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# Principal Perceptions of their Preparedness and the Preparedness of their Staff to Deal with Students of Poverty in the Classroom

Lisa Anne Donmoyer  
*Seton Hall University*

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PRINCIPAL PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PREPAREDNESS AND THE  
PREPAREDNESS OF THEIR STAFF TO DEAL WITH STUDENST OF POVERTY IN  
THE CLASSROOM

BY

LISA ANNE DONMOYER

Dissertation Committee

Dr. Daniel Gutmore, Ph.D.  
Dr. Elaine Walker, Ph.D.  
Dr. Beverly Pish, Ph.D.  
Dr. Hays B. Lantz, Jr., Ph.D.

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
Seton Hall University

2009

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The journey toward my doctorate began when I took my first step to becoming an educator. I entered college with every intention of becoming a lawyer despite being from a two educator household. My mother taught elementary school and my father taught high school. My father would often say of his students that my mother began them and he finished them. It wasn't until my sophomore year that I realized that the law was not my calling. I was to be an educator. I switched my major and began my journey of a thousand steps.

During this journey, many people have touched my life. First and foremost, I wish to acknowledge my parents, Margaret and Gerald Donmoyer. They were truly my first teachers, not only in school but in life. My father's love of the written word and my mother's love of people combined to produce a daughter who loved to learn and to share that love with others. I also wish to acknowledge my brother, Keith and his family, his wife Lynn and my niece Kristen and nephews Matt and Adam. I am not sure they completely understand what compels me to earn this degree but their support and encouragement has this journey easier to bear. I hope that my niece and nephews come to appreciate the gift of learning and maybe then they will understand why I continue to love to learn.

I can truly say that the journey to complete this dissertation would not have been the same without the support and encouragement of my mentor, Dr. Daniel Gutmore. I realize that working with me has been a frustrating experience but during it Dr. Gutmore has been the consummate professional. His wisdom and guidance kept me focused and grounded and made completing this work meaningful. Thank you, Dr. Gutmore, for

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OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Doctoral Candidate, **Lisa Donmoyer**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Spring Semester 2009**.

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE  
(please sign and date beside your name)

Mentor:

Dr. Daniel Gutmore

*Daniel Gutmore*

Committee Member:

Dr. Elaine Walker

*Elaine M. Walker*

Committee Member:

Dr. Hays Lantz, Jr.

*Letter attached*

Committee Member:

Dr. Beverly Pish

*Beverly Pish*

External Reader:

\_\_\_\_\_

The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

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## ABSTRACT

### Principal Perceptions of Their Preparedness and the Preparedness of Their Staff to Deal with Student of Poverty in the Classroom

By all accounts, it is getting more and more difficult to conduct the business of education. One of the reasons is that the number of students who bring the middle class culture with them is decreasing while students who bring a culture of poverty are increasing. The incidence of child poverty in the United States is two to three times higher than most other major western industrialized nations. Though children comprise only 25.6 percent of the total population, they disproportionately represent 35.1 percent of the poor.

Unfortunately, teachers are often not prepared to provide students from minority and poverty backgrounds with the resources they need to be successful in school. At both the state and local level, there is a significant achievement gap on all assessments between FARMS (free and reduced meals) students and their non-FARMS contemporaries. If the goal of education is to equitably educate all students, then the data shows that work needs to be done to improve the achievement of low-income students.

In this study, principals were interviewed to ascertain their perceptions of their own knowledge and professional preparation and the knowledge and preparation of their staff to deal with students of poverty in the classroom.

When talking about what it takes to meet the needs of students from poverty, the principals were in agreement that building relationships with the students is one of the most important pieces of the puzzle along with having high expectations. Both

resurfaced when the principals were asked what they thought their teachers would identify as needing to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty.

The findings indicate that principals are aware there is an issue surrounding level and depth of their preparation and the preparation of their staff to deal with students from poverty in the classroom. They also recognize that additional training for themselves and their staff is the way to mitigate this issue and that this training needs to focus on awareness and understanding of economic diversity and the classroom strategies and practices that positively impact achievement of students from poverty.

never losing patience with me. I would also to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Elaine Walker, Dr. Beverly Pish and Dr. Hays B. Lantz, Jr. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Beverly as she spent an entire Saturday afternoon helping me formulate my interview questions. Without those questions, my research would not have existed. Thank you so much Beverly! As for H.B., he was the first person in my educational career that encouraged me to pursue a doctorate. While working for him for two years, I learned more about being a caring and educated professional than I had during the previous 10 years of my career. Your respect and friendship mean the world to me. Thank you for being a wonderful mentor.

Nine years ago, my career journey brought me to Talbot County Public Schools. Little did I realize when I began there that I would make so many friends who mean so much to me. Each has listened as I lamented about the work I had to complete. They have laughed with me and cried with me. I would never have been able to complete this work without their constant support and unabashed encouragement. My team of supporters and cheerleaders includes Regina, Liz, Pam C., Joanne, Kathy, Sherry, Jody, Judy, Joan, Mary Lou, Joyce, Janet, Theresa, and Donna. To my fellow doctoral students Pam H. and Marcia, I hope you finish your journey in the near future and that it brings you as much satisfaction and joy as it has brought me.

During this entire journey, it has been easy to see God's hand in the plan of my life as he led me to Seton Hall University to complete my capstone degree. I am convinced that God made sure that I was part of Cohort IX. I come from a small family but, over time, my family expanded to include all the members of my cohort. Each is unique and very special to me but some have come to touch my life more profoundly. Wade and



Curtis, both of you embody what it means to be a caring educator and a loving family man. Thank you for continuing to part of my life. Chris, I can honestly say that I would not have completed this dissertation if you hadn't been there to push and encourage me. I owe you more than you will ever know. Lastly, to Octavia and Tawana who became the sisters I never had, I love both of you. I cherish our friendship and hope that we will continue to be meaningful parts of each other's lives. You have made this all worthwhile. As Isadora James poetically states, "A sister is a gift to the heart, a friend to the spirit, a golden thread to the meaning of life." Thank you my sisters, my friends and my gifts!

## DEDICATIONS

William Goldsmith Brown said, “The sweetest sounds to mortals given are heard in mother, home, and heaven.” I wish to dedicate this work to the memory of my mother, Margaret Donmoyer, who passed away before she could see me complete my journey. “Sidder” as she was called by all who knew and loved her was my greatest cheerleader. She wanted everything for her only daughter and did whatever she could to make sure I got it. Graduating from Seton Hall University as Dr. Lisa Donmoyer will be one of the greatest accomplishments of my life. While I know my mother will be with me in spirit on that day, it saddens me that she will not be the first person I hug after I receive my degree. Thank you, Mom, for loving me, encouraging me and making me the person I am today. I hope that I make you proud.

In the ying and yang of life, there cannot be one half without the other. I must also dedicate this to the other half of my parents, my father Jerry. When my mother passed away, my father had to step in and assume the role as my cheerleader. Every Sunday for the last two years, my father has asked me how much I work I had finished. Many Sundays, I had to tell him “none”. Finally, I can tell him that I am finished. Thank you, Dad, for continuing to ask. You will be the first person I hug after I get my degree.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this to the Roberts family, Bill, Jackie, Debbie and Janaya. They have showed me what it means to face life’s struggle for a better life with dignity. They have welcomed me into their home and made me feel part of their family. That feeling of love and belonging transcends economic and social boundaries. You have brought so much joy and laughter into my life. Thank you for being my family in Maryland.

Dedicated to Margaret "Sidder" Donmoyer  
1936-2006

"Everything I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."  
Abraham Lincoln

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Poverty and Education

The United States is considered by many around the world to be the wealthiest nation on the planet. Every day, people from around the world arrive on the shores of the United States to embark on their journey toward the American dream. Data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC), the source of official poverty estimates, paints a different picture. In 2004, 37 million people were in poverty. This represents 12.7 percent of the U.S. population. For children under the age of 18, the poverty rate is 17.6 percent. In the United States, a person is considered to be living in poverty if his/her annual income before taxes and other deductions falls below official poverty thresholds established for that person's family size and composition. The poverty thresholds were established in the mid-1960's and are adjusted annually to reflect inflation.

“The statistics on children who live in poverty portray a nation struggling to keep up with the problem and, perhaps, not fully committed to solving it.” (Renchler, 1993, p. 1) The incidence of child poverty in the United States is two to three times higher than most other major western industrialized nations. Determining a measure of poverty that accurately portrays the plight of children in terms of their economic resources is difficult. A child's well-being depends both on how many resources are available to his/her family and on how the adults in the family allocate those resources among family members. Of

the 37 million people in poverty, 13 million are children under the age of 18. (U. S. Census Bureau, 2005) Though children are only 25.6 percent of the total population, they disproportionately represent 35.1 percent of the poor. Betson and Michael (1997) found that poverty rates for children have been consistently higher than that of adults since the late 1950's. Children under the age of six are particularly vulnerable to poverty, especially if they live in a single parent home headed by a female. The National Poverty Center (2003) reports 18.2 percent of children under the age of six live in poverty, while 48.9 percent of children under age six who live in a female-headed household were poor. Most of the impoverished children are minorities. 34.1 percent are African American, 29.7 percent are Hispanic, 12.5 percent are Asian and 31.9 percent are Native American. "These data reveal a society populated increasingly by groups of citizens that historically have not fared well in this nation, especially ethnic minorities and citizens for whom English is a second language. Concomitantly, the percentage of youngsters affected by the ills of the world in which they live – for example – poverty, unemployment illiteracy, crime drug addiction, malnutrition and poor physical health – is increasing." (Bainbridge & Lasley II, 2002, p. 3)

The price that children pay for being born into poverty is tremendous. Rothstein (as cited in Orfield & Lee, 2005) states that, "Studies show that poverty is strongly related to everything from a child's physical development to the family's ability to stay in a neighborhood long enough so that a school might have an effect on a student." Low socio-economic status (SES) children living in inner cities are more like to have educationally damaging circumstances as part of their life experiences. They are often subjected to exposure to drugs or AIDS, low birth weight or poor nutrition. They are



seven times more likely to be victims of abuse or neglect. Any combination of these experiences can put poor students at risk for lower academic achievement. “Far more relevant than race and gender in predicting academic achievement are family socioeconomics and the education level of students’ parents.” (Bainbridge & Lasley II, 2002, p. 2)

#### Statement of the Problem

By all accounts, it is getting more and more difficult to conduct the business of education. One of the reasons is that the number of students who bring the middle class culture with them is decreasing while students who bring a culture of poverty are increasing. At present, U.S. schools are 41 percent non-white. By 2050, non-Hispanic whites will constitute only 50 percent of the population of the United States compared to 69.4 percent now. By 2030, over half of all students in schools will be children of color. One in five students will be born into poverty. Currently in the United States, disproportionality exists along gender, racial and socioeconomic lines when it comes to achievement, discipline and dropout rates. Orfield and Lee (2005) report that the highest drop out rates occur in segregated high poverty schools. “For the high school class of 2002, almost a third of the high schools that were more than 50 percent minority graduated less than half of their class.” (Orfield & Lee, p. 6) Nationally in 2001, there was an 18.4 percent gap in the graduation rates between districts of high and low proportions of low income students. As the demographics of the United States change, it stands to reason that this gap will increase.

Unfortunately, teachers are often not prepared to provide students from minority and poverty backgrounds with the resources they need to be successful in school. This is

particularly true for the students who live in poverty. “While school policies often demand that race issues (which similarly prevent people from reaching their potential) be taught and addressed, we do not have the same understanding of social class issues that also hinder achievement.” (Beegle, 2003, p. 17) Since a clear definition of generational poverty does not exist in the literature, stereotypes and misunderstandings abound. Poverty exists in a variety of forms including working class, temporary, situational, depression-era and immigrant. All fall under the classification of poverty but each presents its inhabitants with unique challenges and views of the world. A person born into generational poverty who is uneducated and whose peers are also from poverty will have different challenges as compared to an educated family that finds itself in situational or temporary poverty because of unemployment.

Students in poverty need to connect with adults in a meaningful way so that they are able to externalize their poverty conditions. Students that internalize these conditions as individual inadequacies are often at a severe disadvantage when it comes to self-esteem, educational goals and the ability to request help. Many teachers do not recognize the challenges of poverty nor are they prepared to provide the kind of guidance and support that will aid students in overcoming their situation. In a study of successful adults who escaped generational poverty, which is defined as being in poverty for two or more generations, Beegle (2003) found that 94% of participants felt that teachers did not know what to do with students like them. The teachers’ lack of understanding of the experiences these participants had growing up made them feel like they did not belong in school. Payne (1996) identifies four areas where students of poverty need support; 1) cognitive structures, 2) appropriate relationships, 3) goal-setting opportunities, and 4)

appropriate instruction in both content and discipline. “We must adapt and flex our instruction to meet the needs of these students, cognitive strategies and support need to be integrated with insistence and expectations.” (Payne, p. 107)

Many policies that are present in today’s schools punish students for their poverty. Thousands of early grade students fail because they do not turn in homework. Teachers may not be aware of the reason behind the lack of homework. It is assumed that there is some personal defect in the student instead of thinking about the situation in which they live. These students are often seen as indifferent to their education. “The messages of personal deficiency and hopelessness from society in general are echoed in the halls of our schools and exacerbated by silence about the causes of poverty and the skills and resources needed to overcome them.” (Beegle, 2003, p. 17)

At the state level in 2001, 83,352 students ages 5-17 were considered living in poverty. This represents 8.4 percent of the population of the state. In 2002, that number grew to 96,049 or 9.8 percent. At the school system level in 2001, 465 out of approximately 4,000 students were classified as living in poverty. This is equivalent to 11.6 percent of all students. In 2002, the number grew to 521, which represents 13 percent. Although these numbers are not extremely large by comparison, this data supports the notion that more students living in poverty are entering schools.

The federal *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation requires states to track reading and mathematics data on students in grades 3-12. States and local school systems must track this data for a variety of subgroups of students. One of the federally mandated subgroups is FARMS (free or reduced meals) students. Additionally, the state of Maryland requires the passage of four high school assessments (Algebra, English 10,

Biology and Government) for graduation. Achievement on these assessments is tracked for the same subgroups required by the federal legislation. What does the data show about the achievement of these students? At both the state and local level, there is a significant achievement gap on all assessments between FARMS students and their non-FARMS contemporaries. At the state level on federally mandated assessments, there is an overall 28.5 percentage point difference between the achievement of FARMS and non-FARMS students. In Talbot County, the gap is 23.7 percentage points. On the state-mandated high school assessments, the gap between FARMS and non-FARMS students is 27.4 percentage points. At the local level, the gap drops slightly to 25.6 percentage points.

If the goal of education is to equitably educate all students, then the data shows that work needs to be done to improve the achievement of low-income students. These data are not unique. The achievement gap is well documented. “The National Assessment of Educational Progress consistently reports that the average 8<sup>th</sup> grade minority student performs at about the level of the average 4<sup>th</sup> grade white student.” (Barton, 2004, p. 9) School system officials and school-based leaders are all struggling to find an answer to close this gap. It is important to find out if there is a relationship between culturally responsive teaching and a positive effect achievement of students from a culture of poverty. Barton challenges educators to take responsibility and accountability for improving schools when and where they can.

The research suggests that teacher effectiveness can be one of the single biggest factors that are within the purview of the school for improving achievement. (Carey, 2004; Haycock, 1998; Johnson et al., 2004; Learning First Alliance, 2005; Marzano et al.,

2001; National Partnership For Teaching in At-Risk Schools, 2005; Tomlinson, 2003) It is an influence bigger than race, poverty or any other factors that can doom students to failure. Poor and minority students are highly dependent on their teachers. “In the hands of our best teachers, the effects of poverty and institutional racism melt away, allowing these students to soar to the same heights as young Americans from more advantaged homes. But if they remain in the hands of under qualified teachers, poor and minority students will continue to fulfill society’s limited expectations of them.” (Haycock, 1998, p. 11)

A Dallas study of the placement of students with effective and ineffective teachers and their resulting 7<sup>th</sup> grade math achievement showed dramatic results. The National Partnership defines effective teachers as “those who are able to consistently assist their students in making significant academic progress. To do this, teachers must have a command of their subject matter, understand how students learn, and have a broad repertoire of teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students.” (National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, p. 6) Previously low-achieving students who were assigned to effective teachers for three years passed the state mathematics test at a rate of 90 percent. By contrast, only 42 percent of students assigned to ineffective teachers passed the test. The pattern was repeated in other grades and subjects. These data show that low-performing students are capable of catching up to their peers when assigned to effective teachers. The authors of the Dallas study concluded that, “A sequence of ineffective teachers with a student already low achieving is educationally deadly.” (Carey, 2004, p. 11)

Low achievement among low income students places often insurmountable limits on the lifetime opportunities for millions of American students. Yet it is these students, the ones that rely most on schools for their learning, that are the least likely to have fully qualified teachers. So what are the implications of this for the leaders of our nation's schools? It is incumbent upon school leaders, particularly principals, to be able to recognize effective teachers and ensure that students from a background of poverty are consistently placed in the classroom of these teachers. Additionally, principals must also identify potentially effective novice teachers and work to fully develop that potential. This translates into the need of the principal to be not only the leader of the school but also a master teacher who understand what it takes to meet the needs of each student in the classroom.

#### Purpose of Study

At times teachers feel powerless to affect change. But in reality, they have a great deal of power. They have the power to make students feel safe at school. They have the power to ensure that all students feel included and cared about in school. They have the power to turn around the lives of students by believing in them and treating like they somebody important. Unfortunately, many teachers do not realize they have this power or, if they do, they choose to not to exercise it.

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, the study will examine the K-12 principals' perceptions of teacher preparedness for dealing with the students of poverty that populate their classrooms. Almost all the teachers in the school system have had professional development in dealing with students of diverse ethnic or racial backgrounds. However, students in poverty bring a different culture to the classroom for

which most teachers are unprepared. Additionally, the study will examine the knowledge of these same principals about their own knowledge of the culture of poverty and the instructional practices that are effective with students from impoverished backgrounds. Smith and Andrews (1989) identify four levels of strategic interactions that instructional leaders that can lead to improved student achievement. Being an instructional resource for teachers is one of these interactions. Principals as instructional leaders must be able to keep teachers informed of developments in the field of effective teaching and assist them to implement them in the classroom. It is incumbent upon the instructional leader to maintain a certain level of expertise and knowledge in order to provide this leadership for the staff. If a principal does not have at least a working knowledge of the culture of poverty and what instructional strategies work with students who come from this background, then the principal cannot serve as an effective instructional resource for teachers.

