membership could take to improve public education. “The Essential Components” publication was the Roundtable’s education public policy agenda created to identify the essential components needed to provoke the degree of systemic change that would achieve the national goals through successful schools. These components began with four assumptions: all students can learn at significantly higher levels; we know how to teach all students successfully; curriculum content must reflect high expectations for all students, but instructional time and strategies may vary to assure success; and every child must have an advocate (Lund & Wild, 1993). This group of business leaders continued with a delineation of business-like requirements needed to ensure systemic change:

- The new system is performance- or outcome-based.
- Assessment strategies must be as strong and rich as the outcomes.
- Schools should receive rewards for success, assistance to improve and penalties for failure.
- School-based staff has a major role in making instructional decisions.
- Major emphasis is placed on staff development.
- A high-quality pre-kindergarten program is established, at least for all disadvantaged children.
- Health and other social services are sufficient to reduce significant barriers to learning.
- Technology is used to raise student and teacher productivity and to expand access to learning. (Lund & Wild, 1993, p. 14)

While this list appears to have hit upon the essential supports and changes that need to occur in public schools, it did not offer a way that these supports and changes were to be funded

by public school systems. The group appeared to understand the link between healthy schools and healthy business, a link similar to that that was identified at the beginning of the same century, but little was actually done to encourage the change. Notably, ten years after the release of *A Nation at Risk*, Lund noted, "...the involvement of educators with business, in most instances, is still not very extensive. School superintendents in the majority of smaller communities still have little contact with local businesses in any programming beyond the classic 'adopt-a-school' patterns. And despite continual urging from major business organizations, local and state coalitions promoting school restructuring are few" (Lund & Wild, 1993, p. 28).

In conclusion, *A Nation at Risk* was the sounding alarm for the need for school reform to lead the nation's schools into the twenty-first century. How government, schools, and businesses would react to that alarm was yet to come.

2.4.8 OBE, Goals 2000

While *A Nation at Risk* was not law, it did, however lead to increased focus on education. In the year following *A Nation at Risk*, Goodlad published *A Place Called School*, a work that presented another view of school in the United States. He argued that education was still needed by civilization and that money was not enough to fix school or civilization. While it was "fashionable" to kick education, the purpose of the book was to "assist the reader in acquiring this understanding of some representative schools, an awareness of the problems they have, and a sense of priorities for school reform" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 2).

Because it encompassed the ideas in Goodlad's book with the ideas of "the Essential Components" created by the Business Roundtable, a new movement called outcomes-based

education emerged in the 1990's. OBE is an education theory meant to guide curriculum by setting goals, not subject units, for students to accomplish before graduation. Controversy surrounded OBE as parent groups feared that schools were inflicting values upon the students (McNeir, 1993).

As it dealt with goals that needed to be accomplished by students prior to leaving school, the outcomes-based movement led naturally into the age of state standards. Instead of student earning credits for coursework, the OBE movement forced the idea that there is a core body of knowledge that students need to learn. It was the student's attainment of this knowledge that OBE proponents ultimately believe should be assessed in schools. Opponents of OBE believed that OBE limited local control because of the creation of standards by many outside agencies (Education Commission of the States, 1995). In all, accountability to what the students were learning in schools became the focus issue.

From OBE came Clinton's *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, which became law in 1994 and was amended in 1996. *Goals 2000* was meant "To improve learning and teaching by providing a national framework for education reform; to promote the research, consensus building, and systemic changes needed to ensure equitable educational opportunities and high levels of educational achievement for all students; to provide a framework for reauthorization of all Federal education programs; to promote the development and adoption of a voluntary national system of skill standards and certifications; and for other purposes" (United States Congress, 1994). States were encouraged to create standards for what every child should know and to use those standards to improve student achievement, however the federal government did not endorse any of the states' standards. By providing competitive monetary awards in order to increase accountability in school, *Goals 2000* supported school and district efforts to improve

student achievement. This legislation was very different from prior federal funding in that the money made available to the schools came with very little regulation. Essentially, *Goals 2000* “...recognized, and supported, the systemic reform efforts that many states had under way. Any state that was adhering to the idea of standards-based, systemic reform and had a planning process to support that effort could get funding under *Goals 2000*. It was an unusual federal program because it did not target a particular group of students or subject areas; rather, it supported a generic reform strategy that emphasized the development of state standards and the assessments needed to measure progress toward them. It required that in the last three of five years, most of the funds were to go to local districts and schools to implement state standards” (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2006).

The flexibility of this legislation allowed the states to identify their own standards. To ensure high quality across the states, Clinton suggested the creation of a National Education Standards and Assessment Council as part of *Goals 2000*. This council would review the state standards and assessments in order to ensure rigor. Eventually this council was renamed the National Education Standards and Improvement Council (NESIC) and would have been given the opportunity to create national standards upon which the state standards would be measured. However, this idea was vehemently opposed as the idea of national testing became a potential (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2006).

In implementation, *Goals 2000* had varied effects on the local level. High-poverty and small districts struggled with the reforms suggested by this legislation. Because the majority of the money had to be spent on the local level, states did not have the resources to aid under-resourced districts (States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project, 2006). What *Goals 2000*

did achieve was the funding to initiate a nationwide, systemic reform effort that continued after the Clinton Presidency.

2.4.9 No Child Left Behind

In response to *Goals 2000*, the states began to develop standards, especially in the core content areas of reading and mathematics. Standards-based learning soon became further focused in research-based programs as the reply to a new federal mandate: *No Child Left Behind*.

In January 2002, NCLB became law. Its purpose was to close “the achievement gap, offering more flexibility, giving parents more options, and teaching students based on what works” (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005b). By requiring schools to demonstrate “adequate yearly progress” of all students, the law expected schools to make the changes necessary to have all students on grade level by the year 2014, twelve years from the start of the law. Consequently, the NCLB law presents a new level of accountability with a new level of conflict between expectations and resource availability.

The effects of this law, in part, are the focus of this study. Arguably, one of the most sweeping pieces of reform legislation, NCLB has forced accountability efforts at the state, local, and classroom levels.

2.5 HISTORY OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Public education in the state of Pennsylvania struggled at its inception. With no real leader for the movement, the cost and method for education faced the great diversity of nationalities and religious sects living in the commonwealth. While few people opposed the idea of education, “It took all this time to harmonize these elements enough to make a general school system practical, and though it was actually established by the act of 1834, yet the work of improving and organizing was a task of no small magnitude” (Yetter, 1909, p. 39).

It can be inferred that the first accountability movement in the State of Pennsylvania began with the establishment of the public school system.

Governor Wolf said in his annual message December 3, 1834: ‘At the last session of the Legislature, an act was passed for establishing a general system of education by common schools throughout the Commonwealth, in compliance with a Constitutional provision, ... The provisions of this act have, it is understood, been adopted by all the school districts in some counties, partially in others, and in few they have been rejected altogether... Every new measure, although it may have for its object to confer the most solid advantages upon the community in which it is to operate, is destined, for the most part, to encounter long-cherished, inveterate prejudices, which it will be difficult to conquer, unless the most incontestable demonstrations can be given of its title to preference, on the score of unquestionable public utility, over that which it is intended to supplant’ (Heydrick, 1912, pp. 22-23)

In other words, the creators of the state Constitution meant that a public school system be formed, but that system, until the law of 1834, had not been started. This law made the citizens and government of Pennsylvania accountable for the inception of a public school system.

Governor Wolf noted that though the idea of public schools may not be supported universally in the Commonwealth, they are to be created for the common good.

As the state struggled to originate its schools, it quickly became apparent that education needed its own independent body to oversee the organization. In 1857, the Department of Public Instruction was formed. The Superintendent of Public Instruction was to be apolitical, but in actuality, neither political party would garner support. “However, the public schools were too close to the hearts of the people to be thus abandoned...In fact, it is dangerous for any politician of any political party to stand in the way of the education of the State’s children, and it would mean political death to the man and harm his party. So that, instead of losing the political influence of the party in power, the schools gained the influence of all parties”(Yetter, 1909, p. 86).

Upon the acceptance of this law, the lack of trained teachers was the next challenge facing public schools. The quality of the schools came to be a question as the quality of teachers reflected the merit of the education. “At first teachers’ certificates depended upon their knowledge of the several branches of study to be taught in the various schools; this disregarded the importance of theory and practice...The school law of 1867 made teachers’ institutes obligatory in all the counties of the State” (Yetter, 1909, p. 60). Teachers’ institutes were a sort of in-service training that was led by the County Superintendent meant ““to be devoted to the improvement of teachers in the science and art of education,’ to continue in session five days,

including half a day in going to and half a day in returning from the same” (Yetter, 1909, pp. 50-51).

The value of these institutes appears to have been directly related to the efforts of the superintendent. Institutes were held at a time selected by the superintendent. Some were held before the opening of the school term, and others were held in the middle of the term. The institutes prior to the start of the term were focused on “new and better methods or improvement on old ones,” but many of the institutes held in the middle of the school term were more a time for entertainment and rest. “There is a mixing of the sexes, and other attractions take the minds of the teachers away from that of instruction” (Yetter, 1909, p. 62).

Despite this mention of a lack of focus on improving the education in the classrooms in the state, great changes to education were just beginning, changes fueled by the initiatives on the national level. In studying the history of accountability in the United States and in the state, Pennsylvania has played a notable part in the educational history of the United States. As the focus of this study, Pennsylvania schools have been forced to adapt to the continual reform on the federal and state level. This section of the literature review will focus on the roots of current accountability that have taken spread in Pennsylvania’s schools as a result of an increased focus on education in the United States.

2.5.1 Child Labor and Compulsory Education

From the beginning of the industrial movement, Pennsylvania was an industrial state. Families desperately in need of income offered their children for employment. “Public interest in the working child began to manifest itself here in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, but

protective measures were ineffective and compulsory attendance was not even attempted until well after most of the other northern states had their educational programs well under way” (Ensign, 1921, p. 202). In the mid-1850’s calls for reform of child labor laws came from unions as children were often the victims of injury and death in the dangerous mining and factory jobs.