### Research Questions

This study will use qualitative research methods to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do principals understand what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty?
2. To what extent do principals perceive that they have received appropriate preparation to provide leadership to classroom teachers to meet the needs of students from poverty?
3. To what extent do principals perceive that classroom teachers understand what must occur in classrooms to meet the needs of students from poverty?

4. To what extent do principals perceive that their teaching staff has received appropriate preparation to provide for the needs of students from poverty in their classrooms?

### Significance of Study

As the number of students who enter school from impoverished backgrounds continues to grow, so does the body of research that examines the culture of this subgroup and what can be done to impact their achievement. Similarly, there exists a body of research dealing with principal perceptions. However, to the researcher's knowledge, a study that examines the perceptions of K-12 principals from small rural school systems in Maryland as they relate to the culture and instruction of students from poverty has not been conducted. Therefore, a study to examine the perceptions of these principals will be conducted.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will (a) assist in developing a larger body of literature on the perceptions of K-12 principals related to the culture and instruction of students from poverty, (b) assist school system leaders in developing appropriate professional development opportunities for principals and teachers to increase knowledge on the culture and instruction of students from poverty, (c) assist state and local policy makers and instructional leaders in school systems (e.g., assistant superintendents, curriculum specialists, principals) in formulating strategies to impact the instruction and achievement of students from poverty and (d) allow principals to examine their own knowledge of and perceptions about the culture and instruction of students from poverty.

### Limitations



The subjects of this study will be limited to K-12 principals in small rural school systems on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The number of school systems meeting these criteria limits the number of principals that can respond. Therefore, the results could be generalized to districts with similar characteristics (small and rural) rather than the entire state of Maryland.

There are nine school systems on the Eastern Shore of Maryland but only seven of them meet the requirements of this study. These limitations indicate that the findings of this study may not be reflective of the perceptions of principals in school systems that are larger or located in suburban or urban areas.

#### Delimitations

The selection of school systems with enrollments of less than 10,000 students delimits the study by defining these school systems as small. Similarly, the selection of school systems within counties that have 60% of its population living in towns with populations of 5,000 or less delimits the study by defining these school systems as rural. This study will further be delimited by those districts that are located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions will be used.

**Students in poverty:** Students in poverty are defined as students who receive free or reduced meals. This status is determined annually through an application process that examines household income and size of family.

**Perception:** Insight, intuition, or knowledge gained by perceiving.

**Principal:** The educator that has executive authority for a school.

Effective Teacher: Effective teachers have the ability to provide instruction to different students of different abilities while incorporating instructional objectives and assessing the effective learning mode of the students.

Small School System: A school system that has an enrollment of less than 10,000 students for the 2006-2007 school year as of October 1, 2006, the date by which all systems must report official enrollment figures to the Maryland Department of Education.

Rural District: The National Rural and Small Schools Consortium (1986) considers a district rural if inhabitants number fewer than 150 per square mile, or if the district is located in a county where 60% or more of the population lives in communities of 5,000 or fewer.

K-12 School System: School systems that contain school(s) that house students in grades kindergarten through grade twelve.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter I presents the problem to be studied: What are the perceptions of K-12 principals when it comes to teacher preparedness to meet the needs of students from impoverished backgrounds? What knowledge do K-12 principals possess about the culture and instruction of students from impoverished backgrounds? Chapter II contains a Review of the Literature that focuses on the culture and instructional needs of students from impoverished backgrounds and principals as instructional leaders. Chapter III contains a description of the methodology that will be used in this study to evaluate the responses of the principals. Chapter IV includes an analysis of the data collected. Chapter V will summarize the findings of the study, offer conclusions and recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter summarizes the finding of literature related to poverty and its impact on schools and the students who attend them. This chapter is divided into five major sections: 1) childhood poverty; 2) poverty and equity in schools; 3) the culture of poverty in schools; 4) poverty and successful schools and; 5) instructional leadership. “A great nation should have a great vision for its young people and that vision must surely be grounded in the promise that every child will receive an excellent education in every grade.” (Sullivan, 2001, p. 4) Since the late 1960’s, a series of programs at all levels of government have been implemented to offset the significant difficulties children from backgrounds of poverty encounter when they enter the public school system. The idea behind these programs is to educate these students to strive beyond their poverty by giving them intellectual tools and social skills necessary to become productive adults. “We recognize, on one hand, that children neither begin nor end their education on equal footing. On the other hand, Americans simultaneously believe that schools are places where social inequalities should be equalized, where the advantages or disadvantages that children experience in their homes and families should not determine what happens to them in school—in essence, that school is the place where children should have equal changes to make the most of their potential.” (Lee & Burkam, 2002, p. 5)

## Childhood Poverty

Poverty is a common risk for children. “The number one problem in American families is their increasing poverty.” (Stern, 1987, p. 1) A child living in poverty is said to lack goods and services considered to be essential to the well-being of humans. Currently, more than 13 million American children live in families whose annual money income (a combination of wages, unemployment insurance benefits, cash benefits from other government programs and other sources of regular, non-earnings income before taxes and other deductions) is below the federal poverty level, which is currently \$20,000 for a family of four. Across the nation, rates of child poverty range from 7 percent in New Hampshire to 27 percent in Mississippi. In 1994, 15.7 million children lived in poverty. In 2000, the rate of childhood poverty was substantially reduced to 12.1 million. However, it has risen substantially since then. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of children living in poverty increased by more than 12 percent. This translates into 1.4 million more children living in poverty in 2005 than in 2000. Nationally, family characteristics of parents’ employment status, parents’ education level or parent nativity had little to do with the increased child poverty between 2000 and 2004. However, these national statistics mask economic realities that vary by region. “In the Midwest, poverty rates rose the most among children with employed parents and among children whose parents did not have a college education. In the South, the region with the fastest growing immigrant population, children of immigrants experienced greater increases in poverty than did children of native-born parents. This was not true in the West, home to the largest number of immigrants. Across the United States, white and black children experienced greater increases in poverty than did Asian or Latino children. However,

racial and ethnic patterns of rising poverty differed across regions. In the Northeast and West, Asian children experienced declines in poverty, while in the South, Latino and white children experience increases in poverty. These trends suggest the economic differences across regions have profound implications for children's vulnerability to poverty and point to the importance of regional economic structures in exposing children to poverty." (Douglas-Hall & Koball, 2006, p. 4)

The statistics support the assertion that regional economic structures place different children at risk for poverty. Hard working families are falling into poverty because of low-wage service industry employment. Full-time work in jobs with low pay and no benefits is not sufficient to keep these families from experiencing poverty. Nineteen states have increased their minimum wage beyond that of the federal government and others are implementing an increase soon as a means of lifting people out of poverty. Programs such as unemployment benefits, Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid are also critical to protecting families when economic shifts put them at risk for poverty. However, not all families have the same access to these public benefits. Low-wage workers are particularly vulnerable to unemployment; however, they are less likely to have access to unemployment benefits. Children of native-born parents are more likely to access public benefits than children of poor, recent immigrants. Consequently, these children face a more insecure future.

Research has shown that a family of four needs an annual income of twice the federal poverty level, or \$40,000 to make ends meet. If a family of four's income is below this level, the family is considered to be low income. Thirty-nine percent of American children, more than 28 million, live in low-income families. (National Center

for Children in Poverty, 2006) Disaggregating the data by race/ethnicity paints a bleak picture for all children but, most particularly, children of color. Sixty-one percent of Latino and African American children live in low-income families while 28 percent of Asian and 26 percent of white children live in low-income families. Immigrant status also has an impact on children living in low-income families. Fifty-seven percent of children of immigrant parents live in low-income families as compared with 36 percent of children of native-born parents.

Government has a very specific definition of poverty in terms of income thresholds. However, a broader definition can be useful to explain why some are successful in leaving poverty and others are not. Payne (1996) defines poverty as the degree to which individuals do without resources. She does not limit her discussion of resources to just financial. Emotional, mental, spiritual, physical are all types of resources. Payne also identifies support systems and relationships and role models as resources.

Corcoran and Chaudry (1997) examined the dynamics of childhood poverty and found that one-third of all children will be poor for at least one year before reaching adulthood. Two-thirds of children who were ever in poverty spent fewer than five years in poverty. While short-term poverty is more commonplace, for a small percentage – five percent, poverty persists from childhood into adulthood. Children who live in persistent poverty experience severe poverty. The family income of a long-term poor child is about half of the income required to be above the poverty threshold. Data from the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics (PSID) traced the experiences of a cohort of children over a fifteen-year period. These data provide a continuous view of patterns of poverty experienced by the individual children over the fifteen years. Data from this particular

study found that race is an important factor in determining the persistence of poverty in children. On average, the non-black children experienced less than one year of poverty while black children experienced more than five years of poverty. Only 21 percent of the black children were able to escape poverty.

Poverty is particularly prevalent among African American, Latino and American Indian children. Nationally, 35 percent of African American children live in poor families, while in Maryland 21 percent of African American children live in poor families. In the 10 most populated states, rates of African American child poverty range from 20 percent in New Jersey to 43 percent in Ohio. Twenty-eight percent of Latino children live in poor families. In the 10 most populated states, rates of Latino child poverty range from 20 percent in New Jersey, Florida and Illinois to 35 percent in Texas. Twenty-nine percent of American Indian and 11 percent of Asian children live in poor families. Nationally, 10 percent of white children live in poor families as compared to six percent in Maryland. In the 10 most populated states, white child poverty rates range from four percent in New Jersey to 12 percent in Georgia.

Immigrant children are twice as likely to be impoverished as native-born children. 26 percent of children of immigrants are poor while only 16 percent of children of native-born parents are poor. California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Texas, the states with the largest populations of immigrants, have immigrant child poverty rates that range from 14 percent to 40 percent. (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2006) In Maryland, 14 percent of children of immigrant parents live in poverty. One-half of all new U.S. residents are Hispanic. This is a growth rate of 13 percent compared to 3.3 percent for the rest of the population. Hispanic and Asian populations will triple in the

next half century. In 2000, it was estimated that one out of every five children in the United States had at least one parent who was foreign born.

Trying to answer the question of why so many of the nation's children are poor is difficult and complex. Biddle and Berliner (2002) identify three ideologies that are often used to explain why certain groups experience poverty. The ideology of *individualism* encompasses the strong American belief that success is inextricably linked to personal effort. However, an associated belief blames the impoverished for their lack of success. Another belief system, *essentialism*, attributes the lack of success of less-privileged groups (e.g., minorities, women) to the inheritance of intractable genetic flaws. Lastly, *the culture of poverty* thesis asserts that minorities fail to achieve success because of inappropriate traditions inherent in the subcultures of their homes, communities or racial/ethnic groups.

Since children rely on adults for their economic welfare, it stands to reason that children are poor because they live with adults who are poor. There are two major reasons why adults are poor including economic and demographic forces and individual earning capacity. Gender, race, age and education are all factors within these two areas. "Economists and social scientists have attested that the growing income disparity is due, in large part, to such American social policies as shrinking social safety nets, increasingly regressive tax codes, continuing public support for homeownership at the expense of renters, and welfare reform." (Lee & Burkam, 2002, p. 81) Twenty-six percent of low-income children live in a family where parents have less than a high school education, 36 percent live with parents who have only a high school diploma and 39 percent live with parents who have some college or more. Low-income children who live in a single



parent home comprise 51 percent of all low-income children. (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2006) Betson and Michael (1997) point out that a young, black, high school drop out has a 15 percent chance of becoming a self-sufficient adult. If that same young black graduates from high school, his or her chances of becoming self-sufficient increase to 42 percent. This example serves to illustrate Payne's (1996) assertion that two things help to move people out of poverty: education and relationships. She further describes "the four reasons one leaves poverty are: It's too painful to stay, a vision or goal, a key relationship, or a special talent or skill." (Payne, p. 3)

"For too many children in our society, poverty has become a way of life, a prison that becomes more difficult to escape as the years of imprisonment increase. The consequences of poverty become every day realities for these children." (Northern California Superintendent's Council on Language, Culture, Poverty and Race, 1999, p. 9)

The consequences to poverty are many and varied. Compared to white families with children, African American and Latino families with children are twice as likely to experience economic hardships as these parents often occupy the lowest rung on the income and education ladders. Forty-one percent of families, who rent their home, spend one-third of their income on that rent. This can impact the residential stability of a family. Urban rents have risen faster than family incomes, consequently, many families are forced to move frequently because of delinquent rent payments. In some urban neighborhoods, the mobility rate is above 100 percent. For every seat in a school, two children were enrolled at some time during the school year. (Kerbow, 1996) Twenty-one percent of children in low-income families had to move as compared to 10 percent of children in families with higher incomes. A report done in 1994 found that 30 percent of

the poorest students had attended at least three different schools by the time they entered 3<sup>rd</sup> grade compared to 10 percent of middle-class students. (Rothstein, 2004)

Nineteen percent of poor children lack health insurance, nearly double that of all children who lack coverage (10%). (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2006) Poor children are twice as likely to suffer from severe vision impairment and are three times more likely to have untreated cavities. Children in low-income families that reside in heavily populated city neighborhoods are at greater risk to contract asthma. Starfield, Riley & Kang (as cited in Rothstein, 2004) found that “the asthma rate is substantially higher for urban than for rural children, for those on welfare than for non-welfare families, for children from single-parent families than those from two-parent families, and for poor than non-poor families.” (p. 42) Low birth weight, a predictor of childhood developmental problems and school failure, is common among children from impoverished backgrounds. Duncan (as cited in Renchler, 1993) found that children who were born with low birth weight and lived in persistent poverty during the first five years of life had lower IQ’s than children who were born with low birth weights and did not live in poverty. Poor children are more likely to suffer from lead poisoning, in fact, dangerously high blood lead levels are found in these children at five times the rate of middle class children. Impoverished children often experience violent crime, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, sexual abuse or chronic illness. Substandard or inadequate housing makes it almost impossible for children to complete homework or find a quiet place to read or study. Consequently, they are held back in school at least two times the national rate. “These data reveal a society populated increasingly by groups of citizens that historically have not fared well in this nation, especially ethnic minorities and

citizens for whom English is a second language. Concomitantly, the percent of youngsters affected by the ills of the world in which they live – for example, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, crime, drug addiction, malnutrition and poor physical health – is increasing.” (Bainbridge & Lasley II, 2002, p. 3)

### Poverty and Equity in Schools

For many U.S. children, particularly those in low-income urban school districts, the educational system is failing. Sharon Nelson-Barber states that, “Students who are members of certain demographic groups are, of course, at some disadvantage when they go to school, but disadvantage is not something inherent; it is transactional. Students are disadvantaged...because of the way in which education is provided.” (Goodwin, 2000, p. 6) The average, low-income 12<sup>th</sup> grader has a reading level that is the same as an average, middle class eighth grader – regardless of race; a gap that is equal to a difference of four grade levels in student performance. In mathematics, poor students are found to be two grade levels behind their more affluent peers. Orfield and Lee (2005) report that one half of African American and Latino students are dropping out of high school. This is most especially true in segregated, high-poverty schools. Nationally, the gap in graduation rates between districts with high proportions of low-income students and districts with low proportions was 18.4 percent in 2001.

“The difference between the academic performance of poor students and wealthy students and between minority and non-minority students is commonly known as the achievement gap.” (McCall, Hauser, Cronin, Kingsbury, & Houser, 2006, p. 1) Lee and Burkam (2002) detail the findings of the U.S. Department of Education’s longitudinal study of young children in their book entitled, *Inequality at the Starting Gate*. Data was

collected from a representative sample of 1,000 public and private schools offering kindergarten and analyzed to determine the inequalities of children's cognitive abilities based on race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. They discovered that disadvantaged children begin school with significantly lower cognitive skills as measured by the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) reading test and test of mathematical knowledge. Almost half of the racial/ethnic achievement gap can be explained by taking a child's socioeconomic status into account. "Our analyses, in fact, indicate that none of the other factors we considered come close to explaining as much of the race-based achievement gaps as does social class." (Lee & Burkam, p. 81)

According to the Northwest Evaluation Association report *Achievement Gaps: An Examination of Differences in Student Achievement and Growth*, although the gap in growth is not particularly large at any individual grade, it does occur at every grade three through eight. The authors of the report conclude that there is little difference in aggregate growth between students from poor or wealthy schools, which leads them to believe that teachers are giving equal attention and are equally effective with both groups of students. When examined more closely, the rate of growth is not sufficient to close the gap in scores that already exist. This is because students who attend high poverty schools make less academic growth during the school year than students who attend low poverty schools when they all begin the school year at similar achievement levels. Moreover, students in high poverty schools lose more ground academically over summer breaks than their peers. This means that as students in high-poverty schools move from grade to grade, their overall achievement falls further and further behind. Even when beginning school at the same level of achievement, students who attend high-poverty schools will

still likely graduate well behind their more affluent peers. Lee and Burkam (2002) attribute the lack of school success to the stratification of educational experiences that increase as children progress through school. These differing experiences begin in the early elementary grades with reading groups, special education placements and retention. They continue through elementary school in the guise of ability groupings, special education, and gifted and talented programs. Ultimately, these differentiated experiences culminate in high school in the form of enrollment in advanced placement courses and informal and formal tracking practices. Haycock (1998) states, "The low academic achievement of low-income and minority students, and even the mediocre achievement of other American students, is neither preordained nor intractable. This is, in other words, an achievement crisis of our own making. We must and we can do better." (p. 4)

In 1983, Ernest Boyer described the part public schools will play in the future of the United States this way, "Without good schools, none of our problems can be solved. People who cannot communicate are powerless. People who know nothing of their past are culturally impoverished. People who cannot see beyond the confines of their lives are ill equipped to face the future. It is in the public schools that this nation has chosen to pursue enlightened ends for all its people. And this is where the battle for the future of America will be won or lost." In 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* set the precedent that "separate" facilities for blacks and whites were constitutional as long as they were "equal." The "separate but equal" doctrine was quickly extended to cover many areas of public life, such as restaurants, theaters, restrooms, and public schools. However, in 1954, the United States Supreme Court struck down *Plessy v. Ferguson* with its decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. The justices concluded, "That in the field of

public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” (Russo, 2004, p. 944)