Despite this call for action, legislators and business battled about child labor in Pennsylvania. Consequently, “Pennsylvania was among the last of the northern states to provide by compulsory laws for the education of her children” (Ensign, 1921, p. 170).

Eventually, regulations were imposed that gradually raised the age of children legally permitted to work and which slowly phased certain industries out from being legally permitted to employ children at all. “In 1887 there was an active campaign for effective legislation in Pennsylvania. A law was passed which prohibited the employment of children under twelve in any mill, manufactory, or mine” (Ensign, 1921, p. 178).

The push for compulsory education came soon after the child labor legislation. “In the decade, 1880 to 1890, the population of the state increased nearly 25 per cent, in the cities almost 43 per cent” (Ensign, 1921, p. 180). With a greater population, the need for jobs forced the need for education. Consequently, in “1895 the General Assembly enacted a Compulsory Education Act mandating that children between eight and thirteen years old attend school for at least four months per year” (Ensign, 1921, p. 181). This law was modified in 1897 to require “...that attendance should begin at the opening of the term unless otherwise ordered by the board, providing for a more careful enumeration of pupils, extending the upper age limit to sixteen, unless the child was thirteen and regularly employed, and extending the annual term of required attendance to 70 per cent of the school year” (Ensign, 1921, p. 181).

While increasing school attendance, the Compulsory Education Act did not completely stop child labor though the law was primarily supported. One example of this support can be found in the study of the schools in Philadelphia. "...the Public Education Association of Philadelphia in 1898...resolved that as long as there are ignorant or selfish parents, compulsion must be used in order to safeguard the child's rights" (Rothbard, 1979).

Legislation meant to improve the child labor and compulsory education laws continued to pass in the state. In 1909, the most sweeping of these laws was passed. Essentially, children under the age of 18 were not permitted to work in dangerous occupations, children over 14 and literate were permitted to work in the textile industry, boys under sixteen and girls under 18 were not permitted to work more than 10 hours a day, and children must have an employment certificate on file and working papers were to be given by the schools if proper identification was given as to the child's age and attendance (Ensign, 1921).

In 1915, this legislation became even more encompassing with the Cox Child Labor Law. In this law, child employed in agriculture or domestic service were exempt, the number of hours in which school attendance was required raised to eight hours per week while school was in session, labor hours could not exceed 51 hours per week, including the eight hours of school, students must have completed sixth grade and a physical examination certifying their physical fitness for employment, and work hours could not begin before six in the morning and must conclude before eight at night. Additionally, the law was to be enforced by the local police and penalties for violation could be imposed of ten to two hundred dollars, imprisonment, or a combination of both (Ensign, 1921).

In conclusion, after the creation of the public school system in 1834, the compulsory attendance of the children in the state of Pennsylvania was the state's next period of

accountability. As the labor rules became more stringent, the focus on educating the state's youth led to a greater population in the schools. The focus on what was happening in those schools was soon to come.

2.5.2 Vocational Education and High Schools

If students were obligated to attend school, what was being taught in that school became the focus of the next period of accountability in Pennsylvania's education history? The idea that students who would attend school to prepare them for their future careers came to the forefront, just as the movement for the same emerged in the national focus. Much like the national movement, the creation of high schools occurred simultaneously.

Initiating this movement was the great increase in population. "The population of the State rose from 2,311,786 in 1850...and reached a total of 5,255,853, in 1890. The greatest increase was in the cities" (Mulhern, 1969, p. 444). Mulhern also notes that:

While this increase represents, in part, a gradual influx from the farms to the cities, it was to a still greater extent the result of immigration from foreign countries...The industrialization of the State...was a potent factor in the growth of great urban population centres. It is a significant social fact that, in 1887, manufacturing, mining, trade, transportation, and ordinary fields of unskilled labor gave employment to two-thirds of those engaged in the various "occupations," while agriculture and the professions combined accounted for the employment of the other third of our working population. (Mulhern, 1969, p. 445)

With a greater population, the need for skilled, educated labor began to emerge at a much faster rate.

As noted in the previous section of this literature review, the state legislators formally called for the creation of public schools in 1834, an idea presented much earlier in the state's history. Yetter noted:

The laws of 1834 provided for manual training, calling it manual labor. Penn's 'Frame of Government' said that an opportunity should be given the young to learn some useful art or skill. These and other suggestions probably had back of them the idea of preparing to earn a livelihood without thought of its educational value. It seems strange that so much has been said about manual training and so little done. It has been authorized by legislative acts, urged by educational officers, and recommended by educators. The main cause is lack of popular demand for it. (Yetter, 1909, p. 74)

It is notable to mention, that after the enactment of the law of 1834, the city of Philadelphia embarked on a campaign to build a high school. "Early in 1836, a committee of the board of controllers was appointed to visit Boston and New York 'to examine the public schools ...' the most suitable features of which they proposed to adopt for Philadelphia. Plans for an elaborate building and observatory were soon laid" (Mulhern, 1969, p. 493). Across the state, the establishment of secondary schools took a bit longer, but was well underway by the late 1800's.

Further enabling this development was the law of 1887.

In 1887, there was enacted a law permitting directors in 'cities and boroughs divided into wards for school purposes' to establish high schools. By this law directors were required to admit into the high school all duly qualified children of the district under twenty-one years of age; to 'exercise supervision' over the school; to appoint and dismiss teachers; to

arrange the curriculum and select all books to be used; to fix the length of the school term which must not exceed ten months in each year; and to require the city or borough council to levy a 'Public high school building tax' of not more than one mill each year. (Mulhern, 1969, p. 480)

With the organization and funding defined, "There were over 100 high schools in the state by the end of the century...A law of 1901 authorized the creation of township and union high schools" (Good, 1956, p. 246). Mulhern noted the same adding, "Appropriations to the township high schools rose from \$50,000 in 1901, to \$275,000 in 1907" (Mulhern, 1969, p. 480). Additionally, "The earliest collection of statistical data, preserved in the State Department, which presents a fairly representative picture of the high schools of the State, is that for the year 1898. It contains information regarding two hundred and twenty-six high schools in fifty-nine counties" (Mulhern, 1969, p. 500). However, the main issue was not the need for secondary schools but rather the organization, curriculum, and course offerings in the schools.

In 1915, the state created a Bureau of Vocational Education to assist in the oversight of the schools of the Commonwealth. When the federal government passed the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917, the Bureau of Vocational Education was made responsible for enacting the provisions of the act in the state (Mulhern, 1969, p. 486).

In what appears to be an attempt to more clearly define vocational education in the State of Pennsylvania, an act was passed in 1925 which defined it as:

'any form of education of less than college grade, given in school or elsewhere, the purpose of which is to fit an individual to pursue effectively a recognized profitable employment, whether pursued for wages or otherwise.' This act further defined such terms as continuation school, vocational evening class, vocational home economics, and

other like terms. It provided for the establishment of such schools in the several districts, and the reimbursement of the districts by the State for establishing and maintaining such schools (Mulhern, 1969, p. 487).

As the twentieth century began, Pennsylvania had high schools and vocational programs in place across the Commonwealth. What began as a push for students to have a place to go to school, ended as a place for students to learn skills for their future careers.

2.5.3 Result of the Great Depression on Pennsylvania's Schools

During the 1920's, America was experiencing a period of great success and prosperity. This success was felt in Pennsylvania's schools. With the onset of The Great Depression, this success and prosperity wrenched the public schools.

The amounts for capital outlay and maintenance formed an even greater contrast in the respective years studied. In 1924, the amount was 20.9 per cent for capital outlay and in 1934, the per cent became 2.5. A comparison of actual dollars expended shows the respective amounts to be \$34,000,000 and \$4,000,000. In 1929 and 1936 the respective expenditures approximated \$34,000,000 and \$10,000,000. In light of this analysis school costs were cut to a minimum following the depression. As a result, building construction and maintenance suffered heavily. Debt service increased as a result of the depression and came to claim an important place in the amount of money expended in each school dollar. (Pennsylvania State Education Association, 1938, p. 40)

While the money flowed out of schools, the enrollment and organization of students in public schools continued. "The total enrolment of 1,746,496 for the year ending in 1924

increased rather regularly each year until 1934 when the highest point was reached, after which the attendance curve showed an abrupt downward tendency. The indications are that enrolments will continue to grow less and less each year until a possible period of stabilization takes place, which is predicted for the 1960 decade” (Pennsylvania State Education Association, 1938, p. 13). Further, “The last ten years has seen a marked redistribution of pupils in the upper elementary grades dues to the secondary school reorganization reaching down to include the seventh and eighth grades on a secondary school level either under the classification of a six-year high school or a junior-senior high school” (Pennsylvania State Education Association, 1938, p. 12). Not only was an education becoming more and more important, the education of the teacher in the school was also improving. “In 1924 one teacher or supervisor in Pennsylvania in every eight was certificated on the college-degree level; in 1936 this ratio was changed to one in every three” (Pennsylvania State Education Association, 1938, p. 40).

However, times were hard, and money was scarce. “Test surveys in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts showed that among job-seeking youth 16 and 17 years of age, from 57 to 69 per cent were unemployed” (Lindley & Lindley, 1959, p. 8). Faced with growing numbers of unemployed, semi-skilled youth, the federal government, through the National Youth Administration programs, began to take a hand in the education in the state. From 1935-1938, the NYA gave a total of \$14,380,130.48 to students and youth in the state for work projects and student aid. (Work Projects -- \$8,923,343.21; Student Aid -- \$5,456,787.27) This money went to 37,786 youths in 1938 alone for 11,768 work projects and 1,204 student aid recipients. While this money was obviously accepted, its’ quantity was not enough for many students to remain in school, as the monthly earning of a student receiving aid was only on average \$6.49 a month, as

compared to \$21.79 a month earned working on a NYA work project or even greater for youth working for another federal program (Lindley & Lindley, 1959, p. 296).

Additionally, many families were reluctant to allow their children to participate in the federal programs. NYA programs often required students to go away from home. While many states, including Pennsylvania, had resident units, the units were a cultural change for most families in the state.

Resident Centers are complicated and difficult to organize. Sponsors must contribute the larger portion of the materials with which youth are to work, as well as a good share of the instruction...some parents have been reluctant to permit their children to go away from home for six or eight months...These parents, in the lowest-income group, have not had the tradition of financially more fortunate families of sending sons and daughters away to school. More important to them is the fact that, when a relief youth goes away from home to a Resident Center, the family does not receive a large a share of his NYA earnings as it would if he were employed on a project in his home community... (Lindley & Lindley, 1959, p. 105).

In conclusion, while the numbers of students in Pennsylvania's schools increased leading into the Great Depression, the Depression wrecked havoc on infrastructure and student body. Further, while the influence of the federal government on state schools had been to this point legislative, monetary influence was introduced in reaction to the economic times. While the accountability of what was being taught to whom appears to have relaxed somewhat during this period, the accountability to the students and community remained as students needed preparation for the careers that were soon to come.

2.5.4 Civil and Student Rights

Little has been written about education in the state of Pennsylvania immediately following the Great Depression and the World Wars. However, like the rest of the United States, the Civil Rights Movement influenced the accountability of schools to their communities and their students.

Being a northern state, Pennsylvania's public schools were not uniformly segregated by race. However, reaction to the *Brown vs. the Board of Education* ruling did have some effect on education in the state.

Following the Supreme Courts' *Brown v. Board* decision ending de jure segregation in all public school systems, Philadelphia moved slowly to carry out the court's ruling. In the public schools, several actions by the School Board including moving Northeast High School out of North Philadelphia, furthered segregation and limited opportunities for African-Americans children. In another public arena, the admissions policy of Girard College became one of the significant tests of school segregation in the City of Philadelphia (Archives).

Girard College had been established by Stephen Girard, a wealthy merchant who had endowed the school in his will for white male orphans. The state and federal courts ruled that because the will superseded the *Brown* ruling, the College, though administered by the Philadelphia Board of City Trusts, could exclude African Americans. Ultimately, the college did open its doors to African American students in 1968 (Archives). Despite this ruling, by the time of the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown* in 2003, Pennsylvania led the nation in school segregation (The Civil Rights Project Harvard University, 2003).

Pennsylvania fared slightly better in its efforts to improve education for students with disabilities. The beginning of this movement was in 1821, when the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Philadelphia was incorporated (Thomas, 1984). Shortly after the establishment of the public school system in 1834, the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind near Philadelphia was incorporated and endowed” (Thomas, 1984).

As noted in earlier in this lit review, compulsory education forced greater efforts to help educate students with mental and physical disabilities. Pennsylvania’s compulsory education law went into effect in 1895, and in 1913, “The State Legislature authorizes the State Board of Education to educate blind children under 8 years of age if their parents or guardians are unable to do so” (Thomas, 1984, p. 174). Just six years later, the State Legislature amended the School Code, “to enable local school districts to work cooperatively to provide special education. Special classes may be established within the public schools and reimbursement will be provided” (Thomas, 1984, p. 175). This was the first statewide effort at special education. Prior to this point, special services were primarily available only in the larger cities of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Shortly after the passing of this amendment, in 1925, “The PSEA recommends that the state provide for the examination of all children and that it provide sufficient financial support to ensure that the handicapped receive an education to meet their needs. The Legislature establishes a payment method for blind and deaf children between 6 and 21 years of age enrolled in special schools or institutions whereby the state is to pay 75% of the tuition and maintenance costs and the local school district will pay 25%” (Thomas, 1984, p. 176).

Nationally, with the creation of the concept of Intelligence Quotient, or IQ, in 1912, Lewis Terman’s Stanford-Binet Scale of Intelligence was created with “an elaborate

standardization and intelligence quotient” (Thomas, 1984p.175). The idea that students could have a measurable range of mental ability began to affect funding and services in the state of Pennsylvania.

In 1937, the State Legislature passed two changes to special education in the state. First, school districts were permitted to provide free transportation to any physically or mentally handicapped child enrolled in an approved special class, reimbursable by the Commonwealth. Second, the State Legislature created the position of Supervisor of Special Education within the county units (Thomas, 1984, p. 176).

Within the great increase in the school population, in 1951, the state declared that school beginners must be a mental age of five years in order to begin school. And in 1955, instead of being allowed to provide transportation, County Board of School Directors were required to provide transportation for physically and mentally handicapped children” (Thomas, 1984, p. 178).

In spite of these rudimentary efforts, however, it was not until 1959, when Governor David L. Lawrence assumed the governorship that a great commitment to providing an appropriate education to all handicapped children was begun (Thomas, 1984). In 1961, “The term ‘exceptional’ is introduced in legislation to replace the term ‘handicapped’ throughout the School Code” (Thomas, 1984, p. 178). And in 1962, “The first state funds are made available to support diagnostic and consultation services for the emotionally disturbed” (Thomas, 1984, p. 178).

In the 1970’s, Pennsylvania played a large part in special education reform. First, in 1972, “the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) and 13 school-aged children with mental retardation brought a class action suit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

for its alleged failure to provide all of its school-aged children with mental retardation with a publicly supported education” (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, 1996). The lawsuit was resolved by a consent agreement that specified 1) the state could not postpone, end, or deny children with mental retardation access to a publicly supported education, 2) that all school-aged children with mental retardation who were excluded from the public schools would be placed in a "free public program of education and training appropriate to their capacity," and 3) that it was highly desirable to educate these children in programs most like those for non-disabled children” (National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, 1996). “This ruling created the right to an education for disabled Pennsylvania children and expressed a clear preference for mainstreaming, with homebound instruction or residential placements used in only the most rare circumstances” (Douvani & Hulsey, 2002b). Consequently, special education reform in Pennsylvania was on the forefront of federally mandated reform.

Nationally, in the ruling in Pennsylvania was not echoed until 1975, with the passing of Public Law 94-142, known as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This act insured “that all handicapped children have a free appropriate public education provided in the least restrictive environment” (Thomas, 1984, p. 180).

As the rules of special education evolved, in 1979, the ruling of *Armstrong v. Kline* ordered the state to review IEP’s of students in full-time special education classes and to provide an educational program extending beyond the 180-day school year for those handicapped children in need of it. “Guidelines were established to help assess the child’s need relative to self-sufficiency skills, degree of regressions, and recoupment ability when a lengthy interruption occurs in the educational program” (Thomas, 1984, pp. 80-81).

Changes to the education of students with exceptionalities in the state of Pennsylvania continued to occur. Most recently, modifications and review of current practices are happening as a result of the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act that was signed into law by the President in 2004 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006). Essentially this law adds to the previously law, IDEA, by further clarifying how students with exceptionalities are identified and evaluated. While no one perfect solution to education fits all students in the state, the attempt to find the way to educate each student continues to be the goal.

2.5.5 Cold War, NDEA, and What Really had an Effect on Education in the 1950's

While the federal government focused on accountability in regards to the technological advancements on the world, lawmakers and educational oversight saw another focus of alarm in public schools: numbers and cost. In 1958, the Committee of Fifteen issued a report about education in the state. They reported, "The problem is more than one of increasing numbers. As contrasted with the simple program of our schools many years ago, public school service now embraces medical and dental care, speech correction, nursing service, safety, driver training, libraries, reading consultations, special education guidance, music and art, supervision, and more scientific administration" (Committee of Fifteen, 1958, p. 9). Further, "Approximately 40% of all our pupils drop out before graduation from high school, and for approximately 70% of those who do graduate formal education is ended" (Committee of Fifteen, 1958, p. 9). Alarming, the role of schools in the community continued to grow, while many of the potential students were not taking advantage of the opportunity of free, public education. While many students left, the cost of that education continued to grow.

In its report, the Committee of Fifteen traced the history of school financing. It looked at how schools received state funding. In 1897, "...one-third of the appropriation distributed on the number of teachers; one-third on the number of children, and one-third on the number of taxables...here for the first time an attempt was made to recognize that the cost of education had a direct relationship to the number of pupils and the number of teachers required to teacher the pupils" (Committee of Fifteen, 1958, p. 55).

One particular area of focus was that of teacher salaries. The Committee noted that in 1903, "...the legislation was enacted establishing a minimum salary for teachers..." a salary that turned into a variable scale of imbursement based on certificates with the Woodruff Salary Act in 1919 (Committee of Fifteen, 1958, pp. 55-56). This could be arguably one of the earliest attempts to improve the knowledge and skills of teachers in the state, as salary was linked to further education.

Later, "The Edmonds Act of 1921 included not only new minimum salary schedules but also a new basis for distributing State aid. The assumption of this legislation was that the more populous districts of the State contain a relatively greater amount of taxable wealth per pupil than the districts with a smaller population" (Committee of Fifteen, 1958, p. 56). In an attempt to equalize the resources of the school districts in the state, state aid began to shift. However, this shift was not great enough to fix a growing funding problem. "The PSEA in 1938 did a somewhat similar study which was known as the Report of the Committee on Survey of School Costs...Legislation was written and introduced in subsequent sessions of the General Assembly and finally in 1945 the first equalization law, as we know it today, for the distribution of school subsidies in Pennsylvania was passed" (Committee of Fifteen, 1958, p. 57).

When the Committee of Fifteen gave their report, they focused on the issue of what state money should fund.

The question is – Should the State Equalization Program be based upon the provision of bare minimum program of reading and writing and arithmetic or should it provide an adequate well-rounded education program without frills?...the Committee of Fifteen found that education, while it is acceptable in many areas of the State, falls considerably below an acceptable program in other sections. The primary reason for this discrepancy is the inability of some districts to finance an acceptable program within the framework of the present State Equalization Program. (Committee of Fifteen, 1958, p. 59)

In conclusion, while the federal government legislated itself through the Cold War, the state of Pennsylvania had begun its own questions of accountability. In other words, if the state was to provide money to districts, should it be enough money to ensure just the bare minimum of skills for the students in the district, or should money be available for a more well rounded education program.