In the 1960’s, Lyndon B. Johnson’s administration waged what they termed the *War on Poverty* which included strategies that focused on equity in education. Head Start, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Job Corps were all created with the goal of bringing groups of Americans previously excluded into mainstream prosperity through education and access to job opportunities. Title I of the ESEA, the major educational strategy that focused on “educationally deprived children”, “emphasized the importance of poor and minority children as economic resources for the nation, and asserted the belief that targeted programs would prepare the children of the poor to leave the culture of poverty and successfully enter the middle class.” (Mutchler, 2005, p. 9) The 1980’s saw the movement toward equity change to become a movement toward excellence spearheaded on by the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983. This controversial report accused the educational enterprise of failing students as measured by declining student achievement and negative comparisons to schools in other nations. Policies and programs “shifted the focus of public education from equity to quality and emphasized themes of high standards, school choice, competition, devolution, and accountability.” (Coombs & Wycoff, 1994, p. 1) The reauthorization of ESEA in 1994 brought specific guidance and incentives on the implementation of standards based reform efforts to the education of children of poverty on a national level. The advent of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in the reauthorization of ESEA in 2001, retained an emphasis on standards based education but added an annual assessment requirement. “The sociopolitical context surrounding teaching in schools of poverty might now be said

to reflect a valuing of 'equity in excellence'. A merger of these two core values is seen in the now-widespread public accountability of teachers, schools and districts to achieve excellence in education 'for all children'." (Mutchler, p. 12)

With the passing of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, millions of low-income students remain housed in separate but unequal schools. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) analyzed the results from three large-scale surveys of school conditions in the states of California, Wisconsin and New York. They describe "a two-tiered public school system; one for the more affluent, who enjoy the privileges of a relatively healthy educational environment, and the other for the least privileged, who suffer an educational environment that virtually forecloses their chance of learning." (Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, & Yoon, 2004, p. 7) This two-tiered system has its foundations in the inadequate allocation of resources. "To those who need the best our education system has to offer, we give the least. The least well-trained teachers. The lowest-level curriculum. The oldest books. The least instructional time. Our lowest expectation. Less, indeed, of everything that we believe makes a difference." (Commission on Chapter I, 1992, p. 1)

As a nation, we say that our goal is to ensure that all children receive a quality education, in addition, we expect that all school children will have equal opportunities to experience that quality education, but the disparity in the funding for education says otherwise. (Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985) The *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation has created ambitious goals for accountability for all students. Many states and school systems are finding significant achievement gaps among students in poverty and minority students. The goal of raising proficiency for all students and closing the achievement gap

is important. However, funding for the education of all students has not kept pace. Although Title I spending has increased by nearly \$3 billion over the last two years, these levels still fall short of the amounts authorized in the original NCLB legislation. In fact, in the 36 years of its existence, Title I has never been fully funded. Limiting these resources has forced school systems to perform, what the Alliance for Excellent Education calls, “educational triage”. Only 15 percent of Title I funds goes to secondary schools, which enroll 33 percent of all low-income students. On average, elementary schools receive \$495 per student compared to \$372 for secondary schools. This lack of funding has resulted in lower achievement. “More than one million high school seniors have difficulty doing basic math and 714,000 high school seniors have difficulty reading on the eve of their high school graduation.” (Sullivan, 2001, p. 2)

However, “we shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that federal dollars still make up a small portion – currently less than 10 percent – of all funding for public schools. To really provide schools with adequate resources to improve, we also have to focus on the source of most school funds – state and local revenues.” (Carey, 2003, p. 1)

Yearly, the Education Trust publishes a report on the funding gap in the United States. Currently, the nationwide disparity in funding between high-poverty and low-poverty districts is \$1,348. In 2004, their analysis showed that 25 out of 49 states provided fewer dollars to high poverty districts than to low poverty districts. Thirty-one states have a gap for high-minority districts. Sadly, these 31 states educate six out of every 10 poor and minority students in the United States. However, these figures do not fully expose the real extent of the problem. Experts on school funding generally agree that high-poverty schools need more resources to meet the same standards. The standard



set by the Congress recommends that high-poverty districts should receive additional funding per low-income student of 40 percent of the average student amount. Carey (2002) found that in order to significantly reduce the achievement gap, school systems need to fund schools with high poverty populations equal to two and one half times the cost of educating low poverty populations.

The World Economic Forum's *Global Competitiveness Report* rated the United States last among developed nations when it comes to the quality of schools available to rich vs. poor students. Thirty years ago, the Presidential Commission on School Finance found that a gap in the distribution of educational resources because of a reliance on local funding. Since then, lawsuits have been filed in forty-five states aimed at remedying the inequity and inadequacy of funding for public schools. The California Supreme Court ruled in 1976, "that the wealth-related disparities in per-pupil spending generated by the state's education finance system violated the equal protection clause of the California constitution." (Carroll et al., 2004, p. 29) In 2001, the New York Supreme Court ruled that the state had consistently violated the state constitution by failing to provide the opportunity for a sound basic education to New York City school students.

"It is perfectly obvious that the highest at-risk students have the poorest, most run-down physical environments, the greatest instability of teachers coming and going, the fewest fully qualified teachers, a shortage of textbooks and instructional materials, far less availability of technology in the classroom, overcrowded classes, poor working conditions for the teachers, and fewer resources to teach students to pass tests that they have little chance of being properly prepared to take. To compare these schools with those serving the most affluent majority of students is akin to comparing a backward,

emerging nation with a highly industrialized nation. It is no contest.” (Carroll et al., 2004, p. 10)

“The reality is that millions of disadvantaged students live in property-poor urban and rural areas that cannot generate sufficient dollars for education even when citizens tax themselves highly. A lack of affordable housing and continued racial discrimination prevent families of these children from moving to districts that provide better education.” (Commission on Chapter I, 1992, p. 12) To realize the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education*, federal, state and local leaders need to acknowledge that the opportunities to teach and learn at high-risk schools are inadequate and unacceptable and commit to implement and sustain long-term improvements. “We need to distribute our resources in a way that reflects the basic fact that the schools with the hardest job to do – those with the highest costs and the most disadvantaged students to educate – need additional resources to meet common standards of achievement. Only then will we have truly closed the funding gap.” (Carey, 2003, p. 1)

#### The Culture of Poverty in Schools

Much has been written about multicultural education and cultural competency. Most of the literature deals with issues surrounding ethnicity. However, Beegle (2003) recommends that the definition be expanded to include generational poverty or social class. The term “socio-cultural” competency encompasses any socio-economic factors that impact on the educational process. An example of socio-cultural competency would be the recognition that motivation differs among social classes. Most people living in poverty have not had any kind of relationship with someone who has been successful in the educational system. Therefore, motivation to achieve in education is not high

because there is little perceived value. Datcher-Loury (as cited in Renchler, 1993) studied African American children to determine if a link between familial attitude and behavior affected academic performance. She concluded that behaviors and attitudes have a long-term effect on academic performance. This is supported by the work of Beegle. She reported that 96 percent of the participants in her study acknowledged that education was not discussed in the home. This lack of communication sent the message that it was not important and no one cared. “The low value placed on education in the home, the lack of conversations about educational concerns, and the almost total absence of educational goals prevented respondents from including education in their long term plans.” (Beegle, p. 14) By age 24, only seven percent of young adults raised in low-income homes have graduated from college. In 2000, more black males were in prison (791,600) than in college (603,000).

Another cultural competency linked to poverty is the presence of a strong oral tradition. (Ong, 1982, Beegle, 2003) People in poverty often get their information primarily from other people. This shapes how they think and how their brains operate. They exhibit characteristics and learning styles associated with oral culture that include: (a) strong ties to emotions and physical touch, (b) spontaneity, and (c) is based on relationships. “People who get their information primarily from reading exhibit characteristics of print culture and tend to be linear, analytical, individualistic, and focused. Education is designed for those people. When students from poverty backgrounds enter the world of education, their communication styles are likely to clash with the formal nature of the print-culture communication.” (Beegle, p. 16)

Without realizing it, schools and businesses operate from middle-class norms and hidden rules. Hidden rules exist at all levels of economic continuum from poverty to wealth and even among ethnic groups. “Hidden rules are the salient, unspoken understandings that cue the members of the group that this individual does or does not fit.” (Payne, 1996, p. 9) Poverty has some very specific hidden rules. The noise level is always high, non-verbal information is the most important and the ability to entertain is highly valued. It is obvious that these rules are often not acceptable in the educational setting. Consequently, there is a mismatch of norms between the school and certain children from poverty. Children are acculturated at home but must be re-acculturated when they come to school. Students in poverty need to be educated about the hidden rules of the middle class so that they are able to successfully navigate the educational enterprise and break the cycle of poverty.

The three aspects of language: (a) registers, (b) discourse patterns and (c) story structure, play a large role in understanding poverty. Joos (as cited in Payne, 1996) identified five registers that are common to every language in the world. The five are: (a) frozen, (b) formal, (c) consultative, (d) casual and (e) intimate. The use of the formal register, which has complete sentences and specific word choices, is a hidden rule of the middle class. Most impoverished students do not have access to this register but, instead, make of the casual register where the word choice is general and sentence syntax are often incomplete.

Hart and Risley (as cited in Payne, 2002) found that children aged one through three in welfare households heard an average of 10 million words compared to working class households where an average of 20 million words were heard and professional

households where an average of 30 million words are heard. In the same study, the researchers found that, on average, professional parents spoke more than 2,000 words per hour to their children, working class parents spoke about 1,300 words and welfare parents spoke about 600. “At four years of age, children of professionals had vocabularies that were nearly 50 percent larger than those of working-class children and twice as large as those of welfare children.” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 41) Additionally, Hart and Risley tracked how frequently parents verbally encouraged or reprimanded their children. Toddler-aged children of professional parents received six encouragements to every reprimand while children of working-class parents got two. However, in the welfare homes, the trend was reversed. Children averaged one encouragement to every two reprimands. This work supports the notion that there is a connection between social class and the amount of vocabulary a person possesses. Since people in poverty tend to operate in the casual register, they possess very few abstract words. This word type represents ideas, concepts and processes that do not have a sensory-based representation but rather an abstract representation. “To survive in poverty, one must be very sensory-based and non-verbal. To survive in school, one must be very verbal and abstract.” (Payne, 2002, p. 21)

Discourse patterns and story structures for students in poverty are also conducted in the casual register. This means that students tend to go around and around an issue before getting to the point and they begin their stories at the end or at the section that presents the greatest emotional impact first. The language norms of people in poverty are not rewarded or reinforced in the educational setting. Teachers need to be aware so that they assist students in adjusting to the culture of the schoolhouse. “To assume the challenge of becoming literate and educated, these students must bridge social-class,

cultural and academic gaps...The extremely low numbers of people in generational poverty who achieve literacy and obtain college degrees force us to examine the limited progress we have made with educational equity in this area.” (Beegle, 2003, p. 19)

### Poverty and Successful Schools

For more than 30 years a myth has existed in the educational enterprise. It says that, “Urban and rural schools face insurmountable obstacles caused by poverty and racism. It says that disadvantaged children might learn some basic skills but that their home lives are just too deprived to allow them to attain the same levels of learning as their affluent suburban peers.” (Haycock, Jerald, & Huang, 2001, p. 5) “Somewhere along the line, somebody decided that poor children couldn’t learn or, at least, not at a very high level. And everyone fell in line.” (Barth et al., 1999, p. i) The existence of the achievement gap does not imply that student achievement is declining or that schools are getting worse. Kober (2001) reports that student achievement is better on key tests now than it was 30 years ago. Overall achievement has risen even as the demographics of the test taking population have changed to include more minority, English language learners and students with disabilities. Every racial/ethnic subgroup has made achievement gains in the last 25 to 30 years. In fact, during the 1970’s and 1980’s, the achievement gap was significantly narrowed.

“Most Americans assume that the low achievement of poor and minority children is bound up in the children themselves or their families. ‘The children don’t try.’ ‘They have no place to study.’ ‘Their parents don’t care.’ ‘Their culture does not value education’. These and other excuses are regularly offered up to explain the achievement gap that separates poor and minority students from other young Americans.”

(Commission on Chapter I, 1992, p. 3) “The notion that intelligence and will alone determine outcomes implies that everyone has similar opportunities and faces similar obstacles. It suggests that the cream rises to the top through superior intellect and exertion.” (Comer, 1997, p. 5) Families in poverty are less able to afford proper health care, buy nutritious food or provide valuable experiences for their children. Research has shown a link between mental stimulation in the home, a high protein diet and the development of the brain. “Long term childhood poverty has lasting consequences for children’s development: growing up poor is associated with sizable cognitive deficits in early childhood.” (Corcoran & Chaudry, 1997, p. 41) Phillips (as cited in Bainbridge and Lasley II, 2002) found about half of the achievement gap could be closed by eliminating the differences in children before they enter grade one. “It seems quite obvious that a major way to reduce social inequalities in children’s cognitive status (and social competence) as they begin kindergarten is through disadvantaged children’s participation in well-designed preschool preparation programs with at least some academic content.” (Lee & Burkam, 2002, p. 82) Additionally, the participation in pre-school programs by poor students may result in lower incidences of teen pregnancy, lower incarceration rates, higher rates of employment and attendance at post-secondary schools. (Glenn, 1985) Unfortunately, less than half of children in the lowest socioeconomic quintile attend a center-based preschool or Head Start program before entering kindergarten.

Rothstein (2004) asserts that closing the achievement gap is a more complicated and ambitious undertaking than most policy makers are willing to acknowledge. He states that, “Eliminating the social differences in student outcomes requires eliminating the impact of social class on children in American society. It requires abandoning the

illusion that school reform alone can save us from having to make the difficult economic and political decisions that the goal of equality inevitably entails. School improvement does have an important role to play, but it cannot shoulder the entire burden, or even most of it, on its own.” (p. 149) Lee and Burkam (2002) support Rothstein’s assertion by stating that while schools are obligated to close achievement gaps, social policies cannot create or magnify these same gaps. “The U.S. should not use one hand to blame the schools for inadequately serving disadvantaged children when its social policies have helped to create these disadvantages—especially income disadvantages—with the other hand.” (Lee & Burkam, p. 81)

In the past, if children lived in poverty, they were destined to attend the lowest performing schools as measured by state and national assessments. The communities in which these children lived faced many hardships which often presented challenges to the children, families and schools that served them. In schools, these challenges may have manifested themselves in the form of children who started school without early literacy skills, high absenteeism and transient rates and difficulty attracting and retaining quality teachers. “It is unacceptable to perpetuate a system in which failure is commonplace, or tolerate schools where so many students are passed along in a familiar pattern that divides the winners and losers. This nation must reaffirm equality of opportunity unequivocally and give it meaning in every classroom. Students, even from the most difficult backgrounds, can academically and socially succeed. The goal must be quality for all.” (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988, p. xv)

On the path to quality and equity for all, recent research has shown that low performing schools in impoverished communities can be turned around. The Education



Trust has identified more than 4,500 high poverty public schools nationwide where the students are achieving in the top third in reading and/or mathematics assessments for their state. This translates into more than 1.3 million poor students. (The Center for Public Education, 2007) However, the statistics may not be as positive as previously portrayed. Harris (2006) takes issue with the Trust's identification of high-performing, high-needs schools. To qualify as a "high flying" school, as identified by Education Trust, a school must achieve high performance in either reading or math in one grade and for one year (*1-1-1 definition*). Applying these criteria all high-poverty schools, 15.6 percent of them could be identified as high-performing. Harris argues that to be identified as high-performing, student achievement should be consistently high over multiple grades and multiple years. When the *2-2-2 definition* (high performing for both years, both grades and both subjects), is applied to the same schools, only 1.1 percent of them could be labeled as high performing; a 93 percent decrease.

What is the impetus for low performing schools to begin a journey down the road to school improvement? Kannapel and Clements (as cited in The Center for Public Education, 2007) "suggest three potential motivators: state passage of a reform act, a school's recognition that it has 'hit bottom,' or the transformation of a school's culture into a belief system that asserts that all children can learn and succeed, regardless of the income or other demographics of their community." (p. 6) Whatever the impetus is for change, schools in even the most impoverished neighborhoods can become places where all children can learn and perform well academically. Ron Edmonds, most notably, states, "We can, whenever and wherever we choose successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether

or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact we haven't so far.” (Lezotte, 2003, p. 3)

In July 1966, *The Equal Educational Opportunity Survey*, more commonly known as *The Coleman Report* was released. The major conclusion of this report was that family background, not the school, was the most important determinant of student achievement. Coleman and other social scientists of the 1960's believed that family factors such as poverty or lack of parental education prevented children from learning successfully regardless of the instructional methods used by schools. Jensen (as cited in Gauthier, Pecheone, and Shoemaker, 1985) asserted that schools could not be expected to do much more than they were already doing for impoverished children. These beliefs led policy-makers to create compensatory educational programs that “taught low-income children to learn in ways that conformed to most schools' preferred ways of teaching. These programs focused on changing students' behaviors in order to compensate for their disadvantaged backgrounds and made no effort to change the school's behavior.” (Lezotte, 2003, p. 1). In response to this report and the resulting programs, educators began exploring how schools with high numbers of poor students could be as successful in raising student performance as schools in more advantaged communities in what has become known as the *Effective Schools* research. This research, which later became the basis for the *Effective Schools Movement*, indicates that there are certain characteristics that can be associated with increased student achievement and performance in schools traditionally seen as low performing with large number of students living in poverty. (The Center for Public Education, 2007) “The evidence from both the researchers and trail-blazing communities could not be more clear or compelling about what works to

raise student achievement. The time for making excuses that blame the students, or their families, or their communities is long past. As is the time in which we could plead ignorance about what works. We know what works. We know what matters. The question now is do we have the moral and political will to take action.” (Haycock, 1998, p. 2)

Effective school research is not without its critics. Rowan, Bossert, and Dwyer (1983) provide a three pronged critique of effective schools research. First, they argue that effectiveness should be assessed in administrative, social and emotional domains in addition to the academic domain, which tends to be the sole focus of the research. Since education is a multi-faceted enterprise, focusing improvement efforts in one area may lead to the erosion of effectiveness in others. Rowan et al. also argue that effective schools research provides little information about the size relationships between specific variables and effectiveness. They question which of the effective school variables exerts the most influence on student achievement. As an example, are the effects of school leadership larger than school climate? Lastly, it is the contention of Rowan et al. that analyses of effectiveness should begin by looking at individual classrooms rather than at the school in its entirety. In their estimation, effective schools research, in its global descriptions of schools, fails to articulate how the organization and outcomes of the school affects teaching and learning which is at the heart of student success and achievement.

Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel) (2005) divides the characteristics of effective schools into four key components: 1) instruction, 2) school environment, 3) professional development and 4) leadership. Each of the four

components can be further subdivided into subcomponents. The McRel 2005 study examined 76 high needs elementary school in 10 states. “High needs” schools were defined as those in which 50 percent or more of the student population was eligible for free or reduced meals. The schools were differentiated based on their performance, 49 were considered high-performing because of student achievement scores well above state averages and 27 were classified as low-performing because of student achievement scores well below state averages. The researchers wanted to examine if the high-performing schools were organized around these four components differently than the low-performing schools. “Perhaps the most significant finding from the study was that the way in which high- and low-performing schools are organized does not differ as McRel and others had imagined. Instead, the relationships among instruction, school environment, professional community and leadership are the same for both sets of schools...What does differ is the relative influence of each subcomponent.” (Palmer and Nelson 2005, p. 7)

Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (2005) identifies “classroom instruction, which gives students the opportunity to develop proficiency in state or local academic standards through teacher guidance, curriculum content, and a variety of learning activities, as the core work of schools.” (p. 5) Research suggests that this component can be further divided to include 1) structure, 2) individualized, responsive instruction and 3) opportunity to learn cognitively challenging content.

Structure provides the students with clear expectations and goals for achievement. The teachers in high performing schools spend time in the explicit instruction of work management, guide student study and exploration and exhibit increased proficiency in

classroom management. (Crone & Teddlie, 1995, Taylor, Pearson, Clark, and Walpole, 2000) High performing schools make academic achievement and instruction a consistent emphasis. Kannapel and Clements (as cited in The Center for Public Education, 2007) noted, “The key seemed not to be what they were doing so much as the fact that the entire faculty and school community had focused consistently over time on academics, instruction and student learning.” (p. 4). This focus often included finding ways to increase instructional time for students. The Education Trust found that, in the aggregate, 78 percent of the top performing, high poverty schools reported extending instructional time for students with 86 percent of these schools increased time spent on reading and 66 percent on mathematics. (Barth et al., 1999) Additional time on task could be accomplished in a variety of ways: (a) extending the school day, (b) implementing programs that ran after school, (c) on weekends or over the summer, (d) using volunteers to provide extra tutoring, or (e) creating a reading intervention block where adults in the school provided reading assistance to targeted students.

Requiring that instruction follows established standards or curriculum ensures that students are taught the materials they will need to be successful on their grade level assessments. (Barth et al., 1999, Kannapel and Clements, 2005, Corallo and McDonald, 2001, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) Barth et al. noted that high performing schools using standards to guide all school activity was the most significant finding in their study. They found that 80 percent of the schools reported using standards to plan curriculum and instruction, 94 percent reported using standards to measure and monitor student progress and 59 percent used the standards to assess the effectiveness of the teaching staff. Williams et al. (2005) surveyed 5,500 teachers and 257 principals from schools serving

student populations that are challenging but not the most severe (as measured by the state's 2003-04 Characteristics Index) across the state of California. Teachers from high-performing schools reported "school-wide instructional consistency within grades, curricular alignment from grade-to-grade, classroom instruction guided by state academic standards and up-to-date and sufficient curriculum materials in math and language arts aligned with the state's standards." (Williams et al., p. 1) However, alignment must extend beyond just the written curriculum to include the curriculum that is actually taught in the classroom and the manner in which it is taught.

Structure, however, does not imply rigidity. In successful high-poverty schools, teachers display great care and concern for all learners, most particularly, those who are struggling. The individualization of instruction and learning activities in response to student performance data has been shown to result in increased student engagement and achievement. (Hill & Rowe, 1998)

Porter (2002) (as cited in Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, 2005) defines opportunity to learn as "the enacted curriculum, including both content and cognitive demand represented in what teachers say and do." (p. 5) Teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. "They develop instructional repertoires that are consistent with their beliefs and attitudes about content and student learning. Often these are firmly nested within the paradigm of teacher-centered instruction." (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005, p. 2) "If the content of the standards and the content of the curriculum match, student performance will still lag if the level of cognitive demand required by the standards differs from the cognitive demand reflected in classroom practice and/or assessment." (Corallo & McDonald, 2001, p. 2) Research has shown a relationship

between certain instructional practices and student achievement scores on the *National Assessment for Educational Progress* (NAEP). A negative relationship was found between the routine use of ditto sheets and student performance while students who participated in discussions with other students about work showed greater achievement. At one time, it was the belief of educators that “basics” had to be learned before “big ideas” could be explored. Pull-out remediation programs would focus on helping struggling children learn discrete low-level skills. “Rather than experiencing the joy of wrestling with ideas, these children are more likely to spend their time circling m’s and p’s on dittoes.” (Commission on Chapter I, 1992, p. 6) Data from the work of Barth et al. (1999) indicates that top performing schools are moving away from low level instructional practices like the use of dittoes towards developing higher order skills by offering more opportunities for discussion of work and increasing the use of technology. “Those encouraged to work with challenging content, to solve problems, and to seek meaning from what they study will make far greater academic progress than students limited to basic skills instruction.” (Commission on Chapter I, p. 7)

Although the second component, school environment, can encompass many variables, Marzano (2000), in his research synthesis, identified four critical subcomponents as 1) climate, 2) assessment, 3) parent involvement, and 4) academic press for achievement.

High performing, high-poverty schools often exhibit a safe and orderly climate that is characterized by positive interactions between staff and students. Clear policies articulate the rules and behavior codes along with the accompanying rewards and punishments. These policies are understood by all members of the school community

and are implemented on a consistent basis. “One can easily make the inference that a school with an orderly environment would promote a more academic atmosphere and thus increase student achievement because, with fewer disruptions, students could be more productive, and teachers could focus on monitoring students’ progress and working on academics.” (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, 2005, p. 7)

Since the implementation of NCLB, the term assessment has come to be associated with the annual state tests that are administered to measure AYP (adequate yearly progress) and determine if schools are being successful in meeting the needs of all students. These state assessments provide a comparison of student progress against an external standard, however, at high-performing schools, the purpose of testing is to diagnose and determine the instruction of individual students. The use of ongoing assessment practices allows teachers to individualize instruction for students by determining the areas in which they need help and changing the instruction to meet these needs. (Corallo & McDonald, 2001, Carter 2000, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) Barth et al. (1999) surveyed high-performing schools in 21 states and found that 81 percent of these schools had developed a comprehensive assessment program, which allowed teachers to monitor student progress regularly and frequently so that they could quickly intervene with those students who were struggling. Principals of high-performing schools in the Williams et al. (2005) study reported using assessment data from multiple sources including curriculum programs, commercial assessments, district-developed assessments and state and national assessments to monitor the progress of targeted students and, additionally, evaluate teacher practice so that support for instructional improvement could be provided to teachers whose students were not showing increased



academic achievement. The implementation of an ongoing, diagnostic assessment program provides schools with what McGee (2004) calls an “internal capacity for accountability”. However, the implementation of a comprehensive assessment program can be met with complaints about the over-testing of students. “To be sure, students are over-tested; but they are under assessed. The distinction between testing and assessment must be clear. Testing implies an end-of-year, summative, evaluative process in which students submit to test and the results—typically months later—are used by newspapers and policy makers to render a judgment about education. By the time the results are published, they are ancient history in the eyes of the student and teacher. Contrast this to the best practice of assessment, in which students are required to complete a task and then very soon—within minutes, hours or days—they receive feedback that is designed to improve their performance...Great educators use assessment data to make real-time decisions and restructure their teaching accordingly.” (Reeves, 2003, p. 12)

Research has found that family involvement in a child’s education, which is characterized by positive and productive relationships between parents and school staff, positively affects student achievement. To determine how parents are involved and how their voice is to be reflected in school culture, strong communication, parent involvement policies and access to administrators and teachers must be evident. Schools that work together with families and encourage their participation in the school and at home empower students to learn and meet grade level expectations. (Barth et al., 1999, Carter, 2000, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) Parents are often viewed as “critical partners” in learning process of their children. (Ragland, Clubine, Constable, & Smith, 2002)

“Academic press for achievement asserts that all students will achieve at a high level and is the factor that is cited consistently in school effectiveness literature as being critical to success.” (Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning, 2005, p. 7) High poverty schools with a culture of high expectations that is shared by all members of the school community including the principal, the teachers and the students, are often high performing. The central tenet to this culture is the belief that all students can learn and be successful academically. In fact, research has identified this belief to be the dominant theme that makes schools successful in high poverty communities. (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, Carter, 2000, Ragland, Clubine, Constable, and Smith, 2002, Williams et al., 2005, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988) This belief system must be rooted in tangible and measurable goals or what Kannapel and Clements call “high expectations communicated in concrete ways”. These rigorous but concrete and achievable goals make the high expectations real for students and ultimately lead to what Haberman (1999) calls a common ideology that provides the school with a unity of purpose and a sense of identity.

It is important to note that this culture of high expectations must be couched in a caring and nurturing environment. The ability of teachers to forge relationships with children from impoverished backgrounds is identified by Haberman (1999) as a key factor in a high-performing school. This notion is supported by the work of Borman and Rachuba (2001) that focused on building resiliency in students. They identified “strong and supportive” relationships as critical. Beegle (2003) found that college graduates who grew up in poverty reported that, “They believed their lives would have turned around sooner had they experienced teachers who believed in them and treated them like they

were 'somebody'." (p. 15) McGee (2004) observed that attention to given to health and safety through the provision of nutritional meals and access to medical, dental and counseling care is part of developing a environment that supports the needs of students and creating a climate of caring.

"They must have time and support to experiment, to evaluate and to analyze. They must themselves become a learning community—focused on improving student learning." (Commission on Chapter I, 1992, p. 11) When the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn, they are said to be part of a professional community, the third component found in high-performing, high-poverty schools. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals by engaging in professional development, collaborating, and dialoguing in a reflective manner so that students benefit. "Teachers are the first learners. Through their participation in a professional learning community, teachers become more effective, and student outcomes increase -- a goal upon which we can all agree." (Hord 1997)

High-performing, high-poverty schools have collaborative staffs who work together across grade levels and curricular areas to share responsibility and provide support for all students. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2002) Collaboration creates a climate of shared work and expertise, as well as creating a sense of affiliation and teamwork. "Teamwork and collaboration are very typical, and provide venues for teachers to critique and assist one another; actively looking to improve each other's teaching to help students meet specific academic standards. They address barriers to learning, collaborate

to identify solutions, and take part in school-wide intervention strategies.” (The Center for Public Education, 2007, p. 6)

Researchers are in agreement that teacher quality, which can encompass experience, the possession of advanced degrees and training and effective instructional skills, and the participation in professional development opportunities, is directly related to student achievement. (Ascher & Fruchter, 2001, Carter, 2000, Ragland, Clubine, Constable, and Smith, 2002, Kannapel and Clements, 2005, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) In high performing schools, the principal regards the staff as the school’s most important resource and is focused on hiring and supporting the best teachers. Research also supports the notion that the teachers who are successful in these schools “have embraced the culture of high expectations; they are committed to seeing all children achieve. They love learning and relate well to children. They work hard, for long hours, but have high morale and devotion to their work.” (The Center for Public Education, 2007, p. 4) Williams et al. (2005) found that schools with more teachers that possessed regular or standard certification with at least five years of full time teaching experience had, on average, a higher academic performance index (API) than other schools serving similar populations of students.

The expectations that high-performing schools set for their students is often mirrored in the expectations for continual improvement that are held for the teaching staff. When examining high-performing schools, the Education Trust found that one-third spent 10 percent of their Title I budgets on professional development for teachers. (Barth et al., 1999) A distinguishing characteristic of the professional development at these schools is its direct link to a change in instructional practice in order to increase

student achievement. (Barth et al., Jesse, Davis, and Pokorny, 2004, Kannapel and Clements, 2005, McGee, 2004, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) Lauer (2001) found that teachers from high-performing schools were more likely to report an improvement in their teaching skills after participating in professional development than teachers from other schools.

But the teachers cannot travel down the professional development road alone. Barkley, Bottoms, Feagin, and Clark (2001) maintain that school leaders must engage in what they term as *leading for learning*. Leading for learning encompasses modeling and providing a supportive environment for change. Leaders must exhibit the behavior they want from teachers or what Barkley et al. label *modeling the model*. Administrators model the model when they attend professional development opportunities with teachers. This allows them to observe ways to support teachers during the implementation of new practices. When administrators do not participate, it communicates that the learning opportunity is not important. Tangentially, a safe, positive and supportive environment where risk taking is valued must be created so that the true value of professional development is realized. “Research has shown that teachers who receive theory, modeling, practice, feedback and coaching on a new strategy use that strategy accurately in the class between 75 percent and 90 percent of the time. Those who only receive the theory without any follow-up use a strategy properly five percent or less of the time.” (Barkley et al., p. 8, 10)

“Many Americans assume that the achievement gaps among our nation’s students are the inevitable result of poverty, poor family structure, and social problems...But research suggests that if our poorest children are given a succession of motivated, well-

prepared, and experienced teachers, the gaps in achievement between these children and their more affluent peers can be narrowed – if not completely closed.” (National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, 2005, p. 1)

“Of all the educational disparities poor children face, none is more significant than the disparity in the quality of their teachers.” (National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools, 2005, p. 3) Research shows that high-poverty schools have trouble attracting and retaining qualified teachers. (Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, and Donaldson, 2004, Learning First Alliance, 2005, Carroll, Fulton, Abercrombie, and Yoon, 2004, & National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools) One study found that in high poverty schools about one in twelve teachers is not fully certified compared to one in twenty at other schools. Another study reported that teachers teaching out of field taught 34 percent of classes in high poverty secondary schools compared with 19 percent in low-poverty schools. This is particularly true in the area of mathematics. In high-poverty middle schools, 70 percent of mathematics teachers have not completed a major or minor in mathematics or a related field. (Learning First Alliance) Teachers in high poverty schools are twice as likely to have three years or less of teaching experience according to a federal study. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 20 percent of teachers at high poverty schools have three or fewer years of teaching experience compared to 11 percent at other schools. According to the U.S. Department of Education, high-poverty districts employ teachers with waiver of certification requirements at a rate of one in twelve whereas in other districts the rate is one in twenty. (Learning First Alliance) “No matter which study you examine, no matter which measure of teacher quality you use, the pattern is always the same – poor students, low

performing students, and students of color are far more likely than other students to have teachers who are inexperienced, uncertified, poorly educated, and underperforming. Many of those teachers demonstrate most or all those unfortunate qualities all at the same time.” (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 3)

In addition to expertise and experience, the Commission on Chapter I (1992) found that students in poverty were more likely than students not in poverty to be taught by teachers who had negative attitudes towards students and perceptions that children of color and those from low-income families are deficient. There is little or no understanding of what it means to grow up in poverty. When Beegle (2003) studied college graduates who grew up in generational poverty, she found that 89 percent of her participants reported that their teachers did not believe in them; the participants saw the teachers as the “enemy”. Participants felt that “their teachers had the power to make them feel included, cared about, and safe from ridicule or violence but didn’t exert that power.” (Beegle, p. 15) A study by Blasé & Roberts (as cited in Blasé and Blasé, 1999) linked the leadership of the principal to teachers’ consideration and tolerance of students. Differences exist among teachers’ confidence in their abilities and in the knowledge and skills they have to provide accommodations for students who are difficult to teach. Teachers must reflect an attitude that they are willing to work with children who possibly grew up differently than they did. “Teachers must not only believe that students belong in their classroom, but they must believe they can accommodate any special needs of their students.” (Person, 1996, p. 4)

Once formed, teacher perceptions are fairly static and difficult to change. (Lawrence, 2005) Ferguson (1998) (as cited in Lawrence) contends that these

perceptions influence teacher expectations and hinder their ability to accurately predict student learning potential. In fact, some researchers suggest that “teachers’ perceptions, expectations, and behaviors are powerful enough to be partly responsible for (a) the underachievement of students of color and of students from low-income homes and (b) the Black-White achievement gap in scores.” (Lawrence, p. 351)

Many factors account for the problem of staffing these schools. Teacher shortages exist nationally but are particularly acute in urban and disadvantaged or isolated rural districts. On top of this shortage, high-quality teachers elect to work in higher achieving schools because high-poverty and high-minority schools are likely to be more dangerous, poorly maintained, and overcrowded. Schools in poor communities often cannot provide adequate support for any teacher but, most particularly, the new teachers, who are frequently given the toughest assignments. “Basic working conditions in high-poverty, low-performing schools are often far worse than any professional should be asked to tolerate... Teachers who leave jobs in these schools often cite lack of resources, intrusions on instructional time, inadequate time to prepare, and student discipline problems as reasons for quitting. Significant numbers of teachers also cite smaller class sizes and great parental involvement as conditions that would stem the flow of teachers out of these schools” (Learning First Alliance, 2005, p. 7)

NCLB has focused national attention on the importance of high academic achievement for all students. To achieve this goal, NCLB recognizes that students must have qualified teachers. Under NCLB, Title I schools are required to ensure that low income and minority students are not being taught at higher rates by teachers who are unqualified, inexperienced or teaching out of field. However, NCLB focuses solely on



teacher qualifications rather than requiring the improvement of working conditions and/or the capacity to hire and support teachers.

Slavin and Madden (1989) contend that while every student can learn, many do not because of the school's incapacity to meet the needs of every child. They further contend that even while there is much to learn, enough is known to take action to ensure that even the most vulnerable children can be successful in school. "*Insistence* that faculty, students, and other parties take responsibility for improvement, *persistence* in doing what must be done to attain high standards, *resiliency* in moving forward despite discouraging obstacles and developments, and *consistency* in implementing coordinated and coherent programs to improve instruction—these are some of the key prerequisites for success that will continue to be associated with unusual effectiveness for the foreseeable future." (Levine, 1990, p. 584)

#### Instructional Leadership

"The direct responsibility for improving instruction and learning rests in the hands of the principal." (Sweeney, 1982, p. 346) In 1977, Brookover and Lezotte studied eight schools (six improving and two declining) in Michigan. This study produced a set of differences that best explained the improvement or decline of pupil performance in the schools. One of the most pronounced differences was in the role of the principal. The study found that in the improving schools, the principal took on more of an instructional leadership role and assumed responsibility for the achievement of the basic objectives of the school. In declining schools, the principals put more emphasis on public relations rather than on evaluating the effectiveness of the school in providing an education to all students. (Brookover & Lezotte, 1977) Edmonds' efforts to identify and analyze

successful urban schools for poor and minority students in Detroit and Lansing, Michigan resulted in major contributions to the research on school effectiveness. Based on his analyses, Edmonds concluded that schools and, most particularly, school leaders make a difference. In fact, he states that, "One of the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools is strong administrative leadership, without which the disparate elements of good schools could be neither brought together nor kept together." (Sizemore, 1985, p. 278) This research along with the work of Rutter (1982) resulted in the development of a list of attributes that are common to all successful, high-needs schools. These attributes are better known as the *Effective School Correlates*. While there are seven correlates in all, the focus of this section will be on the third correlate which states, "In an effective school, the principal acts as an instructional leader and effectively and persistently communicates that mission to staff, parents and students. The principal understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program." (Lezotte, 2003, p. 3) Leadership is also identified by Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (2005) as the fourth component that can be associated with increased student achievement in traditionally low-performing schools that serve large number of students living in poverty.

"Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers. This is done in order to realize goals mutually held by *both* leaders and followers." (Burns, 1978, p. 18) A grim picture of inequities that deny civil rights to the most vulnerable citizens is a difficult problem to solve for most leaders. In *Leading in a*

*Culture of Change*, Fullan (2001) states that, “Leadership is needed for problems that do not have an easy answer.” (p. 2) Heifetz (1994) asserts that leadership is not a set of personal characteristics or an individual's role; it is about getting people to tackle hard problems. Effective leaders, as described by Covey, “value oneself and, at the same time, subordinate oneself to higher purposes and principles...Individuals are more effective and organizations more empowered when they are guided and governed by these proven principles.” (Covey, 1990, p. 19) These principles act as the “compass” for leaders; they always point in the right direction to help leaders do the right thing. This sentiment is echoed by Michael Fullan in his book *Leading in a Culture of Change*. He charges that, “Moral purpose and sustained performance of organizations are mutually dependent.” (Fullan, p. 28) Leaders need to acknowledge the conditions that surround the instruction of low-income students. Until recently, most the high-stakes consequences for meeting standards have fallen on the shoulders of the students. “To ensure that every child has equal access to a quality public education, it is time to establish a chain of accountability – a shared commitment to school quality that links educators, community leaders, and elected officials who have a common responsibility for ensuring that every school provides an equal opportunity for successful teaching and learning. Everyone who has a stake in the quality of our schools must become a strong link in the chain.” (Carroll et al., 2004, p. 36)

While establishing a culture of high expectations for all is valuable, The Center for Public Education (2007) contends that the principal's most important role is that of instructional leader. It is difficult to locate a credible study on school effectiveness that does not include an effective instructional leader as one of the criteria of success.

(Austin, 1979, Brookover & Lezotte, 1977, Edmonds, 1979, Levine & Lezotte, 1990, Rutter, 1982, Cotton, 2000, Reeves, 2003) “In many ways, the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school...It is the principal’s leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become...If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal’s leadership as the key to success.” (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 5-6) In *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*, Samuel Carter declares that leading a high poverty school is one of the most important leadership positions in the nation. Most of the 21 schools mentioned in the book were, at one time, low performing and became high performing once the right leader was installed. Finding the right principal who will work to find the right teachers could be more important than reducing class size, renovating facilities or any other popular strategy for improving public schools. (Carter, 2001)

One of the most popular themes in the literature about educational leadership focuses on the principal as an instructional leader. The groundwork for the reconceptualization of the role of principal from one of manager to one of instructional leader was laid in the 1980’s with the work of researchers in the Instructional Management Program at the Far West Lab. This research assumed that the principal’s impact on student learning took place indirectly, through interactions with teachers and students and the development of policies and norms which influenced instructional climate (attitudes and behaviors of staff and students towards instruction and learning)

and organization (the manner in which opportunities for teaching and learning are organized). This assumption was validated in the work of Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1990. They found that the principal influences student learning by developing a school mission that focuses the instruction of all teachers, encourages high expectations, and creates an environment that is conducive to learning. “Ultimately, it is less important to know the degree of direct effect principals have on student learning than it is to understand the ways in which principals can shape an effective educational program.” (Hallinger et al., p. 28)

Despite its prevalence in literature, a common definition of instructional leadership is difficult to find. Instructional leadership is often seen as a combination of supervision of classroom instruction, professional development and curriculum development. Krug (1992) defines instructional leadership as “the strategic application of knowledge to solve context-specific problems and to achieve the purposes of schooling through others.” (p. 5) He further states that despite the numerous problems leaders face and diverse contexts in which they operate, essentially, instructional leadership can be seen as a composition of five dimensions: (a) defining mission, (b) managing curriculum and instruction, (c) supervising and supporting teaching, (d) monitoring student progress, and (e) promoting instructional climate. Andrews and Soder (1987) assert that an instructional leader has four primary roles: (a) resource provider, (b) instructional resource, (c) communicator, and (d) visible presence. As a resource provider, the principal ensures that the appropriate resources are available so that the school can achieve its mission and objectives. The instructional resource, the principal gives priority to instructional issues, serves as a coach and model of desirable behaviors and actively

engages in professional development. Setting and clearly articulating the school's mission and goals to all stake-holders falls under the role of communicator. As a visible presence, the principal is seen around the school frequently visiting classrooms, attending meetings, and generally being accessible to staff. Thomas (1978) (as cited in Hall, Rutherford, Hord, and Huling, 1984) studied 60 schools with a focus on the principal and identified three classifications of principal behavior: (a) Director (actively involved in all aspects of the school), (b) Administrator (involved in whole school decisions but not active in classrooms) and (c) Facilitator (involved in shared decision-making with the staff). Similarly, the work of Hall, Rutherford and Griffin (1982) (as cited in Hall et al.) produced three other principal styles: (a) Initiator (have a strong beliefs and work to attain their vision), (b) Manager (respond to situations and provide basic support to teachers), and (c) Responder (focused on traditional administrative tasks with little guidance given to teachers). Hallinger and Murphy (1985) identify three domains of instructional leadership: defining the school mission, creating a positive climate for learning and overseeing the instructional program. The work of Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (2005) is built upon the work of Hallinger and Murphy but recognizes redesigning the organization rather than creating a positive climate for learning as the third component of instructional leadership. It is the contention of McRel that to lead a high-needs school to effectiveness, the principal must be able to make changes in policies, structure and culture. In the EdSource study of California elementary schools serving low-income students, the researchers found that higher API (Academic Performance Index) were achieved in schools where the principal was a *manager of school improvement*, guiding the reform process by using student

achievement data to focus improvement efforts. Simply put, instructional leadership is anything that is done by the leader to improve teaching and learning in the school. (King, 2002)

Dufour (2002), most widely known for his work with professional learning communities, takes the discussion of instructional leadership in another direction. Principals need to become, what he calls, a *learning leader* rather than an instructional leader. It is not enough to know what works theoretically, school leaders must be the *chief learner*, knowing what is needed now and what will be needed in the future to ensure continual improvement. (Bottoms, 2001) DuFour argues that school leaders need to shift their attention from teaching to learning which entails shifting the emphasis of their work from the improvement of individual teachers to assisting groups of teachers ensure that students achieve the identified educational outcomes. When a principal works as an instructional leader, the questions that drive improvement efforts focus on what the teachers are teaching and what can be done to help them teach it more effectively. In contrast, a learning leader is driven by questions that address the extent to which students have learned the intended outcomes and what can be done for both students and teachers to give them the support and time they need to improve learning. “By concentrating on teaching, the instructional leader of the past emphasized the inputs of the learning process. By concentrating on learning, today’s school leaders shift both their own focus and that of the school community from inputs to outcomes and from intentions to results.” (Dufour, p. 15)

Whatever the definition, aspects of effective school leadership are anchored in the principal’s participation in the instructional program. Cotton (2000) identifies six ways

that effective administrators are involved in student learning: 1) They believe that all students can learn and that schools make a difference, 2) They understand teaching and learning and can model appropriate strategies for their staff, 3) They read and share research on effective instruction, 4) They provide professional development opportunities to the staff and are willing to participate in those same opportunities, 5) They work to align curriculum, instruction and assessment, and 6) They expect improvement in the instructional program and monitor staff practices to ensure that improvement. Niece (1983) (as cited in Whitaker, 1997) describes effective instructional leaders as leaders who operate within a network of other successful principals and have found support in the form of a mentor from within their network; these leaders are people-oriented and interactional, in other words, they are visible and accessible.

But research does suggest that instructional leadership is not all about the actions principals take but also more human aspects of leadership they exhibit. Patricia Novotney in Vann, Novotney, and Knaub (1979) characterizes instructional leaders as people who *believe* that instruction is important, *analyze* their own commitment to professional growth, *act* in the best interest of all staff members and *persist* in a task no matter what is required. A principal that is concerned for others and the environment in which they reside displays what Fullan (2002) calls “an explicit, deep, comprehensive moral purpose.” *Intentionality* and *heart* are at the center of Uchiyama and Wolf’s (2002) analysis of two successful elementary principals. They assert that leadership is built outward from core beliefs and commitments rather than inward from textbooks. “You can look around at other schools – even in our district – and people would say, ‘These kids are poor. You need to just love them. That’s the best we can do for them.’”



Or you can come to a school like this where the philosophy is that the best way to love them is to give them an education so that they can make choices about their lives.” (Uchiyama & Wolf, p. 80) Bell (2001) describes leadership that makes a difference in HP2 (high-performing, high-poverty) schools as *moral leadership* where respect and empowerment are key words that apply to both staff and students. One principal of a HP2 school states that, “While academic achievement and high standards are important, maintaining a family feeling on campus and establishing strong, enduring ties to the parents and community in which the school was located are key.” (Bell, p. 11)

Lee and Burkam (2002) argue that “public schooling is the nation’s number one social intervention. As such, equity should be at the top of the list of criteria. We should not allow school location to determine school quality, nor should we rely on choice that allows only some low-income parents to gain access to high-quality schools for their children, often at the expense of those whom they leave behind. All schools should be high-quality schools and all children should attend such schools.” (p. 85)

### Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to highlight some of the research surrounding the issue of poverty and its impact on students and the institutions they attend by focusing on five themes:

1. Childhood Poverty – Nearly 13 million, or 17%, of American children live in families with income below the federal poverty level. The research clearly supports the notion that poverty is the single greatest threat to children’s well-being. Poverty can impede children’s ability to learn and contribute to social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Poverty also can contribute to poor health and mental health.
2. Poverty & Equity in Schools – Discourse about high poverty schooling generally revolves around equity of school resources being considered the key ingredient in school improvement. Resources, including qualified teachers,

instructional materials, facilities, and, of course, funding, must be distributed in a way that reflects the fact that the schools with the hardest job to do—those with the highest costs and the most disadvantaged students to educate—need additional resources to meet achievement standards.

3. **The Culture of Poverty in Schools** – Teachers need to be tuned in to the culture of poverty and be sensitive to the vast array of needs that children of poverty bring to the classroom. Social contexts have a significant impact on the development of children. The social world of school operates by different rules or norms than the social world these children live in. Oral culture is linked to poverty; people in poverty get their primary information from other people rather than books. Consequently, they think differently and their brains are trained to operate in specific ways that allow them process this oral information. The implications for education for students in poverty are apparent. Socio-economic diversity requires new approaches to the craft of teaching. So that students from poverty reach their full potential, teachers must help them connect what they know with what they need to know. Teachers who teach skills in a relevant context so that the students are able to make sense of what they are learning are critical to the success of our impoverished students.
4. **Poverty and Successful Schools** – The background of the student body does not have to determine achievement results. The creation of a positive learning environment—where academics are emphasized and teachers and students thrive—contributes significantly to improved student achievement.
5. **Instructional Leadership** – Many studies on school effectiveness show that leadership is one of the keys to effective schooling for all students but, most particularly, those from impoverished backgrounds. Principals must exhibit strong instructional leadership and be innovative and persistent in acquiring the resources necessary to meet the needs of the students.

In 1992, the Commission on Chapter I stated that, “ The *low* expectations in our suburban schools are *high* in comparison to expectations in urban schools and rural schools with concentrations of children in poverty. And that this absence of challenge, of rigor, is dulling the minds and dashing the hopes of millions of America’s children. Our low expectations are consigning them to lives without the knowledge and skills they need to exist anywhere but on the margins of our society and consigning the rest of us to forever bear the burden of their support.” (p. 1) Unfortunately, not much has changed

in the 16 years since the issue of their report. The price that children of poverty must pay is unbelievably high. Each year, increasing numbers of children are entering schools with needs from circumstances, such as poverty, that schools are not prepared to meet. The rise in the number of children in poverty has contributed to making our nation's classrooms more diverse than ever before. This, indeed, makes both teaching and learning more challenging. This issue can remain a challenge for teachers, as opposed to becoming a problem, if focus is placed on student learning as opposed to teaching.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, the study will examine the K-12 principals' perceptions of teacher preparedness for dealing with the students of poverty that populate their classrooms. Additionally, the study will examine the knowledge of these same principals about their own understanding of the culture of poverty and the instructional practices that are effective with students from impoverished backgrounds. Chapter III contains information on the population to be studied, the procedures used to conduct the research, interview questions and methodology that will be used for data analysis and summary.

#### Population

The population of this study is comprised of K-12 principals in small, rural school systems on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. There are nine school systems located on the Eastern Shore of Maryland however, as explained in Chapter 1, only seven of the school systems meet the requirement for this study as their structure is consistent with the small, rural structure that is to be studied. Within the seven eligible school systems, there are a total of 76 schools. In an effort to narrow the scope of the number of participating schools, the researcher has chosen to focus on the three small, rural county school systems in the mid-shore region. These school systems meet the requirements of the

study and have 31 schools within their jurisdictions. So the researcher has chosen to invite 31 K-12 principals to participate in the study on principal perceptions of their preparedness and teacher preparedness to deal with students in poverty in the classroom. Therefore the sample size (n=31) is 40% of the total eligible population.

#### Research Procedure and Techniques for Data Collection

This study will use a qualitative research approach. Data will be collected from the participants through confidential interviews. Thirty-one K-12 principals who have met the criteria stated above will have letters sent to them inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix A). A reply form and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for each principal will be enclosed (see Appendix B). All invitees agreeing to participate in the interview will be required to sign a consent form (see Appendix C).

The researcher has chosen a qualitative method for data collection of principals' perceptions about their preparedness and their teachers' preparedness for dealing with students of poverty in an effort to gain an understanding of the perspective of the participants. Using qualitative research allows those who are being studied to speak for themselves, to provide their perspectives in their own words. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and McCormack-Steinmetz (1991) describe qualitative research as an interactive approach that allows the participations to teach the researcher about their lives. Sherman and Webb (as cited in Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and McCormack-Steinmetz, 1991) further state that, "Qualitative research, then, has the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it" (p. 4-5) The ability of qualitative data to more fully describe a phenomenon is an important consideration not only from the researcher's perspective, but from the reader's perspective as well. Readers can better

understand when they are provided information in the form in which they usually experience it. Qualitative research reports, often rich with detail and insights into participants' experiences of the world, may be more in harmony with the reader's experience and, thus, more meaningful.

Quantitative data can be described as systematic and standardized. Closed instruments like questionnaires, commonly used in quantitative research, force respondents to fit their knowledge, experiences and feelings into the researcher's predetermined categories. By contrast, qualitative data, particularly responses to open-ended questions, are neither systematic nor standardized. The researcher never supplies nor predetermines the categories that respondents must use to express themselves. Patton (2002) describes the purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions as enabling researchers to understand and capture the points of view of others without predetermining those points of view; these responses allow one to understand the world as seen and experienced by the participants. It is the job of the researcher to develop a framework that allows participants to respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view of the world about which they are talking.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) identify five features of qualitative research. First, qualitative research is *naturalistic*, in that it makes use of actual settings as sources of data and the researchers serve as the key instrument. The research questions are developed to allow topics to be investigated in all their complexity and within a context. Qualitative researchers place great emphasis on the context because they assume that human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting in which it occurs which, in turn, allows them to understand topics from the subject's frame of reference. Geertz (as

cited in Bogdan & Biklen) states that, “If anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then to divorce it from what happens—from what is in that time or that place, what specific people say, what they do, what is done to them, from the whole vast business of the world—is to divorce it from its application and render it vacant.” (p. 5)

Secondly, the data collected through qualitative methods is *descriptive*, often rich in conversations. Qualitative research requires that the world be examined with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything holds a clue to unlock a deeper understanding of the complexities of what is being studied. Third, qualitative researchers are interested in the *process* in addition to the outcomes. A basic theoretical assumption of qualitative research is that process is crucial to understanding human behavior. Fourth, qualitative researchers tend to analyze data *inductively*. Rather than searching out data to prove or disprove a hypothesis, qualitative researchers build abstractions based on the data gathered and analyzed. The process of qualitative research can be seen as a funnel where things are open at the top and become more directed and specific as they reach the bottom. Lastly, qualitative researchers strive to construct *meaning* from what can be termed *participant perspectives*; they are interested in how different people make sense of their lives. Researchers try to discover from the subjects of their study what they are experiencing, how they interpret those experiences and how they structure the world in which they live. “The process of doing qualitative research can be characterized as a dialogue or interplay between the researcher and their subjects. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 7)

### Interview Questions

“The major way in which qualitative researchers seek to understand the perceptions, feelings, and knowledge of people is through in-depth, intensive interviewing.” (Patton, 2002, p. 21) Bogdan and Biklen (2003) describe the interview as a purposeful conversation, usually between two people, that is directed by one in order to acquire information from the other. The basic assumption of qualitative interviewing is that the perspective of others is meaningful and foreseeable. The interview allows the researcher to enter into the respondents’ perspective and find out what is in and on their mind. Patton further defines the purpose of qualitative interviewing as capturing how respondents view their world and enabling researchers to learn their terminology and judgments and to ascertain the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences. Bogdan and Biklen define a good interview as one where subjects are at ease and talk freely of their points of view and produces rich data filled with words that reveal the respondents’ perspectives. No matter how it is defined or described, ultimately, the interview is used in qualitative research to gather descriptive data in the respondents’ own words so that a researcher can develop insights on how respondents interpret their piece of the world.

Patton (2002) describes an interview guide as a list of questions or topics that the interviewer wished to explore during the interview. The guide is designed to provide pre-determined subjects or topics within which the interviewer wishes to probe and explore for understanding, while allowing the interviewer the freedom to establish a conversation using spontaneously worded questions within those particular subjects. “There should be a balance between designed questions, ad libbing, and not leading the respondent down the expected paths to knowledge.” (Ely et al., 1991, p. 66)



The use of an interview guide ensures that the interviewer makes good use of the limited interview time; makes interviewing multiple subjects more systematic and comprehensive by setting out the specific topics to be explored and ensuring that the same basic information will be obtained from each subject. The detail to which the interview guide is developed depends on the extent to which the researcher can identify crucial issues in advance and the extent to which it is important to ask the same questions in the same order to all participants.

### Interview Questions

1. Background Information
  - 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?
  - 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?
  - 1.3 What is your gender?
  - 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?
    - 1.4a Did your family's economic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?
    - 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?
2. Principal and Teacher Knowledge Rationale: Dwyer (1984) found that principals identified personal traits, experience, training and beliefs as influential factors affecting their activities and the decisions they made as the instructional leader of the school. The National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005) defines effective teachers as those who consistently assist their students in making

significant academic progress. In order to achieve this level of effectiveness, teachers must have command of their content, understand how students learn and have a large repertoire of teaching strategies which allow them to meet the diverse needs of their students. Carey (2004) reports that teacher effectiveness has a major impact on student performance, so much so that having a quality teacher throughout elementary school can significantly offset or even eliminate the disadvantage of an impoverished background.