2.5.6 State Testing, OBE, and Standards

Following the report of the Committee of Fifteen, *Education in Pennsylvania Today and Tomorrow*, a movement began to look at the quality of the schools in Pennsylvania. In order to measure the quality, the State of Pennsylvania began state testing in 1970 with the Educational Quality Assessment or EQA. This assessment was designed to give an overview of schools and district programs and continued from 1970-1988. From 1984-1991, the *Test of Essential*

Learning and Literacy Skills (TELLS) was administered to identify students in need of remedial mathematics or reading support (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1996).

The next “logical” step of the testing was to try to do something with the data. If not all of the schools in Pennsylvania had similar testing results, in other words, weaknesses in the curriculum were apparent, the attempt by the state to align the education of its students came in the form of OBE. OBE specified the outcomes students should be able to demonstrate in order to graduate. When OBE was presented to the community in Pennsylvania, an outcry that the outcomes were values rather than academic skills and knowledge limited the implementation of the plan. This led the legislature to quickly abandon the mandate until it was reviewed and certain controversial outcomes were deleted (McNeir, 1993).

In Pennsylvania, the outcomes of OBE led to the creation of academic standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening and Mathematics in 1999. Schools were given the freedom to design curriculum and instruction, so long as the curriculum and instruction ensured that the students would meet or exceed the standards’ expectations (Pennsylvania Department of Education). To ensure that the schools were meeting this expectation, statewide testing grew.

The current testing system, known as the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), was created as a means of curricular overview for schools and districts. However, in 1995, individual student reports were added (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1996).

The purposes of the statewide assessment component of the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment were:

- To determine achievement levels of all students in the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.

- To provide assessment results to school districts for consideration in the development of strategic plans.
- To provide information to state policymakers about student achievement and the performance of schools in the Commonwealth.
- To focus the direction of educators by sharing assessment results and providing widespread in-service on the assessment techniques used in the PSSA.
- To provide information to the general public about school achievement on the PSSA. (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1996)

While these were the initial rationales for PSSA testing, the tests provided a method of compliance with the federal law, NCLB.

2.5.7 NCLB

No Child Left Behind was the act signed into law by President Bush on January 8, 2002. Much of the school accountability associated with *No Child Left Behind* has become the job of the state governments. While each state may have a different way of measuring learning of its students, all must be able to comply with the yearly requirement of reporting. Pennsylvania's reaction has been the systematic assessment and identification system of schools deemed as failing its populations of students.

Adequate yearly progress, or AYP is a term indicating a "state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards" (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003). In the state of Pennsylvania, four indicators are used to determine AYP: achievement in reading and mathematics, 95 % test participation, improvement in student attendance (K-8), and

improvement in four-year graduation rate (secondary schools) (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005a).

AYP goals in the core subject areas, namely reading and mathematics, are set by the state, gradually increasing from 45% in reading and 35% in mathematics in 2002 to 100% in both reading and mathematics by the year 2014 (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005a). The goals align with the federal NCLB legislation goals (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005a).

AYP is used to determine the progress a school is making toward meeting academic standards. AYP is determined first by using the total school scores. In addition, subgroups of students are given special focus. Students who are economically disadvantaged, from racial and ethnic minority groups, have disabilities, or have limited English proficiency make up the state's disaggregate groups (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003). Failure to meet AYP of the total population or in any of the disaggregate groups, consisting of 40 or more students, will force a school into the school improvement process.

School improvement is defined as a designation indicating that a school failed to meet AYP targets for two or three consecutive years (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003). This designation falls in the middle of the accountability actions for failure to meet AYP.

Before the official school improvement designation, the first year of failure to meet state targets results in a warning. The second year of failing to meet AYP is the *School Improvement I* designation. This requires the school to offer school choice, school assistance teams, and creation of a specific plan for improvement (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005a). A third year of failure to meet AYP results in a *School Improvement II* designation, meaning the school continues its plan but must offer supplemental services such as tutoring. A fourth year of not

meeting targets means a designation of *Corrective Action I*. *Corrective Action I* must lead to significant changes in leadership, curriculum, professional development or other strategies. If these changes do not lead to AYP, the school faces significant changes in governance such as reconstitution, chartering, or privatization (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005a).

In order to be able to exit any of these levels of negative designation, schools must meet state AYP targets for two consecutive years. Schools can also reach “Safe Harbor” by having a 10% reduction in percent not proficient (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2005a). In other words, “Safe harbor status allows a school or district to achieve AYP without meeting the standard achievement targets” (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003).

The way the State of Pennsylvania chooses to react to the federal regulations of *No Child Left Behind* continues to evolve. The focus of this doctoral study will be the way that schools under School Improvement are reacting to meet the accountability of their services to their students.

2.6 CONCLUSIONS

Education in the United States has entered a significant period of reform. Never in its history has public education been forced to conform so entirely to a piece of federal legislation. While many politicians and educators tout NCLB to be the beginning of educational accountability, those leading public education have always been accountable to someone or some institution, be it to the students, the families, outside factions, or the government.

Table 2 offers a visual map of the major influences in United States' educational history in comparison with the influences in Pennsylvania's educational history. Such a continuum of change displays NCLB as only the most recent attempt at the accountability of schools

Table 2

United States and Pennsylvania Influences on School Accountability

Date	Event in United States Educational History	Event in Pennsylvania Educational History
1821		The Institute for the Deaf and Dumb in Philadelphia was incorporated.
1834		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishment of Schools in PA through legislative Act – Law of 1834 ▪ The Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind was incorporated.
1837	Massachusetts creates the nation's first Board of Education with Horace Mann as its secretary	
1857		Department of Public Instruction founded.
1867		School law mandates teachers' institutes
1887		Passing of law that limited labor in mills, manufacturing, and mines to those over 12 years of age.
1887		Establishment of high schools in cities and boroughs, and permission for taxation to build these schools
1895		Compulsory Education Act mandated 8-13 year olds attend schools at least four months a year.
1901		Creation of township and union high schools
1906	Beveridge-Parsons Bill	
1909		Law further limiting child labor
1912	IQ Tests	
1913		State legislature authorizes the education of children who are blind and under eight years of age.

Date	Event in United States Educational History	Event in Pennsylvania Educational History
1914	Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education	
1915		Creation of the Bureau of Vocational Education
1915		Cox Child Labor Law
1916	Keating-Owen Bill	
1917	Smith-Hughes Act provided federal funds for vocational education	
1919	Child Labor Tax Act	Edmonds Act
1925		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Definition of Vocational Education Expanded ▪ Payment by the state for students who are blind and deaf
1935		Beginning of National Youth Administration Programs in the state
1937		Free transportation for special education students
1944	Research: A National Resource	
1945		Equalization Law for distribution of School Subsidies
1947	The Dilemma of American Education	
1950	National Science Foundation	
1951		State legislature defines that students have the mental age of 5 years in order to begin school
1954	Brown v. the Board of Education	
1955		Districts are required to provide transportation
1957	National Defense Education Act	
1958		Committee of Fifteen report entitled <i>Education in Pennsylvania Today and Tomorrow</i>
1959		The term "Exceptional" replaces "handicapped" in the School Code.
1962		State funds are provided for the identification and education of the emotionally disturbed.

Date	Event in United States Educational History	Event in Pennsylvania Educational History
1965	Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)	
1970		Beginning of State Testing – Educational Quality Assessment (EQA)
1972	Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA)	PARC lawsuit
1975	Education for All Handicapped Children Act (P.L. 94-142)	
1979		Armstrong v. Kline
1982	A Nation at Risk	
1983	A Place Called School	
1984		TELLS Test
1988	The Essential Components	
1990	Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)	
1994	Goals 2000: Educate America Act	
1995		Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) Testing
1999		Adoption of Academic Standards in Reading Writing, Speaking and Listening and Mathematics
2002	No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)	
2003		State defines its definition of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in accordance with NCLB
2004	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)	

Accountability requirements have power only when they result in change. In NCLB, the federal government has created legislation that has the possibility, or arguably inevitability, of making change in individual schools. Thus, NCLB has forced a certain power upon schools that

many educators never thought would happen: specific school-wide and classroom practices of educators are being called into question.

As a conclusion to this literature review, the researcher seeks to understand how this possibility or inevitability of change is influencing schools. Therefore, the focus of this study is the effect of the federal legislation, and the resulting state guidelines, on the practices in the schools in Pennsylvania. Public education may be required to change in order to meet accountability guidelines, but what *actually* is changing?

3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) charged states with establishing academic achievement and annual progress goals for school improvement, and establishing a way to identify schools needing improvement (United States Department of Education, 2004). To achieve this goal, Congress detailed the allocation of monies, to establish academic assessments and accountability systems, to support teacher preparation and training, to strengthen curriculum and to provide instructional materials. On paper, the guidelines appear simple. In reality, attaining the academic achievement goal for all is not.

In an August 2011 press release, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, “There is no magic bullet for fixing education and the best ideas will always come from the local level – from the hardworking men and women in our schools doing the hard work every day to educate our children.” (U. S. D. o. Education, 2011). While there may be no magic bullet, there *may be* changes teachers and administrators have made that have contributed to making a difference in the education of their students.

While schools have been accountable for their expenditures in the past, accountability for *individual* student achievement is a development in education reform. As schools are becoming more accountable for individual student results, how are schools changing to meet their new focus? What are teachers doing to meet the challenges articulated in NCLB?

This study described interventions in junior high and middle schools serving students in grades 6, 7, and 8 that could lead to improvement in student scores on the PSSA. The specific interventions examined will be those identified in each building's Corrective Action Plan -- Year I. Schools reaching Corrective Action status as identified by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are required to submit more detailed plans than schools not demonstrating AYP status for fewer years.

Because of the level of detail, this study focused on schools labeled Corrective Action I during the 2005/2006 school year. Moreover, the 2005/2006 academic year was the first year that a group of nonurban, middle level schools in the Commonwealth reached the Corrective Action rating since Federal law requiring the demonstration of AYP for all students. Because school-based teams, comprised of teachers and administrators, did not know the consequence of the failure to attain an improved status, and because additional supports from the Pennsylvania Department of Education were not readily offered for schools as they created their plans, this study is of the schools' independent plans based on self-reflection and attempts at intervention.