- 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?
  - 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom?
- 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?
  - 2.2a When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?
- 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies do you see teachers employing?
- 2.4 Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty, how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

- 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers?
- 2.6 If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?
3. Principal Professional Preparation and as a Staff Developer Rationale: King (2002) describes principals as learning leaders. If a principal desires to be a successful instructional leader, that principal must participate in regular and collaborative professional development experiences that are aimed at improving teaching and learning like study groups, school visits or the examination of student work. They recognize the importance of developing a broad knowledge base in curriculum, instruction and assessment and seek out ongoing professional development opportunities that broaden their knowledge. DuFour (2002) recommends that principals put student and adult learning at the center of their leadership. Fullan (2002) suggests that the creation and sharing of knowledge is central to effective leadership. He found that principals must constantly remind teachers that they are engaged in practicing, studying and refining their craft. The principal, the lead learner in the school, should model lifelong learning by sharing recent readings, engaging in action research and implementing study groups among the staff. Krug (1992) suggests that effective school leaders provide information that teachers need to skillfully plan their classroom instruction.

- 3.1 Have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the students from poverty?
- 3.1a If so, describe the professional development opportunity(ies).
- What was the title?
- Where and when did you take it?
- What was the length of the class?
- What were some of the key learnings?
- Did you seek out this professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of your job?
- 3.1b If no, what kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to you?
- 3.2 Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?
- 3.2a Can you recall the titles or authors?
- 3.2b In your readings, what are some of things you used or will be able to use with your teachers?
- 3.3 Have you had the opportunity to share this information to your teachers or other colleagues?
- 3.3a If so, how have you shared this information with your teachers or other colleagues?
- 3.3b If not, what plans do you have to share this information with your teachers or other colleagues?

- 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?
4. Teacher Professional Preparation Rationale: Results of a study by Wenglinsky (2000) suggest that teacher classroom practices are influenced by the professional development that the teacher receives. This is supported by the work of Lambert (as cited in Magee, 2005), who states that professional development shapes the beliefs, assumptions and practices of teachers. Uchiyama and Wolf (2002) found that building the capacity of classroom teachers by improving their instructional skills is the only way to reach all students.
- 4.1 Have your teachers received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the students from poverty?
- 4.1a If so, describe the professional development opportunity.
- What was the title?
- Where and when did they take it?
- What was the length of the class?
- What were some of the key learnings?
- Did they seek out this professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of their job?
- 4.1b If no, what kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to teachers?
- 4.2 Have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?
- 4.2a Can you recall the titles or authors?

- 4.3 Have your staff members had the opportunity to share this information with other colleagues?
  - 4.3a If so, how have they shared this information?
  - 4.3b If not, what plans do they have to share this information?
- 4.4 What additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers?

#### Data Analysis

Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed to provide the qualitative data for this study. The responses will be examined to determine patterns and/or themes for each question, as well as any exceptions to the patterns. Accuracy and anonymity will be maintained by assigning each subject a number code. A review of the data will allow for the identification of patterns to be recorded by the researcher. Additionally, responses that are not aligned with the established patterns for the question will also be noted. Patton (2002) states that, "The analysis of qualitative data involves creativity, intellectual discipline, analytical rigor, and a great deal of hard work." (p. 443)

The challenge in qualitative analysis lies in the distillation of large quantities of data by sorting trivia from significance, identifying important patterns and developing a framework for communicating the essence of what is found in the data. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others." (p. 147) Qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis of data, meaning that the critical themes emerge out of the data (Patton, 2002).

Transcription of the interview data is necessary to prepare for the coding process required in grounded theory as developed by Strauss and Corbin (Patton, 2002). “The procedures of grounded theory are designed to develop a well integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena under study. A grounded theory should explain as well as describe.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 5) This systematic method of analysis involves categories, codes and coding. Charmaz (as cited in Patton, 2002) states that, “Grounded theory looks at how ‘variables’ are grounded – given meaning and played out in subjects’ lives.” (p. 128)

A line by line analysis to identify the themes emerging from the raw data is the first step in the coding process, known as *open coding*. Open coding is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the text through the asking of questions and the making of comparisons. Each line, sentence, or paragraph is read in search of the answer to the question, “What is this about?”. “Only by comparing incidents and naming like phenomena with the same term can a theorist accumulate the basic units for theory.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 7) The process of grouping concepts at a higher, more abstract, level is termed *categorizing*. The goal of open coding is to create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories which form a preliminary framework for analysis. “Categories are higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. They are generated through the same analytic process of making comparisons to highlight similarities and differences that is used to produce lower level concepts. Categories are the ‘cornerstones’ of developing theory.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 7) They provide the means by which the theory can be integrated.

Whereas open coding fractures the data into concepts and categories, axial coding puts those data back together in new ways by making *connections* between a category and its sub-categories. Axial coding is the process of relating codes (categories and properties) to each other, via a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. The comparing and combining of categories allows the researcher to assemble the “big picture.” Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that the purpose of this comparison is to not only describe but, more importantly, to acquire new understanding of the phenomenon under study. Based on this understanding, the researcher builds a conceptual model and determines whether sufficient data exists to support that interpretation. The researcher translates the conceptual model into the story line to be read by others. The research report should be a rich, tightly woven account that “closely approximates the reality it represents”. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990)

In order to further refine the study’s design, the interview questions will be used with a focus group of five principals from the two small, rural school systems located on the lower shore region of Maryland selected based on availability. As defined by Powell and Single (1990), a focus group is a “group of individuals selected and assembled by the researcher to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research.” (p. 499) “The main purpose of focus group research is to draw upon respondents’ attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods. Compared to individual interviews, which aim to obtain individual attitudes, beliefs and feelings, focus groups elicit a multiplicity of views and emotional processes within a group context.” (Gibbs, 1997, p. 2) They can be used either as a method in their own right or as a complement to other methods,



especially for triangulation and validity checking. The homogenous nature of this group was purposeful as Gibbs noted, “If a [focus] group is too heterogeneous...the differences between participants can make a considerable impact on their contributions.” (p. 5) The focus group administrators remained independent from the interview participants.

The purpose of the focus group in this study is to provide for the triangulation of findings. The triangulation of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena is often employed in qualitative studies as an alternative to traditional criteria like reliability and validity. By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and empirical materials, researchers can overcome the weakness or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method, single observer, and single theory studies. There are four basic types of triangulation: 1) data triangulation; 2) investigator triangulation; 3) theory triangulation; and 4) methodological triangulation. Methodological triangulation was used in this study to check that the data collected from the structured interviews was both reliable and valid.

### Summary

This study will examine the K-12 principals’ perceptions of teacher preparedness for dealing with the students of poverty that populate their classrooms. Additionally, the study will examine the knowledge of these same principals about their own understanding of the culture of poverty and the instructional practices that are effective with students from impoverished backgrounds.

The criteria used to identify the research were described. The research and data collection methodologies were described as interviewing identified subjects using

interview questions developed based on and substantiated by the literature review in Chapter II.

Chapter IV will provide the findings, analyses and summary of the data collected through the procedures outlined in Chapter III.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine principals' perceptions of their preparation and the preparation of their staff to deal with students of poverty in the classroom in small rural school systems on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. A qualitative research methodology was used to investigate the perceptions of these school leaders. In this chapter, the researcher will present and analyze the findings of this study.

#### Nature of Study

The population of research subjects for this study included Maryland public school principals who lead schools in small rural counties located in the mid-shore region on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Three school systems located in the mid-shore region on the Eastern Shore met the criteria of being small and rural. For the purpose of this study, small was defined as school systems that had an enrollment of less than 10,000 students for the 2006-2007 school year as of October 1, 2006, the date by which all systems must report official enrollment figures to the Maryland Department of Education and rural was defined as districts where inhabitants numbered fewer than 150 per square mile or the district was located in a county where 60% or more of the population lived in communities of 5,000 or fewer. Within these school systems, 31 principals were identified and invited to participate in the study. Of the 31, 14 principals agreed to be interviewed. These 14 principals represented 41% of the total subject population.

The principals were asked a series of 33 interview questions. The questions were grouped into four sets. The first set of five questions was asked to gain background information on the participants including their experience in education and the socioeconomic status of their family during childhood and the impact of that status on their educational experiences. The second set of eight questions asked the study participants about their perceptions of their own knowledge and the knowledge of their teaching staff when it came to dealing with students from impoverished backgrounds in the classroom. A third set of ten questions asked the participating principals about their professional preparation and their role of staff developer as it relates to students from poverty. The last set of nine questions focused on the principals' perceptions of teacher professional preparation in regards to dealing with students of poverty in the classroom.

#### Presentation and Analysis of Findings

The majority of the interviews, 12 of the 14, took place in the office of the principals while two of the 14 interviews took place in the office of the researcher in an effort to accommodate the schedules of the participants.

The first set of five questions was asked to gain background information on the participants including their experience in education and the socioeconomic status of their family during childhood and the impact of that status on their educational experiences. Within this set of questions, principals were asked how long they had been in their current assignment and the total number of years in education. These data are illustrated in Table 1. Of the 14 principals interviewed, eight were principals of elementary schools, three were principals of middle schools, two were principals of high schools and one was principal of a combined middle/high school. The years in their current assignments

ranged from one to 15 years with the average being 4.7 years. It was interesting to note that the majority of the principals, nine of 14, had been in their current assignment five years or less. However all 14 principals had been in education 10 years or longer. The years in education ranged from Principal #14's 10 years to Principal #9's 30 years with an average of 19.9 years. The principals were also asked about the socioeconomic status of their family during childhood and the impact of that status on their preparation to deal with students from impoverished backgrounds and their ability to relate to those same students.

Table 1

Background Information of Principals

Principal	School level	Years in current assignment	Years in education
#1	High	2	25
#2	Elementary	3	14
#3	Elementary	10	29
#4	Elementary	15	19
#5	Middle	3	11
#6	Elementary	7	17
#7	High	5	25
#8	Middle	3	19
#9	Elementary	2	30
#10	Elementary	3	15
#11	Middle	1	19
#12	Elementary	2	16

#13	Elementary	10	29
#14	Middle/High	1	10
	Average	4.7 years	19.9 years

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In Maryland, school systems are organized by county and receive funding from the county, state, and federal governments. School systems in wealthier counties receive the majority of their educational funding from the county government with little state or federal aid. Of the three counties (Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot) in this study, Talbot County is considered the wealthiest. The median household income in Talbot County is \$43,532. This can be compared to the \$34,077 median household income in Dorchester County and \$38,852 median household income in Caroline County. In Caroline County, 12% of the population lives below the poverty line and in Dorchester County, 14% of the population lives below the poverty line compared to 8% of the population that lives below the poverty line in Talbot County.

The Maryland State Department of Education defines wealth as “adjusted real property assessments, public utility operating property and net taxable income.” (Maryland State Department of Education, 2008, p. 29) In 2008, the wealth per pupil for Talbot County was \$840,316 compared to \$303,665 for Dorchester County and \$231,857 for Caroline County. Since Talbot County is so wealthy, it only receives \$1,004 in state foundational aid per pupil compared to \$4,742 per pupil in Caroline County and \$4,141 per pupil in Dorchester County.

It is interesting to note that even though Talbot County is the wealthiest county, it does not spend the most educating its students. Talbot County spends \$10,364 per pupil

while Dorchester County, whose median income and wealth per pupil are significantly below Talbot's, spends \$11,032 per pupil. Caroline County, which spends \$9,864 per pupil, is less than both Talbot and Dorchester Counties.

Table 2

Wealth in School Systems of Principals

School System	Wealth in School System				
	Per Pupil Spending	Wealth per Pupil	State Aid per Pupil	Median Household Income	Population Below Poverty Line
Caroline	\$9,864	\$231,857	\$4,742	\$38,832	12%
Dorchester	\$11,032	\$303,665	\$4,141	\$34,077	14%
Talbot	\$10,364	\$840,316	\$1,004	\$43,532	8%

An explanation for why Caroline County spends the least per pupil might lie in an examination of the demographic data of the participating school systems. Caroline County must educate the greatest number of students at 5,290, which is almost 600 more students than Dorchester County at 4,654 and 900 more than Talbot County at 4,396. While the number of students differs, the demographic patterns in each system are remarkably similar. White students are the majority in all three systems with Caroline having the most at 74% and Dorchester having the least at 56%. Talbot County ranks in the middle with 71% white students. The largest minority group in all three counties is African American. In Caroline County, African American students make up only 19% of the students where as in Dorchester County they make up 39% of the students. Again, Talbot County is in the middle with 21% African American students. All three counties have a small population of Hispanic students. Native American and Asian students

represent between one and two percent of the total student population in all three counties. Most notably, the percentage of FARMS (Free and Reduced Meals) students in the school systems mirrors the wealth of the counties. The wealthiest county, Talbot, has the smallest FARMS population at 29%. The two poorer counties, Caroline and Dorchester, have significantly larger FARMS populations at 44% and 56%, respectively.

Table 3

Demographics of School Systems of Principals

School System	Demographics						
	Total # of Students	African American	Native American	Asian	Hispanic	White	FARMS
Caroline	5,290	19%	.4%	1%	6%	74%	44%
Dorchester	4,654	39%	.3%	1%	4%	56%	50%
Talbot	4,396	21%	.2%	2%	6%	71%	29%

The study participants were questioned as to the socioeconomic status of their family during childhood. Eleven of the 14 principals reported that they grew up in middle class families. Only three of the principals acknowledged growing up in poverty. Principal #7 (high school) claimed, "I guess we were poor but, during those times, it didn't seem like it because everyone else was poor so it really didn't matter." When asked if their family's economic status had any impact on the principals' preparation to deal with students of poverty, seven of the 14 principals answered that their family's socioeconomic status had no impact on their preparation to deal with students from poverty. "I don't really think so. I mean, I didn't experience those things myself," answered Principal #6 (elementary). Principal #10 (elementary) stated, "Growing



up...we weren't in a diverse area but I don't think it impacted how I look at children of poverty...I really don't think it did." Principal #11 (middle school) commented, "I don't know. I went to school in a pretty high poverty area...but I never really thought about it as being a high poverty area so I don't know if the economic situation had an impact or not." Principal #13 (elementary) acknowledged that the economic situation in which she was raised did not have an impact on her preparation but she did think that the way she was raised had an impact on her preparation. "I am not so sure that it had to do with the economic status that I was raised in. It was just that we were raised to be very mindful of other people and what we had in relationship to other people and to try and always help people that were less fortunate than we were." She recalled doing *Meals on Wheels* with her mother and helping less fortunate people through her church and Girl Scouts which, in her words, "made me a little more sensitive to needs of others."

Five principals reported that the socioeconomic status of their family during childhood did impact on their preparation to deal with students from poverty even though not all grew up in poverty. Principal #8 (middle school) discussed that while growing up in a lower middle class, blue collar family she always had food and clean clothes, but was not able to wear name brand or expensive clothing. "I would think so, yes because being from a lower middle class family...my parents, they had to work hard. They were blue collar workers and they taught us to appreciate a dollar. I never had to experience being hungry or anything like that, however, it wasn't always my favorite food to eat but I always had food...As long as our clothes were clean, that was appropriate. We didn't wear name brands stuff. The goal was just to make sure we had changes of clothes and just enough to get us through a week."

The principals who did grow up poor discussed how growing up where there was a lot of need made them more sensitive to the plight of families today. Principal #5 (middle school) asserted, "I think so because if you experience it first hand, it is much easier to be able to talk to someone who is in that situation." Similarly, Principal #7 (high school) voiced, "I think my background growing up has a lot to do with the way that I deal with parents who come through my door or anybody who comes through my door." Two principals, Principals #6 (elementary) and #11 (middle school), thought that their family's socioeconomic status may have impacted on their preparation to deal with students from poverty but not because they grew up in poverty but in the fact that they grew up in other similar conditions as their students. Principal #6 (elementary), who is the principal of a school situated among many farms, stated, "I don't know about impoverished. Now some farm areas, especially these days, it is very hard to make a living farming and we are in a farm community so some of our economically needy children are from farm families. It is a relationship that I can have with them. I grew up on a farm and I can talk about all that." Principal #11 (middle school) stated, "I don't know if the economic situation had an impact or not. I would say maybe it did because I lived in a rural area very similar to where I am now."

The participants were also questioned about how their childhood experiences impacted their ability to relate to students from impoverished backgrounds. The three principals who grew up in poverty spoke of a keen awareness and understanding of the circumstances of their students from poverty. Principal #7 (high school) discussed how he was able to share stories and give insights that students could relate to because he had similar experiences. "I am able to share stories, insights, give analogies that they can

easily relate to because of their experiences. They can see that, although I am a principal and have degrees and they say that I've got it made or whatever, I can quickly share with them that I've been there. It's just a matter of how you are going to work with your opportunities and what God has given you." Principal #5 (middle school) talked of understanding the nuances of what the students were going through and of having to live without a lot of things that the other students had. This same issue was echoed by Principal #2 (elementary). "I know what it's like to not have a lot of brand name items, to not have the ability to go out and eat certain types of fast food all the time or go to fancy restaurants or not have the latest toy or gadget that some of the other students in the school have. When I see that students in the school who are struggling with the same situation or struggling to fit in with the in crowd or with students who have certain things, I struggled with the same thing and so I can definitely relate to those students."