Schools in need of Corrective Action were given a tool to aid in their creation of their plan. This tool, entitled *Getting Results!TM Continuous School Improvement Planning Framework* (Fagbaya, 2006). In the case of this study, this framework was referred to as the "Getting Results! Framework."

This chapter describes the research questions, data collection procedures, and data analysis method used to study these Corrective Action Plans.

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To understand the process of creating the plans, the needs addressed in the plans, and the outcomes of the Corrective Action plans, the researcher sought to address following research questions:

- 1) How did schools utilize the *Getting Results!* Framework to formulate their Corrective Action Plans?
- 2) How did the school's Corrective Action Plan address the individual school's needs?
- 3) How did the school's Corrective Action Plan result in improvement as measured by the AYP targets?

3.2 SAMPLE

The subjects of this study were the schools that reached Corrective Action I during the school year of 2005-2006. This was the first academic year that nonurban, middle level schools in the Commonwealth reached the Corrective Action rating since Federal law requiring the demonstration of AYP for all students. School-based teams, comprised of teachers and administrators, did not know the consequence of the failure to attain an improved status. Additional supports from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) were not readily offered for schools as they created their plans. Consequently, these plans were believed to

reflect the schools' independent ideas based on their self-reflection and attempts at intervention. In other words, these plans are the purest demonstrations of an individual school's ability to identify and to address any concerns with the education provided to students.

This study made use of public documents. The researcher gathered these documents by requesting, in writing, a copy of the school's Corrective Action Plan through the Right-to-Know officer in each school district. While the researcher attempted to gain access to the Corrective Action Plan for each of the schools fitting the established criteria, not all school districts with schools in Corrective Action I in 2006-2007 were able to provide documentation of their plans. Thus, information from six of the 10 schools fitting these criteria was utilized in this study.

Furthermore, these schools serve students in grades 6, 7, and/or 8. Accordingly, schools not identified as being in need of Corrective Action I and who are not middle or junior high schools serving students in grades 6, 7, and 8 were excluded from this study. Additionally, urban schools, namely those in the two largest cities in Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, were excluded in this study. The challenges facing these schools are thought to make them dissimilar to other settings in the state. Further, no urban middle or junior high schools were identified as being at the level of Corrective Action I. The information included in the public documents and the names of the committee members who created the documents are matters of public records. This researcher will make no false claims to protect what was already public record².

² In order to protect those individuals involved in the creation of the public records referenced in this research, documentation of the specific plans are not included in the bibliography. However, copies of the Corrective Action Plans for the schools studied can be retrieved through the Open Records Officers in each of the school districts.

3.3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The methodological approach used in this study was a document analysis to examine policy implementation. Goertz (2006) explains that policy implementation analysis serves several functions, including examining effects of policies. In the case of this research, the investigator will scrutinize how schools planned to make changes mandated by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Goertz uses the policy implementation process of administration, adoption, micro-implementation, and technical validity to explain a policy's implementation. She further explains the local adoption of policy as a two-stage process. The first stage is the "regulatory framework that identifies the formal roles and responsibilities of each level of government and the institutions that fill those roles" (Goertz, 2006). The second stage "focuses on what the local adopter actually does" (Goertz, 2006).

By choosing to study the descriptions of anticipated change in the Corrective Action Plan, the researcher anticipated focusing on the second stage of Goertz's description of local adoption of policy. In other words, this was a study of what schools do when implementing a federal policy. Further, this was a study of what schools do when independently interpreting the federal policy.

3.4 PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING THE DATA ANALYSIS

In order to interpret the local adoption of policy, this researcher employed a system of coding. Saldana (2010) writes: "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that

symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.” The process of creating codes and coding data is a structured means of research. Saldana describes a three step process for coding: 1) Initial Coding, 2) Creating a Code Book, and 3) Evaluation Coding, that this researcher followed as her research procedure.

3.4.1 Initial Coding

To begin, the researcher followed Saldana’s description of pre-coding the Corrective Action Plans, searching for significant terms or statements. As she pre-coded, the researcher began a code book by creating a list of terms.

3.4.2 Code Book

After an initial review of the Corrective Action Plans, the researcher created a code book using descriptive coding. After organizing the terms alphabetically, she assigned an alphanumeric label to each term or phrase. As the researcher noted these terms in the plans, the researcher marked the plan with the appropriate alphanumeric label. In her codebook, the researcher compiled descriptions, applications, examples, and location in the plan of these terms. Using the code book, the researcher conducted a *second coding* of the Corrective Action Plans in order to begin making connections and identifying unanswered questions. For example, the researcher noted how the term was used in the context of a school’s plan. She then added to that memo when she

identified the use of the same term in another school's plan by annotating how that plan referenced the term.

3.4.3 Evaluation Coding

After conducting the second coding, the researcher completed a third round, or evaluation round, of coding. The researcher utilized the codes and the memos generated through the second coding process to analyze the plans and to further solidify the codes. Ultimately, the researcher used the data to make connections among the coded data, identifying commonalities among the schools of focus and unique methods of addressing areas of concern. The researcher noted the recurrent practices, compiling the information into an annotated table. Finally, the researcher compiled a description of the common practices based on the implementation and outcomes of these plans.

By coding these documents, the researcher identified similar and unique practices that may have resulted in improved student achievement.

3.5 LIMITATIONS

Limitations of this study result from the small number of schools and the level of detail of the Corrective Action Plans. First, only those nonurban, middle and junior high schools identified by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on the Corrective Action I level of school improvement during the 2005/2006 school year were studied. This was the first academic year that nonurban, middle level schools in the Commonwealth reached the Corrective Action rating since Federal

law requiring the demonstration of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all students. School-based teams, comprised of teachers and administrators, did not know the consequence of the failure to attain an improved status. Additional supports from the PDE were not readily offered for schools as they created their plans. Consequently, these documents reflected the school teams' independent ideas based on self-reflection and attempts at intervention.

Additionally, Corrective Action Plans created by school teams that did not teach students in grades 6, 7, or 8 exclusively were not addressed. Plans created by school teams at lower levels of the school improvement spectrum, namely those schools on the Warning or School Improvement levels, were not included in this study.

4 FINDINGS

Few schools met the criteria of being a middle or junior high school in need of corrective action in 2006. The small number of schools may suggest a uniqueness of the scenario; or the small number of schools may be like trailblazers sent to scout the scene in the age of NCLB. Either scenario made this study interesting to the researcher.

Again, only those nonurban, middle and junior high schools identified by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on the Corrective Action I level of school improvement during the 2005/2006 school year were studied. This was the first academic year that nonurban, middle level schools in the Commonwealth reached the Corrective Action rating since Federal law requiring the demonstration of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for all students.

Table 3 details the 2010-2011 demographic information for each of the schools included in this study. The only exception is information for school E, a school which was dissolved at the end of the 2006/2007 school year. According to the Open Records Officer for the school district, this middle school was created from the grades 7 and 8 portion of the previously grades 7, 8, and 9 building organization. Therefore, for the sake of comparison of the demographics represented in this study, information from the newly created middle school is included in this table.

Table 3*Comparison of Demographics*

	Number of students	Grade Span	Free and Reduced Lunch	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White
School A	1517	6-8	1005	278	1024	55	156
School B	1153	7-8	372	0	39	17	1090
School C	1250	6-8	382	62	249	32	892
School D	902	6-8	837	11	178	607	103
School E	842	7-8	669	13	782	8	36
School F	922	6-8	823	13	173	599	135

(P. D. o. Education, 2012)

One thing to be noted about the information in this chart is that each of these schools is a larger school, serving greater than 500 students. Thus, these schools have representative populations of students in one or many subgroups. A representative population in terms of NCLB is 40 or more students in a subgroup.

Knowing the demographics of the schools, what can be learned from these schools' plans? To answer this question, the researcher coded each school's plan as detailed in the next section of this paper.

4.1 UTILIZATION OF FRAMEWORK

The *Getting Results! Continuous School Improvement Planning Framework* (Fagbayi, 2006) was the framework identified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to be used by schools entering the school improvement process as identified by the school's non-attainment of AYP. Despite the fact that the Pennsylvania Department of Education mandated that this format be utilized in the creation of the plan for improvement, the document explains as part of the introduction that "Because the design emphasizes continuous improvement, this version can be used by all schools, regardless of each school's current level of performance" (Fagbayi, p. 3).

This framework consists of three parts, labeled as "Phases."

- Phase 1 – Organize and Review Data
- Phase 2 – Analyze Data and Discover "root cause"
- Phase 3 – Plan solution

As part of Phase 3, Plan Solution, an action sequence is outlined:

- Step 1: Data
- Step 2: Design
- Step 3: Delivery
- Step 4: Development of People
- Step 5: Documentation (Fagbayi, 2006)

Each of the six schools in this study followed the *Getting Results! Framework* in the creation of their plans.

To understand how the schools utilized the *Getting Results! Framework* to formulate their Corrective Action Plans, the researcher compared the schools to a sample copy of the

Getting Results! Framework. Three of the six schools used the plan exclusively, completing the sample tables for data organization and typing their responses into the actual sample documents. Three of the schools appear to have used the framework for structure, but did not utilize the actual sample documents. As a result, these schools offer additional information in their plan that was not included in the *Getting Results! Framework* loyal versions.

For example, school B's plan includes an extensive description of the school building and location; the demographics of the school; the academic and social programs offered; comparison among years of violence and weapon violations; and professional development initiatives. This description painted a portrait of the school before the plan for improvement was ever addressed. Further, by addressing more than the "numbers" data, this plan appeared to be more of a total school plan than other plans that were created adhering strictly to the *Getting Results! Framework*. Additionally, this plan did not directly document Phase 1 and Phase 2 for the *Getting Results! Framework*; data are provided in a less detailed way as part of the Phase 3, Step 1 Data section of the *Getting Results! Framework*.