Johnston (2001) asserts that most educators are raised in middle class, thus creating a lack of awareness or understanding of the rules of a class different from their own. However in this study, six of the principals who were raised in middle class homes also spoke of being able to relate to their students from poverty despite their higher socioeconomic status because they struggled with some of the same issues that families in poverty face. Principal #1 (high school) talked of the physical and economic struggles her mother faced as a single parent when her father was deployed in Vietnam. "My dad was in Vietnam for two years when I was growing up...When my dad was gone it was harder on my mom economically and physically." Research states that 60 percent of today's five-year olds will live in a single-parent home before they reach the age of 18. Ninety percent of these homes will be headed by a female. The data suggests that

female-headed households will be five times more likely to have a lower economic status regardless of race or ethnicity. (Johnston, 2001) Principal #14's (middle/high school) family moved frequently because of her father's military service which meant she had to settle into a new school 10 times during her educational career. A report done in 1994 found that 30 percent of the poorest students had attended at least three different schools by the time they entered 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. (Rothstein, 2004)

Principal #11 (middle school) talked about growing up being "a redneck with the best of them." "I don't even know if these are my childhood experiences or just my experiences in general...I grew up cruising in town on the weekend. That's what you did. You had a '57 Chevy and it was jacked up. I can relate, in this particular setting, to the group that is affectionately called the 'boot boys' or the 'farm boys'. So I guess, if anything, that's what helped me." Three principals echoed the feelings of Principals #2 (elementary) and #5 (middle school) in that they spoke of growing up understanding the differences between the haves and the have-nots. Principal #4 (elementary) talked about how her and her siblings were part of the have-nots only in the respect that their things weren't the top of the line or the best. She shared that her sisters resented getting hand-me downs. Principal #14 (middle/high school) also spoke of going to school and seeing kids with designer or "in" things and not being able to have them and realizing that she had students in that same situation now. "The spectrum of poverty is really larger than just those students who qualify and are counted in our free and reduced meals. You have those kids who are border-line who have some of those issues as well." Principal #8 (middle school) discussed how she could relate to the students who just had two pairs of shoes; sneakers and a pair of dress shoes. "I think I can relate to students who might

have had maybe two pairs of shoes, a pair of sneakers, a pair of dress shoes and, in some cases, wearing the sneakers to church. You had shoes to cover your feet and you had food but it may not have been exactly what you wanted. I think those types of things help you to relate to those who are a little less fortunate.”

Four of the 14 principals acknowledged that their childhood experiences had no impact on their ability to relate to their students from poverty. Principal #9 (elementary) stated that, “I don’t think I can relate to that. I can empathize and show compassion but I didn’t grow up with friends that were poor. I grew up in basically a middle class neighborhood.” Principal #3 (elementary) discussed the lack of economic diversity in her school. “Everyone seemed to be about the same when it came to money.” As a child, Principal #10 (elementary) did not notice the students from poverty because they didn’t stand out any differently from the kids that weren’t. Principal #12 (elementary) remarked, “We had poor friends and we had rich friends...I guess in reflecting upon it now, you know who was rich and who was poor but at that point in time, it really didn’t make a difference.”

The second set of six questions asked the study participants about their perceptions of their own knowledge and the knowledge of their teaching staff when it came to dealing with students from impoverished backgrounds in the classroom. Payne (1995) acknowledges that, typically many educators are raised in middle class, thus unaware of the “hidden rules” that exist in other classes or cultures. Similarly, schools tend to operate from middle class values and norms, which often conflict with the norms that impoverished children come to school.

This set of questions pertains to research question one and three. Research question one asks to what extent principals understand what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty. Research question three asks to what extent principals perceive that classroom teachers understand what must occur in classrooms to meet the needs of students from poverty.

As a result of the interview process and analysis of interview questions 2.1 through 2.6, two overarching themes emerged pertaining to research question one and research question three. The first theme that emerged was the importance of classroom relationships. All principals talked repeatedly of the need to establish relationships with students from poverty to foster a classroom environment conducive to successful learning. The second theme that emerged was the need to for teachers to establish the same high expectations for students from poverty as they established for other students in their classroom.

The first question asked to the principals had two parts. The researcher asked: The research shows that students from poverty do better in school when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you? How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom?

The researcher found that 12 of the 14 principals interviewed discussed the need to instruct students from poverty in the daily operations and expectations of school including routines and practices. Two of the 12 principals discussed how students from poverty straddle two worlds; one foot is in the neighborhood and the other foot is in the world of the school. Principal #2 (elementary) stated that, "There's different languages, different morals, different ways of acting and speaking in school then there are when

students get home, so we have to teach them how to behave in both worlds.” Principal #3 (elementary) talked how students must leave street behaviors on the street and adopt different behaviors in school. Three of the 12 principals talked about teaching students how “to do school,” which included how to navigate the system, how to use the resources available to them and how to ensure they have the right materials to use. Principal #1 (high school) discussed the importance of communicating expectations and not assuming that students know what to do. She further elaborated that educators often assume that students know how to line up, take notes and turn in papers. Principal #14 (middle/high school) remarked that she worries that teachers spend too much time teaching students how to do school that they forget about the content and the rigor.

Principal #4 (elementary) compared the process needed to be successful in school to following a recipe. She commented that there is a particular procedure in order to know how to do things in school. Principal #7 (high school) likened education to a game; if you learn the rules, you can play the game. He stated, “If you go into a classroom and you do exactly what a teacher asks you to do and you play by their rules, you’re going to be successful in the class.” Principal #11 (middle school) discussed the importance of modeling what needed to be done for students. She explained that when she was an elementary principal, she had to talk to students about playground rules and expectations. “We had to model for them why you don’t walk up a slide when someone is sliding down the other direction. That seemed like a real basic thing for a lot of teachers, but at the same time, if we didn’t do it, then there would be some kid that would try to walk up the slide.”

When answering the second part of the question, two of the 14 principals talked of setting clear and high expectations for students. Principal #1 (high school) further went on to say that consistency was also an important part of the process. Principal #13 (elementary) talked of observing teachers leveling the playing field for children of poverty by pre-teaching to compensate for the lack of prior experiences or providing classroom supplies that parents may not have been able to get. Nine of the 14 principals mentioned specific routines or practices that they saw when they walked through classrooms. These included organizing materials and supplies, establishing routines like how to pass out papers, walk into a room and get materials, providing course syllabi, setting schedules, reinforcing character lessons, or solving problems without adult intervention. Principal #12 (elementary) went on to elaborate “You want those kids in the same routine. We don’t want to surprise them with stuff. Education is not a guessing game. They need to know what’s coming and when it’s coming.”

Principal #11 (middle school) noted that she did not see as much of it as she should. However, when she did see it, the instruction was very explicit. The teachers would model it and practice it.

The second question in this set also had two parts. Principals were asked: The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you? When you observe in a classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

Dr. James Comer states that, “No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.” Relationships are the key to achievement and the most significant



motivator for students from poverty. Payne states that, "To honor students as human beings worthy of respect and care is to establish a relationship that will provide for enhanced learning." (1995, p. 144) When asked how they succeeded in leaving poverty for a middle class existence, nine out of 10 students answered that a teacher, a counselor or coach took interest in them.

All 14 of the principals agreed that establishing positive relationships involved showing students that you care and that you are interested in them. Students don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. However, each had a different description of the outward expression of that caring and interest. When Principal#1 (high school) talked of establishing relationships, her description included the presence of mutual respect and working with student to reach their goals. "I really truly believe that the child needs to know that you care, that you may not understand everything that they are from and that they've dealt with and the baggage they bring to school but you care enough to work with them to meet their goals. I think in the relationship there needs to be a sense of mutual respect. I think respect is earned. I see, as an administrator, a lot of the teachers that have the most problems...are teachers that have not earned that mutual respect with students that comes out of that relationship with students both academically and interest-wise." According to Principal #2 (elementary), it is an educator's job to find out what each student's talent is and to boost the child up so that they believe that they can be whatever they want to be. "The students...have a lot of authoritarian figures in their lives providing structure and rules for them but they need someone being a positive cheerleader in their lives, letting them know that they can be successful, that they are smart, that they do have the ability to succeed at a number of things. Maybe their talent

is not Art but their talent is Reading. If their talent is not Reading, their talent may be Math. If it's not Math, then maybe they would be a great Social Studies person. If their talent is not in Social Studies, maybe it is Science. It's our job as educators to find what each student's talent is and to boost that child up so high that they believe that they can be whatever it is they can and they want to be by focusing on their strengths rather than their deficiencies." Sharing experiences and getting to know each other are some of the components needed in relationship building as identified by Principal #3 (elementary). "I believe that students aren't going to learn until they learn that you care about them and little simple things like knowing about their ball games. We've had some teachers who would go to their ball games and then, the next day, be able to talk with them just very briefly. I also think that's why *Tribes* is so powerful because using that morning meeting lets everyone share experiences and get to know one another." According to Principal #4 (elementary) establishing positive relationships with students means not giving up on them. "When an individual teacher, principal or whoever it might be shows an interest in the kids and just really doesn't want to give up on the kids regardless if the kids want you to give up on them. It's sort or like a dog and a bone. You're just hanging on and you won't let go. I think kids know that you truly do care about them regardless and it helps build positive relationships." For Principal #5 (middle school), establishing relationships is not about liking or disliking but rather about understanding. "You can have a student in the class that is corrected by the teacher and the student may not like it but the student respects what the teacher is trying to do." Principal #6 (elementary) wants teachers to go the extra mile and to spend time with students getting to know them. For Principal #7 (high school), establishing a positive relationship means finding something that will work

with each child. A teacher will only be successful with students when they have built a relationship.

Principal #8 (middle school) talks about the importance of adding a personal touch to education. “Many times through the course of a school day and in the hustle and bustle and the rush to get everything in, sometimes that can get lost.” Going above and beyond instruction by getting to know each student and his/her family was identified by Principal #9 (elementary) as part of relationship building. It is important to make contact with the family. Principal #11 (middle school) talks of the teacher as guide and coach that doesn’t make excuses for students or accept less than their best. A teacher must have expectations and model them for students. “The reason we got into this business is for kids and we have to take the time and go the extra mile to know them” is the sentiment of Principal #12 (elementary). Teachers need to help students learn how to deal with the situations at home and also focus on the task at hand. Principal #13 (elementary) expressed the idea that teachers must listen more than they talk to find out what students are trying to tell them in terms of their needs. The teacher must be a support for the students and establish a level of comfort and trust. “I think it is going beyond just teaching your content and actually teaching kids. It is getting to know kids as individuals and their strengths and weaknesses whether or not they come to their classroom looking like they are prepared to learn. It is finding out what motivates them and what they are good at and designing instruction for that student.” states Principal #14 (middle/high school). She went on to say that she is able to walk into a classroom and immediately determine whether a teacher has the ability to reach kids in that fashion or whether he/she is willing to commit the extra effort that is needed to get to know students.

Principal #10 (elementary) had a unique perspective on this question in that she did not speak of building relationships in terms of students from poverty. She stated that her staff is not aware of students' individual socioeconomic status but they are aware of the community from which the school pulls so there is no effect on how they relate with their students. "You develop a relationship with every one of your students regardless of their circumstances so the teachers don't do anything differently."

When discussing how they saw teachers building relationships with students in the classroom, the principals' responses ranged from physical expressions of caring like hugs and high fives, proximity, a caring tone of voice, eye contact and gentle touches on the back to more intangible expressions like not passing judgment, maintaining high expectations, not giving up on a student and allowing students to maintain dignity and self esteem in front of peers. Principal #2 (elementary) observed that, "Holding them accountable for their attitude and their behavior in a way that's not so 'in your face' but in a private, loving way lets them know you care about them but you have standards for them."

Of the 14 interviewed principals, two asserted that they could tell what kinds of relationships were established by the teacher as soon as they walked into a classroom. Principal #1 (high school) commented that, "There are people that don't do it at all; they teach one way and teach one child...I also see people who work really hard at it but they are not good because they are not consistent or honest with themselves...I see people who don't really have to work at it at all because it is part of their nature. Being an administrator going into all the rooms, you really see the differences in the dynamics of classrooms."

Three of the 14 principals stated that the way students responded to the teacher was indicative of the relationship with that teacher. “You can tell right away when a student does well with a teacher where he or she may not be doing well with other teachers. The student is usually on time for class, his or her work is of a much higher quality in the class and he or she fully participates in class.” remarked Principal #2 (elementary).

Five of the 14 principals saw teachers taking time to talk with students while three of them saw teachers taking time to be a good listener. Teachers greeting students by name was observed by two of the 14 principals. Principal #7 (high school) and Principal #11 (middle school) both talked of observing teachers using humor or respectful banter to build relationships with students. “You can see some teachers use a sense of humor with students and students are receptive to that sense of humor.” Principal #12 (elementary) talked about the importance of the use of wait time with students. “You’re giving students an opportunity to process the thoughts and get an answer out. Even when it’s an incorrect answer, you are still giving them that positive feedback.” Principal #2 (elementary) commented that students from poverty do well when teachers use rubrics and performance assessments to hold them accountable because students know where they are going. Principal #13 (elementary) talked of teachers being mindful of the students’ unique circumstances that might put them at a disadvantage and trying to proactively head that off.

For the third question in this set, the researcher asked the principals: The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kinds of language and vocabulary development activities do you see teachers employing?

In studies on vocabulary acquisition, researchers found that, on average, professional parents spoke more than 2,000 words per hour to their children, working class parents spoke about 1,300 words and welfare parents spoke about 600. “At 4 years of age, children of professionals had vocabularies that were nearly 50 percent larger than those of working-class children and twice as large as those of welfare children.” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 41) When analyzing the responses to the question, the researcher found that the principals discussed activities that fell into two distinct categories: acquisition and learning which is supported in the research. Gee (1987) distinguishes between acquisition and learning. Acquisition is the immersion in and constant use of a language and is considered the best and most natural way to learn a language. Learning, on the other hand, is the direct instruction of a language.

In an effort to support student acquisition of language, two of the 14 principals talked of immersing students in a language rich environment. Principal #13 (elementary) stated that, “Teachers are very mindful to constantly provide a language rich environment, whether it’s the spoken word or the written word or lots of reading resources for children to get their hands on. I think it’s singing songs in the early grades and learning poetry. It is just that full language immersion to help shore up some of those skills that we know children of poverty often don’t have because they don’t have the resources or the prior knowledge.” Principal #14 (middle/high school) lauded the efforts of her middle school teachers to reinforce vocabulary by reading in context and encouraging students to find it anywhere they can, including in music, in a newspaper or in an advertisement. The teachers help students realize that the vocabulary is constantly being used and is not just something to learn for that particular moment.

Of the 14 principals, two discussed the importance of building background and prior knowledge. Principal #3 (elementary) mentioned the use of informational videos as way of building that background knowledge. For Principal #9 (elementary), just getting students to talk, especially in Pre-K and primary grades, is a way for teachers to help students overcome the language deficiencies they come with. Having books readily available and reading aloud to students are some of the other literacy experiences that this principal has observed that allow students to continually interact with language. Principal #1 discussed how teachers ask particular questions to get students to think of things in a different way or how teachers ask students to retell something in a different way to help them learn a different way to use the language.

More frequently, the principals discussed the way students learn the language. Eight of the 14 principals mentioned observing the direct instruction of vocabulary in classrooms. This instruction could take the form of pre-teaching unit vocabulary, using vocabulary development programs and texts, encouraging students to use a thesaurus, or posting word walls in the classroom. Principal #2 (elementary) observed teachers focusing on vocabulary development activities at different times during the school day. They play little word games in line to go to the bathroom or a special or when students are leaving the room at the end of the day. "Vocabulary development has to be school wide. It can't be just one or two teachers or a group of teachers. It has to be systematic...If you have that then you know all students benefit especially students from impoverished backgrounds."

Principal #4 (elementary) and Principal #13 (elementary) have some teachers that use writing as a way of expanding students' vocabulary. These teachers help students

understand that there are lots of different ways to say something and they provide strong feedback to students on their writing.

Principal #11 (middle school) acknowledged that teachers are still using “drill and kill” as the way to explicitly teach vocabulary. Even though they are moving away from it, she still sees teachers giving students 10 vocabulary words and having them copy the definitions. Principal #7, a high school principal, rarely sees a whole lot done at the high school level other than in ESOL classrooms. It is the expectation of the teachers that students already have those skills and strategies.

In addition to vocabulary development, four of the 14 principals discussed the importance of teaching grammar. Principal #12 (elementary) stated that, “Our English Language Learner teachers are teaching nouns, pronouns and the parts of speech. That’s what we are going back to doing for an intense, short period of time. We are getting that stuff to our students who are missing a whole boat load of literacy experiences and literacy exposure from an early age.” Principal #4 (elementary) has observed teachers rephrasing incorrectly phrased student responses in the correct grammatical structure so that students don’t feel put down. Principal #5 (middle school) has observed teachers in Language Arts classrooms putting sentences on the board and asking students to find the mistakes in those sentences and correct them. “They are purposefully going through the process of building grammar and sentence structure with them.”

For the fourth question in this set, the researcher asked the principals: Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers’ expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?



Research suggests that one of the characteristics that must be in place to promote student achievement is teacher expectations. When the economic backgrounds of teachers and students differ, it is incumbent upon teachers to examine their attitudes and beliefs and the impact those may have on students. “If an educator’s attitude is that a particular socioeconomic group is, in her estimation, academically weak, she may dumb down her curriculum and lower her expectations, an approach that is likely to result in negative outcomes for the individual student within the group, regardless of a student’s own SES level.” (Baruth & Manning, 1995, p. 168) Similarly, teachers’ feelings about the impact they are making on a student is equally important. Teachers’ confidence in their ability to impact student learning and motivation, known as teacher efficacy, has an effect on their expectations concerning the ability of students. “Teachers with a high sense of efficacy are more likely to view low-achieving students as reachable, teachable, and worthy of their attention and effort.” (Alderman, 1990, p. 28)

Six of the 14 principals interviewed agreed that teachers should have the same high expectations for their students from poverty as the other students in the classroom. Principal #4 stated that her teachers let students know that they are here to teach them and that the students are here to learn regardless of where they came from or who their parents are. “They hold them to the same standard. They don’t give up on them.” Principal #6 (elementary) commented that it is really about having the same high expectations for all students but sometimes having to scaffold for some students to get them there. Principal #12 (elementary) shared that he spends time talking with teachers about their expectations for students at different points during the school year. Principal #13 (elementary) discussed the culture of shared accountability that had been developed

in her school. Teachers were required to turn in monthly writing samples to the principal so that she could read an example of each child's writing and also monitor the feedback that teachers were giving to students on their writing. If the feedback was not meaningful, the principal could provide some professional development to teachers. Principal #7 (high school) talked of his commitment to ensuring that the playing field is level for each student because when he was in school, people saw him as a person who was not going to do much because of his background and, consequently, had low expectations for him. Principal #1 (high school) reflected that, "I think you need to have high expectations for all your students not just those from poverty but what I find is both ends of the spectrum. Some people lower expectations because they feel sorry for them...but you also have the other side of the coin where sometimes they set them so high that it's really hard for those kids to be able to reach those goals." Principal #11 (middle school) shared that when she came to the school, she had to spend time explaining to and modeling for teachers what it meant to have high expectations. "Every teacher in this building thinks that they have high expectations but then you see our test scores and you think if you really had high expectations and you were truly teaching the curriculum the way you should be, we wouldn't have these test scores." Principal #1 (high school) summed up it when she stated that, "Teachers can demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students by understanding where they're coming from and their situation but also helping those children understand how to maneuver through the obstacles in their life to be able to meet those expectations."