The other two plans that did not strictly adhere to the *Getting Results! Framework* were the plans from the same school district: School D and School F. These plans did not appear to be as detailed as the plans created by schools strictly adhering to the *Getting Results! Framework* in that they did not include as detailed analysis of the testing data, both from the PSSA and the 4Sight assessments. Further, the Steps 2 and 3 of Phase 3, Design and Delivery, were not directly linked to the data presented. Rather, the Design and Delivery of the plans was based solely on Reading, Math, Participation in the PSSA, and Attendance. Explanations for the rationale of these *Design and Delivery* elements were not detailed.

For those schools that adhered directly to the framework, repetition of information was the norm as the *Getting Results! Framework* directed the plan creator to link the elements explicitly together.

In conclusion, this researcher drew from her observations that while the framework provided an initial plan for identifying concerns, schools that went beyond the framework did a more thorough self-evaluation.

4.2 ADDRESSING INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL'S NEEDS

In order to describe the commonalities of the results of the framework, this researcher used coding to identify the items references in each plan, and to compare the usage of terms among the plans.

The following section of this dissertation is a compilation of the terms coded in the study, a description of how they fit into the *Getting Results! Framework*, and a discussion of how the schools used the *Framework* to focus on their individual needs.

4.2.1 Phase 1 – Organize and Review Data

In this first section of the corrective action plans, the researcher coded the terms listed in Table 4 and labeled these terms as to the type of data they represented in the plans. As part of the *Getting Results! Framework*, the plan creators were asked to look at multiple data sources,

including summative assessments, formative assessments, perceptual data and demographic (Fagbayi, 2006).

Table 4*Phase 1 Coding Data Sources*

Term	Type of Data
Attendance	Demographic
Coherent Instructional/ Programmatic Roadmap/ Collaborative Inquiry	Locally Relevant
Curriculum	Locally Relevant
Demographic Data	Demographic
Disciplined Learning Environment	Locally Relevant
Economically Disadvantaged	Demographic
4Sight Data	Formative
Formative Assessments	Formative
Instruction	Locally Relevant
Professional Development	Locally Relevant
Progress Monitoring	Locally Relevant/ Formative
PSSA	Summative
Safe Learning Environment	Locally Relevant
Student Recognition/ Reward/ Award	Locally Relevant
Terra Nova	Summative
Transient Population	Locally Relevant

In each of the plans, references to summative assessments, aside from the PSSA's, were minimal. One building referenced the Terra Nova assessments and another building referenced the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test and the Stanford Achievement test, but no additional information about the results of this testing was provided in either of these plans.

The most common formative assessment was the 4Sight assessment. Every school in the study noted this assessment. The *Getting Results! Framework* encourages the use of this assessment by asking plan creators to include a detailed analysis of the scores on two worksheets in the Framework (Worksheet 3-E: Analyze 4Sight Data (Part 1) and Worksheet 3-F: Analyze 4Sight Data (Part 2)). Further, plan creators were to denote subscores for each of the benchmarks and to “describe your fact-based observations and questions about the current state of student learning and achievement based solely on 4Sight data” (Page 21).

In terms of perceptual data, each district responded uniquely. School A noted a transient population, Federal Lunch Program data to determine those students listed as Economically Disadvantaged, and IEP's. Further descriptions of those data sources were not provided in this section of School A's plan. School B referenced school violence reports in their introductory description of the school, a section coded as a safe learning environment by the researcher. Additionally, School B's plan describes student recognitions and rewards in this introduction to the school. School C included a reference to school climate, safety, and discipline data in this section of their plan with no further description. School D included names of curricular reading and math programs in their description of data related to their strengths. Meanwhile, schools E and F included no perceptual data in this section of their plans. Consequently, this researcher noted that each of the schools appeared to struggle with identification of pertinent perceptual

data. This perception by the researcher may have been due to limited explanations in the plans as to why this data was included, or pertinent.

In terms of demographic data, each school denoted information pertaining to attendance, PSSA participation rate, and students in each of the subgroups present in the school. This data also included percent proficient in terms of the students in each of the subgroups. Demographic data became important in terms of the plans as this data was used by the state and federal government to identify if a school was “failing.” If any subgroup, in addition to the total population in the school, did not demonstrate a proficiency percentage at or above the AYP Targets for the year, the school was identified as failing.

4.2.2 Phase 2 – Analyze Data and Discover “Root Cause”

While the purpose of Phase 1 of the *Getting Results! Framework* appears to be only the *compilation* of data, the purpose of Phase 2 is noted to be a substantive *analysis* of the data:

“Analyze the current state of student achievement, using data from multiple sources.

Find the underlying causes (“root causes”) of the current state of student achievement.”

(Fagbayi, 2006, p. 14)

From this phase, schools began to identify their areas of weakness and focus for their plans. In this section of the corrective action plans, the researcher coded the terms listed in Table 5.

Table 5***Phase 2 Coding Data Analysis and Root Cause***

Term	Analyze Data or “Root Cause”
Accelerated Interventions	Root Cause
Achievement Gap	Analyze Data
Alignment with Standards and Assessments	Root Cause
Best Practices	Root Cause
Coherent Instructional/ Programmatic Roadmap/ Collaborative Inquiry	Root Cause
Coaching	Root Cause
Climate	Root Cause
Disaggregated Group	Analyze Data
Disciplined Learning Environment	Root Cause
4Sight Data	Analyze Data
Faculty and Staff Communication	Root Cause
Formative Assessments	Analyze Data
Instruction	Root Cause
Instructional Materials, including technology	Root Cause
Instructional Program	Root Cause
Inclusion Models	Root Cause
Instructional Coaches	Root Cause
Match teacher skills/ experience with student learning needs	Root Cause
Motivation	Root Cause

Term	Analyze Data or “Root Cause”
Open-ended Response Results	Analyze Data
Parent Communication	Root Cause
Plan-Assess-Adjust Cycle	Root Cause
Program Implementation/Evaluation	Root Cause
Quality Leadership	Root Cause
Reading Apprenticeship/ Reading in the Content Areas	Root Cause
Rigor	Root Cause
Reading Comprehension	Root Cause
Rubrics	Root Cause
Safe Harbor	Analyze Data
Shared Values, Mission and Vision	Root Cause
Student Communication	Root Cause
Transient Population	Root Cause
Teacher Observations	Root Cause
Test Taking Strategy Instruction	Root Cause
Teacher Mentoring	Root Cause

Because there are two main tasks in this section of the plan, the researcher used these two tasks to do a final classification of the terms coded. The terms labeled “analyze data” represent those terms that have to do with the types of data or concerns arising in the data.

Achievement gap, safe harbor, open-ended response results, formative assessments, 4Sight data,

and *disaggregate group* appeared in the text of the plans in this section. School A noted that the achievement gap in math and reading among subgroups had not diminished from the previous year.

Safe harbor was referenced by all schools in terms of the target PSSA scores for their lowest subgroups. Schools could reach AYP through safe harbor by making a 10% increase in subgroup or total population scores if they did not directly reach the AYP target for the year.

- Four of the schools, in analyzing the scores for open-ended responses, noted that there was a need for better instruction for this test question style.
- All of the schools referenced analysis of 4Sight data, their only recorded formative assessment, in order to focus instruction.
- The term “disaggregate group” described the school teams’ use of data to address each subgroup’s areas of concern. In other words, in the analysis of data, the teams took into consideration the needs of the members in each of the disaggregate group identified by the state.
- In terms of the root causes identifiable in the plans, concerns could be grouped into several broad categories.

First, the need for better communication within the school could be linked to the coded terms *faculty and staff communication*, *student communication*, and *parent communication*. In the description of the need for faculty and staff communication, infrastructure needs of common *planning time*, *collaboration for better instruction*, and *communication of the parts of the plans* were a common theme. The need for students to gain ownership in their own learning and their assessment efforts were the focus of the student communication references in the plans.

Likewise, parent supports of student assessment efforts, as well as increased parental involvement initiatives were recognized as necessary to improve student achievement.

Second, a need for better instructional practices could be linked throughout the plans in coded terms of *best practices; coaching; instruction; instructional coaches; plan-assess-adjust cycle; reading apprenticeship; rubrics; teacher observations; and teacher mentoring*. While the purpose of this section of the *Getting Results! Framework* is note areas in need of focus, many of the schools used this section as an opportunity to voice initiatives they had previously begun. For example, in the School C's plan on page 15, the team noted, "The increase in benchmarks next year and the steady increase in our IEP subgroup make the task more challenging. However, we have made progress in improving best practices and aligning the core curriculum with state standards."

In School E's plan, questions in the reflections on the data spur the "root cause" idea of the need for the plan-assess-adjust cycle for instruction as the use of data to drive instruction becomes apparent in Step 3 Design in their plan. Reading instruction across the curriculum is defined as a root cause in every plan, as professional development in Reading Apprenticeship is articulated in the Step 3 Design portion of the plans.

Finally, teacher observations and teacher mentoring are referenced in four of the plans as ways to improve instructional practices. Schools A, D, and F note the need for additional teacher observations in order to address other root causes, while School C's plan notes a teacher mentoring program is already in place to provide teachers, staff, and administrators with timely, effective support and intervention.

Curricular cohesion was addressed in terms of *alignment with standards and assessments; coherent instructional/programmatic roadmap/ collaborative inquiry; instructional*

materials, including technology; instructional program; program implementation/evaluation; and reading comprehension. The overall impression the researcher gained from these references throughout the plans was that all of the schools were in the midst of the shift from autonomous classroom instruction to the development of a cohesive, standards-aligned curriculum. While some of the schools named specific remedial reading program curricula, the reference to *Reading Apprenticeship* suggests that primary reading instruction be done on the part of the curricular teachers. Additionally, the need for additional instructional materials was addressed in each plan.

The question of how to address students in need of extra support and/or remediation was articulated through the coded terms *accelerated interventions; inclusion models; match teacher skills/experience with student learning needs; rigor; transient population; and test-taking strategies.* While these terms were referenced throughout the plans as the teams articulated the achievement gaps of their disaggregate groups, access to rigorous instruction appeared to be the most common root cause. School A was the only school team to address their transient population. School B addressed the need for more inclusion opportunities for students with IEP's and delivery of content by content certified teachers. School C noted the need for accelerated interventions in order to close the achievement gap. In short, the schools studied articulated the need to provide more to those students who the data shows to be struggling.

School climate was a concern voiced through the coded terms *climate; disciplined learning environment; motivation; quality leadership; and shared values, mission, and vision.* While school climate may seem at odds with student achievement, school climate goes toward the creation of a safe learning environment. As noted in School F's plan, the need to establish a positive school climate to reduce suspensions directly relates to student achievement as

“Students who are suspended fall behind and have a harder time reentering the school process.”

School D’s plan notes the need for school-wide motivational practices to increase attendance, decrease the suspension rate, and increase PSSA, 4Sight, and classroom assessment results. In all, a school with quality leadership, shared values, mission, and vision, and discipline welcomes students for better learning.

In conclusion, the root causes articulated though the data analyses are specific in terms of areas to be address. However, in summary, a school looking to analyze their own root causes should pay special attention to each of the following areas: communication among stakeholders, instructional practices, curricular cohesion, remediation, and school climate.

4.2.3 Phase 3 -- Plan Solution

According to the Getting Results! Framework, the goal of Phase 3 is to “pull everything all together” by compiling the detailed action plan to be implemented by the school” (Fagbayi, 2006, p. 27) To accomplish this task, school teams were to complete the five steps:

- Step 1 Data
- Step 2 Design
- Step 3 Delivery
- Step 4 Development of People
- Step 5 Documentation

4.2.3.1 Step 1 Data

Every plan included in this study adhered entirely to the *Getting Results! Framework* for this section. The following is a report of the coded terms identified in each of the five sections of the Plan Solution phase of the plans, organized by steps, beginning with Step 1 Data found in Table 6.

Table 6***Step 1 Data Codes***

Plan Solution
Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Targets
Attendance
Data
Disaggregated Group
4Sight Data
Improvement Targets
Participation
Perceptual Data
Summative Assessments
Open-ended results

In each schools plan, Step 1 Data begins with the establishment of AYP targets set by NCLB. In disaggregated groups that were faced with the need for greater than a 10% gain in order to meet the 54% of all students proficient in reading and 45% of all students proficient in math, schools set the target at a 10% improvement. For example, School C set the following target on page 32: “Increase the number of proficient and advanced IEP students from 14.5% to 25% and All students from 66.4% to 70% as measured by the PSSA Reading test administered in 2007.” As improvement targets for reading, math, and attendance and PSSA participation were articulated as part of the *Getting Results! Framework*, each plan included targets in each of these

four categories. In School E's plan, targets for 4Sight testing in the categories of reading and math are also included.

Some schools included targets, or areas of concern to be addressed based on the individual needs of the school, in this section of their plans. For example, in School C's plan, it is noted: "Have at least 25% of student who decline to 'N' or 'U' status on our Character Grade perform the necessary community service hours to earn eligibility for extra-curricular activities."

In the construction of the plans, the targets noted in Step 1 are again referenced for each of the design elements as a demonstration of plan alignment. In other words, the targets, or goals for change, gave purpose to the actions. Changes were undertaken to take meet the needs listed as targets, not without reason. Physically listing the targets with the design elements to address the concerns lends organization and clarity as to how a school planned to tackle their issue.

4.2.3.2 Step 2 Design

Step 2 Design of the *Getting Results! Framework* answers the question: "Where do we want to go next?" (Fagbayi, 2006, p. 35) The Framework asks school teams to consider two to four research-based or promising strategies that they plan to implement. The schools in this study referenced design elements that were coded with the terms listed in Table 7 by the researcher.

Table 7***Step 2 Design Codes***

Plan Solution
Coherent Instructional/ Programmatic Roadmap/Collaborative Inquiry
Alignment with Standards and Assessments
Climate
Effort
Subgroup Specificity
Instructional Materials, including technology
Instructional Program
Intervention Strategies
Interventions (safety nets)
Inclusion Models

The Design elements of the schools' plans are aligned to each school's need for "root cause" solutions. In the researcher's coding of the design elements, the five common themes again arose: communication, instructional practices, curricular cohesion, remediation, and school climate. These Design elements were further defined in each school's plan under the delivery element of the *Getting Results! Framework*.

4.2.3.3 Step 3 Delivery

In the *Getting Results! Framework*, Step 3 Delivery is meant to answer the question, “How are we going to get there?” The framework provides a table structured for responses to *what needs to be done, by when, by whom, with what, and evidence of effectiveness*. The researcher coded responses to these topics in the categories listed in Table 8.

Table 8

Step 3 Delivery Codes

Plan Solution
Alignment with Standards and Assessments
Artful Use of Infrastructure
Climate
Differentiated Instruction
Pennsylvania Performance Index
Policy
Curriculum
Block Scheduling
Better Answer Protocol
Career Awareness
Character Education
Extended Day/Year activities
Faculty and Staff Communication
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Plan Solution
Instructional Leadership
Tutoring
Parent Communication
Plan-Assess-Adjust Cycle
Program/Implementation Evaluation
Research-based
Soar to Success
Student Support Programs

Each plan directly linked the Delivery elements with the target to be addressed. Elaboration of these elements was not present in any of the plans.

4.2.3.4 Step 4 Development of People

In this section of the Getting Results! Framework, planning teams were to address the question: “What additional skills/training/capacity-building do we need?” Each plan included a list of dates when school planning committees would address the learning needs of its professionals.

Topics to be addressed where the coded terms listed in Table 9 were labeled in the plans.

Table 9***Step 4 – Development of People***

Plan Solution
Professional Development
Career Awareness
Character Education
Development of People
Learning Walks
Qualified Teachers
Quality Leadership
Quality Teaching
Teacher Observation

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to summarize the individual needs of the schools in comparison to each other, the need to provide support to classroom teachers in order to ensure instructional practices, career preparation for students, and a positive school climate was apparent in all of the schools' professional development plans. Those elements identified in Step 4 can be directly linked to the researcher's five common themes: communication, instructional practices, curricular cohesion, remediation, and school climate.

4.2.3.5 Step 5 Documentation

The Documentation section of each of the plans is the least detailed section of any of the plans. According to the *Getting Results! Framework*, Step 5: Documentation, “Define the milestones of progress you will monitor at specific time-intervals. Identify milestones that relate to student learning and achievement, as well as milestones that track educational programs and professional practice. Each milestone must be defined up front” (Fagbayi, 2006, p. 39)

On the whole, the plans offered little in terms of documentation of their plans. Each plan included a sign off page titled, “Assurance of Quality and Accountability.” This page asked the Secretary of Education and PDE to grant formal approval for the plan. In School B’s plan, a statement on page 43 notes, “Completion of this plan will be documented as each step of the delivery component is completed.” With the statement is a list of other documents to be referenced, if needed, including memos on procedures, grading descriptions, handbooks, and strategic plans. These items are categorized into the four categories articulated for Strategic Plan alignment: quality teaching, quality leadership, artful use of infrastructure, and continuous learning ethic.

It is noteworthy that no other school’s plan offers more than a cursory reference to on-going attempts for improvement. In this researcher’s opinion, this section could successfully be cut from the plans with little effect.

4.3 RESULTS OF THE PLANS

The plans themselves cannot be credited with changes in PSSA test scores. On the other hand, the extensive preparation and self-study that went into developing the plans could possibly account for some changes in the PSSA results. Table 10 displays the levels of AYP accountability each school achieved from 2007 – 2012.

Table 10

AYP Results 2007-2012

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
School A	Corrective Action 2 (1 st year)	Corrective Action (2 nd year)	Making Progress	Corrective Action (2 nd year)	Corrective Action (3rd year)	Corrective Action (4 th year)
School B	Making Progress	AYP	AYP	AYP	AYP	Warning
School C	Corrective Action 2 (1 st year)	Making Progress	AYP	AYP	Warning	School Improvement I
School D	Corrective Action 2 (1 st year)	Corrective Action (2 nd year)	Corrective Action (3rd year)	Corrective Action (4 th year)	Corrective Action (5 th year)	Corrective Action (6 th year)
School E³	*	*	*	*	*	*
School F	Corrective Action 2 (1 st year)	Corrective Action (2 nd year)	Corrective Action (3rd year)	Corrective Action (4 th year)	Corrective Action (5 th year)	Corrective Action (6 th year)

Only two of the schools, School B and School C, managed to make AYP after being identified as failing schools. One school, School C, followed the *Getting Results!* Framework explicitly. The other, school B, used the framework, but the team identified as the creators of the

³ School E is the school that no longer existed after 2006. Thus, results for this particular school are not available.

plan went beyond the plan in its self-analysis. What is evident from this data is that as the proficiency levels increased, especially in 2012, all of the schools are again struggling.

5 DISCUSSION

The need for accountability in schools did not begin in 2001 with the NCLB legislation. What *did* begin in 2001 were the nationwide efforts for change in the modern school. But what do these changes look like at the student level? What really is changing about the way we educate students?

This study was an analysis of the planned efforts of six middle/junior high schools deemed in need of change based on their inability to meet AYP targets. Each school's plan was unique. Though created through the use of a common framework, the plans did not provide a single common solution. What the researcher was able to determine were the five common areas of focus that could be used by any school for its own self-evaluation. These areas of focus include: Communication, Instructional Practices, Curricular Cohesion, Remediation/Safety Nets, and School Climate.

Communication in schools may seem an odd area of focus because without it, no learning would occur. Teachers must be able to communicate with their students. However, communicating with students needs to not be the only communication. Teachers need to communicate with parents in order to foster the understanding about an individual student's needs by all stakeholders. If a student is struggling, parents need to be made aware by the classroom teacher. Thus, when remediation needs to be put into place for a student, parents are

less likely to push back or to keep their child from participating as they have a better understanding of their student's needs.

Communication within the school is the way teachers and administrators can improve instructional practices and ensure curricular cohesion. Teachers come to their classrooms with a set of instructional tools collected through their own educational experiences. Honing these tools takes feedback and additional professional development. School administrators need to be the catalyst for these opportunities. By assuming that teachers are able to develop their instructional practices independently, school administrators risk leading a group lacking what they need to address the challenges in the classroom. In this study, school teams struggled to identify specific professional development to provide to staff to improve instructional practices. In turn, this is an area that a school leader may need to look outside of the school for resources to assist with professional development. What this study has demonstrated to the researcher is that classroom teachers may not be the experts when it comes to best instructional practices and developing curricular cohesion.

Throughout this study, the researcher noted that while school teams identified a need for remediation and safety net plans, definitive plans were not apparent. The Researcher identified this as an overwhelming area of concern because if teachers and administrators are unable to determine what to do if a student is not achieving, how can they turn concern into action? Targeted remediation techniques may be a professional development topic for every school and may be the missing link in schools in need of remediation on the whole.

In this researcher's opinion, teaching in a school in need of remediation would be intense. Negative publicity puts the school in spotlight, opening every action up to constant criticism. Focusing on the needs of each student, in terms of larger schools of focus in this study, would

translate into focusing on the needs of at least 140 students per teacher, As teaching to the whole is no longer a good option, the teacher would need to spend adequate time with each student. Teachers in the assessed areas of math, English, and science function under the most intense microscope because though it takes an entire school to educate a child, those content teachers are the ones named as the teacher of record when the students perform or do not perform. Needless to say, school climate in a failing school can be a major problem.

In this research, the school that managed to make and continue to make AYP for the longest period of time based on AYP results was School B. It is to be noted that School B was the only school that used a school wide team to create their plan as noted by the names of the school improvement committee. This researcher ventures to draw a connection between the two: in a school where the climate includes the combined and sustained efforts of the entire staff, opportunities for the greatest change can occur.

Using these five areas of focus, any school team should be able to conduct a self-analysis of their own practices. When weaknesses are identified, school leaders should seek to create a plan for addressing those weaknesses. This plan will most likely need to include resources from beyond the school itself as a school is only as good as its school team. By regularly assessing and addressing their areas of weakness, school teams should not be faced with a yearly surprise when results of state testing are announced. Further, if an unsatisfactory outcome is presented, a school leader should be immediately able to address the concerns as a procedure for regular self-assessment, professional development, and adjustment to instruction will exist.

Further, there is no one solution to “fixing” our schools. The needs of each school are too diverse. However, development of a solid, rigorous curriculum, the use of a variety of instructional practices to convey that curriculum to all students, and the development and use of

safety nets for students mean the beginnings of a good school. Enacting these in a school where the climate is one of communication and shared responsibility for student learning means moving a school to a learning environment where all students, regardless of diversity, can find success in learning.

5.1 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires schools to create plans for improvement if they demonstrate a failure to meet AYP targets for two or more years. One implication for policy and practice coming from this study is the suggestion for *all* schools to engage in a yearly self-analysis of data and practices. Without such thoughtful analysis, complacency can be a serious threat.

Schools teams should take their PSSA and any other available data, and systematically analyze it, examining the data for fluctuations, both between classes and in the same class of students. Further, analysis of scores of individual students can assist with planning instructional program. Through this analysis, communication is essential among instructors, with parents, and with each student. Together, the stakeholders can confirm curricular cohesion and put any necessary safety nets in place. In completing this self-analysis, school teams, not just school leaders, have the greatest chance of keeping the need for on-going change at the forefront.

Further, each school should have a leadership team that meets regularly to reflect on what is working and what is not working in the school. The leadership team's focus should be the

instructional practices and curricular cohesion in all classrooms. The team should include not only the school leaders, but also teachers. Teachers, by nature of their jobs, have the greatest ability to make changes with impact on individual student learning. Because of their direct knowledge of the students, they are also skilled at identifying what is and is not working in the classroom for each student. However, school leaders are needed to assist with identifying systemic issues and to assist with sharing best practices among teachers. Further, school leaders need to be able to determine when the expertise of their staff has reached its limits and then seek additional support for curriculum and instruction from beyond the school itself.

Analysis of programs should be on-going. While PSSA assessments are completed only once a year, regular analysis of local assessments should be a mechanism of discovering the strengths and weaknesses of the students' abilities and instruction of the content. In this study, each of the schooled used at least 4Sight testing throughout the school year to gain insight to growth on content aligned to the PSSA assessed material. Without on-going analysis, the need for safety nets and remediation for individual students may not be identified in time to make an impact on student's overall learning and the PDE established target of a year's worth of growth each year.

School leaders should be the guides for curricular cohesion. Teachers may be the experts in their own classrooms. Overseers of the entire school, school leaders are the people most likely to see what is going on in all classrooms. School leaders, like those noted in the plans for Schools A and C, can include content area coaches as well as administrators. Knowing if students are instructed with the defined, standards-aligned curriculum is as important as knowing if instructional practices meet the needs of the students. School leaders can help to draw what is happening in one classroom to another.

In conducting this study, a recurrent theme was a cohesive curriculum that students, most often those in the IEP subgroup, could access. Curriculum should be linked among grades and classrooms. If it is not, immediate re-alignment is necessary in order to guarantee that all students have access to a rigorous, cohesive curriculum. Otherwise, students do not have the opportunity to demonstrate understanding of grade level content as they may never have been exposed to such content. In this study, each of the schools had a unique way of addressing the need for better access to rigorous curriculum. What was common was the realization of the need itself.

Beyond the standard curriculum, creation of plans to address the needs of those students needing remediation, or safety nets, need to be both practical and on-going. While many remediation steps can occur within the classroom, the school needs to create a more detailed plan for when a student falls significantly behind. This plan may include increased instructional time in the area of weakness or tutoring, as it did in all of the plans presented in this study. The goal should be keeping all students meeting, at minimum, the grade level requirements each year. It is to be noted, however, that self-created improvement plans are only as good as their authors and their knowledge. It is this researchers' belief that outside resources, such as those provided by the intermediate units and the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, should be utilized by school leaders to assist with identifying areas of action and potential supports.

Last, school leaders must continually engage in understanding the climate in the school.. School improvement can be a stressful endeavor, and if the climate of the school is one counterproductive to the efforts of the team, significant improvements are unlikely to occur. When analyzing the climate, school leaders must look at the students, the staff, and the parents,

as well as themselves. Understanding the relationships among the stakeholders will better enable a school leader to plan strategically. Then, engaging stakeholders to make changes may result in greater accomplishment as the stakeholders are more likely to buy into something that they have created.

With the advent of NCLB, schools are challenged to improve on a yearly basis. As the targets for achievement continue to climb, more important to remember is that the educational needs of today's students are not the same as the needs of students of the future. Schools are creating the leaders and creators of technologies and understanding today's innovators have not yet imaged. If school systems become accustomed to striving for constant improvement, making change in the future will not be such a Herculean task.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focused on middle and junior high schools identified as being in need of Corrective Action. These schools were tasked to create Corrective Action plans using the *Getting Results! Framework for School Improvement* (Fagbayi, 2006). The study of these plans was meant to demonstrate how schools addressed the need for change at the practical level.

One suggestion for further study would be to further interview the teams responsible for the creation of each school's plan. From these interviews, researchers may be able to further determine what was most beneficial from the changes proposed in these plans, as well as what things were deemed fruitless efforts.

Another suggestion for further study would be a broader study, focused on K-12 programs. While this study focused on schools in the transitional period between elementary and secondary, a broader scope may help to identify the origin of a schools' struggle, as students entering a middle or junior high school come prepared at a certain level. Achievement gaps do not happen overnight. Future researchers' ability to analyze the most effective periods to provide intervention may lead to a better overall educational system.

Lastly, another opportunity for study would be a school analysis, or case study, focused on the five main categories of root causes identified in the analysis of these plans: communication, instructional practices, curricular cohesion, remediation, and school climate. By addressing those things contributing to these root causes, a school could potentially find great improvement in their instructional program and student learning.

What is for certain is that further study of what is working in today's schools is needed. Despite increased efforts to improve student achievement, public schools are tasked with ever growing challenges. Daily practitioners need the assistance of researchers who are separate from the daily barrage of events that occur in every school in order to look at their school with another lens. While the solutions to each schools "root causes" may be unique, the big picture challenges and solutions schools face are universal.

5.3 CONCLUSION

School accountability is not a new phenomenon in America's schools as its roots reach to the very start. The modern public schools were established to meet the needs of a growing

population, namely as providers of social services including health programs, community activities, and playgrounds. As schools entered the Industrial Age, accountability took the form of preparation for vocation. As social awareness moved to the forefront, access and equality in education for all became the goal. Ultimately, the goal of global competitiveness, first in the Space Race during the Cold War and then in the realization of global standing with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, moved to the forefront. In short, we, as a nation, strive to be the best, and in doing so, we want the best *for* our students and the best *from* our students. The problem becomes determining what “the best” actually entails.

While it is easy for one to say that our American schools are failing our students, our communities, and our nation, determining the causes and the solutions of the problem are not easy. Federal legislators enacted the NCLB Act of 2001, stating that by setting the goal that all children reach proficiency, all children *would* reach proficiency. The challenges for schools to meet the requirements in this Act became a Herculean Task.

The goals of NCLB may seem to be an impossible mission. However, there may be changes that teachers and administrators have made resulting in a better education for their students. In this study, the researcher sought to understand what it was schools declared “failing” did to attempt school improvement. While no two schools did exactly the same thing to meet their targets, all of the school addressed each of the same areas of concern: communication, instructional practices, curricular cohesion, remediation, and school climate. The challenge this research presents to members in her field is to develop a way for school teams to learn from each other.

School teams, themselves, may not be able to make all students proficient in a defined period of time. They *can* continue to strive to do the best they can for each individual student.

The stated goals of *No Child Left Behind* may continue to be elusive, but school communities, by carefully reflecting and refining on their practices, may be better able to prepare students to meet the needs of an every changing global society.

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