Four of the 14 principals discussed the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the need of individual students. This includes assessing the students' level of

academic achievement and getting them into an appropriate intervention or enrichment program based on the assessment data. Principal #9 (elementary) talked about teachers who continually look at students, not where they come from, but what the students can do. The teachers make sure that the students get what they need. Principal #2 (elementary) discussed how his teachers were using leveled readers to individualize instruction. “Students are just really taking off with their small group instruction and reading.” Principal #14 (middle/high school) talked about the importance of making sure teachers are looking at individual students and identifying where they are and how they are going to move that child towards mastery of the objectives. “It is differentiating in the classroom. It may be that in your Language Arts classroom, you have two or three texts going...the texts may be at different levels but you begin to progress students forward. You don’t keep them stuck in one place.” Principal #8 (middle school) admitted that it is sometimes harder for teachers at the secondary level to differentiate instruction. “Some teachers do it really well and some other teachers still struggle. I find that they try to put all students in the same group.”

Monitoring progress of students was mentioned by three of the 14 interview participants. These principals all agreed that the expectation is that every student who comes into a building will have the same opportunities and access to the same resources to be successful. Principal #12 (elementary) has his staff look at individual student scores and progress or lack of progress. If there is a lack of progress, they look at why this happening and try to redirect the instruction and learning. Principal #7 (high school) elaborated on what would happen at his school when students are not succeeding. “Every month we assess every student who is not being successful in the classrooms. Teachers

are required to submit to me the names of specific students who are not being successful. It's our responsibility as a team, as a school to find out what's going on... We're going to do the very best that we can for each and every student, every single day."

Three of the 14 principals felt it was important not to feel sorry for the students from poverty. Principal #2 (elementary) stated that, "We look at a child and, as teachers, we naturally feel sorry for students from certain backgrounds. But we can't do that; the stakes are too high today." Principal #11 (middle school) talked about not being able to control what is happening at home but being able to control what is happening at school. She further discussed the need of her staff to move beyond the excuse model because it is what she called "a dead horse" that has been dead for 20 years at that school. Principal #5 (middle school) commented that his staff is relatively new and not quite there when it comes to understanding where the students come from. He talked of the balancing act between understanding where students come from yet not feeling sorry for them because of where they come from. "I think it is promoting more understanding of where the students are coming from; what backgrounds they are coming from but, at the same time, having them understand that this is not the end of the road for them."

Principal #6 (elementary) felt that it was important to catch students being able to do something and using it as model or example for the rest of the class. This helps build the child up and let the child know he or she can do it. Principal #2 (elementary) expressed a desire to see the curriculums set aside for the talented and gifted and advanced students used with all students. It is his feeling that people would be shocked and amazed at what students from poverty could do if exposed to these rigorous curricula. "Many of our students from poverty have had to be extremely creative in their

home environments and in having to navigate through that environment. It's not an easy environment to live in."

The fifth question in this set asked principals: If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students of poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to teachers?

Scheeler, Ruhl and McAfee (in Savrock, 2005), found that teachers rely on performance feedback from supervisors as a means of developing effective practices for classroom instruction. If a supervisor's feedback is immediate, positive, corrective, and/or specific, it is more useful for the teacher and will allow them to spend more time on direct instruction behaviors. Using corrective feedback will aid administrators in improving instruction in the classroom of experienced in-service teachers who may have been engaged in what the researchers termed, 'practicing errors'. "Providing effective feedback to teachers will not only increase correct practice of teaching behavior; it will ultimately have positive results on student academic performance." (Savrock, p.1)

When a perceived weakness was seen in the classroom through a formal observation or informal walk through, all fourteen interviewed principals met with the teacher and had a discussion about what they saw occurring in the classroom. However, what occurred during the discussions varied. Principal #1 (high school) and #6 (elementary) shared specific instructional or relationship building strategies with the teacher. Principal #1 (high school) states, "I think it really should be somewhat specific if you see a weakness because I think...if you just say you need to work on this, a lot of people don't know where to start." To assist her teachers, Principal #3 (elementary) brainstorms with them. Principal #4 (elementary) has teachers talk to her about their

perceptions of the child and family so that she can help clarify the situation. “Sharing with me first their perceptions and then if I can add any light to it; it puts a different twist or a different tone to the whole situation and how they deal with a kid.” Principal #2 (elementary), #5 (middle school), and #8 (middle school) help teachers think critically about the actions they take by sharing student oriented feedback, including that their expectations should be the same for all students. Principal #5 (middle school) noted that, “I can do a walk through...and note some things like I noticed that you finished the sentence of that student as opposed to letting them take it all the way. You are not asking high order thinking questions with that student but you have another student that you know is from a different background and you have more confidence in that student to give you the correct answer.”

Principal #7 (high school) shares resources that he has accumulated over the years with the teachers and acts as a support system for them. “I try to give them the benefits of my expertise and let them know that it’s okay not to have all the right answers but it’s okay to find the right answers because they’re out there.”

Principal #11 (middle school) collects data when she is in the classroom to share and analyze with the teacher. Examples of data she collects include the number of times students are called upon, what groups the teacher spent time with or the location of groups of students in the classroom. “One classroom we went in this year, all the African-American boys were sitting on the side of the room...All the girls were kind of scattered out and there were a few boys that were up front but most of them were all in a row and they were all minorities.”

When Principal #12 (elementary) sits down to talk with a teacher, he is interested in the thought process of that teacher. Based on that insight, he is able to redirect the teacher toward the goal the school is working to achieve.

Examining individual student data is part of the conversation for Principal #9 (elementary) and #14 (middle/high school). Additionally, Principal #14 (middle/high school) finds other teachers that are succeeding with a particular student and uses them to help the struggling teacher build some relationships that might help the student be successful.

The last question in this set asked the principals: If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

Of the 14 principals, eight thought that teachers would say relationships had to occur in the classroom. Principal #14 (middle/high school) thinks teachers would recognize that unless rapport is built with a student, they are not going to reach that student instructionally. As Principal #2 (elementary) stated, "If you don't have that relationship with that child, with the child's family and with the community that the child lives in, it is going to be very, very difficult for you to be successful with that child." Principal #12 (elementary) thinks that making connections with students is the hardest part for some teachers. "It's often times fighting through that tough outer shell of some of our students who come from poverty to really get to know who they are."

Five of the 14 principals mentioned that teachers would talk about high expectations for all students. Along with high expectations, Principal #1 (high school) also mentioned consistency of these expectations.

Three of the 14 principals thought that teachers would mention good teaching. For Principal #2 (elementary), good teaching meant knowing their content and being prepared to teach each day. For Principal #10 (elementary), good teaching took the form of a strong vocabulary program to help students develop their vocabulary skills. Principal #12 (elementary) talked about using strong teaching practices.

Having access to intervention and remediation would be mentioned by teachers as something that had to occur for students of poverty in the classroom according to four principals. Principal #6 (elementary) states that, "They would say that having a little something extra for those kids was important, as well as, telling them they can do it." Principal #3 (elementary) and Principal #10 (elementary) both emphasized the importance of intervening with students when they are young. Similarly, having access to the same opportunities, like athletics, outside the classroom as other students was mentioned by two principals. Principal #3 (elementary) talked about having opportunities to participate in programs like *Black Saga* that encourage students to excel and be proud of their heritage. Principal #7 (high school) argues that, "Backgrounds are different but once they come to school, we have to do everything we can to balance what is taking place at home and what takes place in the classroom."

Two of the fourteen principals thought teachers would talk about parental support and involvement. For the teachers that work for Principal #4 (elementary), it is not important that the parents know how to help students with their work but that they make sure their student(s) complete the work and that they support the efforts of the teacher.

For two of the 14 principals having a better understanding of the students' background would be part of the teachers' answer. Principal #5 (middle school) spoke of



understanding how the students' backgrounds affected their readiness for school. By middle school, there is a certain level of readiness that is expected in terms of prior knowledge. "Prior knowledge is something that is going to ultimately determine how far you have to reach down and grab them and bring them along."

Principal #13 (elementary) thought her teachers would say that students in poverty need a higher degree of support than students that come from more privileged backgrounds. That support could take the form of providing resources, pre-teaching, doing follow-up, helping kids with homework or connecting families with outside agencies to help them acquire things they might need and cannot provide themselves.

The third set of four questions asked the study participants about their professional preparation and their role as a staff developer. Principals need to become, what Rick DuFours calls, a *learning leader* rather than an instructional leader. It is not enough to know what works theoretically, school leaders must be the *chief learner*, knowing what is needed now and what will be needed in the future to ensure continual improvement. (Bottoms, 2001) DuFour argues that school leaders need to shift their attention from teaching to learning which entails shifting the emphasis of their work from the improvement of individual teachers to assisting groups of teachers ensure that students achieve the identified educational outcomes. A learning leader is driven by questions that address the extent to which students have learned the intended outcomes and what can be done for both students and teachers to give them the support and time they need to improve learning.

This set of questions pertains to research question two. Research question two asks to what extent principals perceive that they have received appropriate preparation to provide leadership to classroom teachers to meet the needs of students from poverty.

As a result of the interview process and analysis of interview questions 3.1 through 3.4, several overarching themes emerged pertaining to research question two. The first theme that was apparent after examining the interview data was the lack of effective professional development for principals in dealing specifically with students from poverty. Only one principal received any training at the collegiate level, whether in undergraduate or graduate work. Some of the other principals had received limited training but that training was not on-going, but rather a *one-shot deal*. The research on professional development suggests that to be effective, professional development must be on-going. Similarly, another theme that came to light during the discussions with the principals was their desire for more training dealing explicitly with students from poverty.

The next theme that emerged from the data was the universal appeal of and familiarity with the work of Dr. Ruby Payne. Every principal that was interviewed specifically mentioned her work. They had either participated in one of her workshops, attended a conference where she presented, or read her book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. The principal as staff developer was the final theme that became apparent after reviewing the interview data. All principals talked about sharing information learned from reading professional literature or participating in professional development opportunities with their staff and monitoring the use of what they shared in the classroom.

The first question has three parts and asks the interviewed principals: Have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deal with the needs of students from poverty? If so, describe the professional development opportunity(ies). If no, what kinds of things would you like to see the district do that would be helpful to you?

None of the 14 study participants had any coursework at the undergraduate or master's degree level that dealt with the needs of students from poverty. Principal #7 (high school) declared, "I would say on the Bachelor's level or Master's level, I really don't see too much emphasis on students from poverty." The only principal that talked about having any type of coursework was Principal #2 (elementary), who had a multicultural course in his doctorate program. Principal #7 (high school) stated that, "There are a lot of things that I don't think we are actually are trained in or taught that would make us good principals...There's just so much that a principal has to do but there's never enough time to give them the training that they need."

Some of the principals did participate in other types of professional development opportunities that focused on the needs of students from poverty. Six of the principals talked about participating in a workshop or training by Dr. Ruby Payne, a nationally recognized authority on students from impoverished backgrounds. Principal #1 (high school) and #4 (elementary) were part of a book study group that read Dr. Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Principal #1 (high school) and #14 (middle/high school) mentioned attending a school system-wide diversity course that may have touched on poverty issues. Principal #1 (high school) and #3 (elementary) discussed doing some reading on their own and attending some conference sessions that dealt with students from poverty. Principal #1 (high school) heard a speaker at a conference who

focused on impoverished African-American students and brought him to her school to speak to her staff.

Of the principals who did attend a professional development opportunity that dealt with students of poverty, most could remember some of the details of the training. Principal #1 (high school) recalled attending her three-day training with Dr. Ruby Payne in Cambridge, MD. Principal #2 (elementary) attended his three-day training with Dr. Payne during the summer of 2006 in Sante Fe, New Mexico. When Principal #3 (elementary) and #12 (elementary) attended their three-day training with Dr. Payne, they went to Baltimore, MD. Principal #9 (elementary) and #11 (middle school) remembered someone from Dr. Payne's organization presenting for two days in their school system at least five years ago. Principal #11 (middle school) also saw Dr. Payne at the NAESP (National Association for Elementary School Principals) conference in 2002. Principal #4 (elementary) and her staff spent the entire 2007-2008 school year studying Dr. Payne's book.

When asked to recall some of the key learnings from their professional development, six principals responded and each focused on something unique from their training.

Principal #2 (elementary) listed four important ideas that he took away from his training, relationships, high expectations, teacher preparation and communication.

Principal #3 (elementary) talked of acquiring a better appreciation for what it takes for a student from poverty to arrive at school ready to learn; "an appreciation for how resilient the kids are in the environment that they're living in and how they walk in with a

smile on their face where what they have gone through in the last 24 hours would lay an adult low.”

Principal #4 (elementary) identified two key learnings from her book study. The first dealt with, what Dr. Payne terms as “hidden rules” or expectations that differ from home to school. After the book study, teachers could better understand that what they saw as rude or disrespectful behavior was often a difference in cultural norms. Secondly, Principal #4 (elementary) learned that it was important not to give up on these students. As she says, “I think that the education and the schooling that these kids from poverty get is so critical that if we give up as educators, they are truly lost.”

What stood out for Principal #9 (elementary) was the idea that for parents who are struggling, it is about day to day survival. These parents are worried about putting food on their table not about getting their kids to go to college.

For Principal #11 (middle school), the key learning was that there are things that people in each income level (wealth, middle class, and poverty) do or believe that people in a different income level don’t do or understand.

For Principal #12 (elementary), the key learning was that building relationships and exposing the students to different things made a big difference. “There is not much beyond their frame of reference and the expectations for them within their culture or within their family aren’t really there.”

When asked if they sought out the professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of their jobs, six of the seven principals who participated sought out the opportunity on their own. Only one principal was required to attend.

The researcher questioned the principals about what their districts could do that would be helpful to them in terms of meeting the needs of students from poverty. Eight principals felt that there should be some kind of course offered that focused on the issues surrounding students from impoverished backgrounds. As Principal #2 (elementary) stated, “We have quite a diverse population here in this county and if we don’t understand that population, it’s very hard for us to work with the population. It is our obligation to understand our customer base.” Principal #6 (elementary) thought a course on intervention programs would be helpful. “If you could take a class to learn a little bit about each one, that would be great in building your intervention block and knowing which program is really best for which kid.”

Both Principal #7 (high school) and #12 (elementary) talked about programs for aspiring principals. Principal #7 (high school) would like to see aspiring principals go through a program similar to student teaching where they would have to shadow a current principal. He would also like to see retired principals return to mentor new principals. “Too often, we take teachers and turn them into administrators without formal or proper training and the expectation is that because they were good teachers, they are going to be a good administrator.” Principal #12 (elementary) thought the training for aspiring principals should focus on reaching beyond the school walls out into the community. “There seems to be a huge barrier between the parents of children of poverty, who 90% of the time have had bad educational experiences themselves, and the teachers and leaders in the building.”

Principal #3 (elementary) thought that the school system should provide additional personnel to assist students. “When I go and visit other school system, I see the numbers

of adults they have that can help out...We operate on a shoe string when it comes to personnel and I think what principals need more than anything else is more personnel.”

Principal #4 (elementary) would like to see someone to follow up on the different trainings conducted at the schools with updated information or additional opportunities. As a principal, she gets caught up in other things and can't always follow up. In a similar vein, Principal #11 feels it is important to keep the issue in the forefront. “I think if you don't keep bringing things up to people, it is real easy for things to go by the wayside.”

Principal #10 (elementary) felt strongly that schools needed to stop looking at them as students from poverty but look at them like all other students. The majority of her school population receives free or reduced meals but they do not formally address that issue. “What is addressed is what kids need intervention, what kids need help learning compound words or learning to blend their words. We're focusing on their academic needs not the fact that they are living in poverty.”

The second question in this set also had three parts. The researcher asked the participating principals: Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? Can you recall the titles or authors? In your readings, what are some of the things you used or will be able to use with your teachers?

All 14 of the interviewed principals had read a book or article dealing with needs of students from poverty. Most of the 14 principals could recall the title and/or author of a book. Nine of the 14 principals stated that they had read Dr. Ruby Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Two of the 14 principals mentioned reading Paul Slocum's book entitled *Hear My Cry: Boys in Crisis*. Principal #4 (elementary) chose to follow up

her book study on *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* with Slocum's book because most her population is boys and some of them are very challenging. Additionally, two principals read *What Is It About Me You Can't Teach?* by Eleanor Renee Rodriguez and James A. Bellanca. Other books that principals recalled reading included: (a) *To be Smart or Popular: The Black Peer Group*, (b) *Nothing's Impossible: Leadership Lessons from Inside and Outside the Classroom* by Lorraine Monroe, (c) *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools*, (d) *Through Ebony Eyes*, (e) *Teach Me – I Dare You*, (f) *The Culturally Proficient School* by Randall Lindsey, Laraine Roberts and Franklin Campbell-Jones, (g) *Inspired to Learn: Why We Must Give Children Hope*, (h) *The Nurtured Heart*, and (i) *Annual Growth for All Students, Catch Up Growth for Those Who are Behind*. Additional authors the principals remembered reading included: (a) Jonathon Kozol, (b) Lisa Delpit, (c) Rick DuFours, and (d) Jon McGregor.

Some of the principals also read professional articles that dealt with the needs of students from poverty. Three of the 14 principals mentioned reading professional articles from *Educational Leadership*, the journal published by ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). Principal #4 (elementary) recalled that *Educational Leadership* devoted an entire issue to students from poverty. Principal #3 (elementary) stated that she read articles in the *Principal* magazine published by NAESP (National Association of Elementary School Principals). Principal #1 (high school) read professional articles provided by her superintendent.

The ideas that principals took from their readings to share with staff were as varied as the readings themselves. Six of the 14 principals talked about sharing the importance of relationships with their staff. To further expand on that theme, Principal #7 (high



school) and #8 (middle school) both talked about establishing positive relationships with families and being visible in the community.

Principal #2 (elementary), #7 (high school), and #14 (middle/high school) used the readings to help raise the awareness of their staffs and help them understand where their students come from and how to make school experiences positive. Principal #2 (elementary) stated that, “We have to really understand that some of our students are thinking differently. It’s not about us, it’s about them. They don’t need to change; we need to change to meet their needs.” Principal #14 (middle/high school) noted that she hoped that the information would help break down some stereotypes of children from poverty and the types of families they come from and the support they may have. “I think the thing that struck me the most from the Ruby Payne training was just the concept of language and the use of language and how it can inform relationships and misconstrue interactions between adults and children from poverty.”

Principal #3 (elementary) took specific strategies focusing on discipline and language development from the Ruby Payne book. Along those same lines, Principal #6 worked with her staff on the 15 best practices mentioned in *What is it About Me You Can't Teach?*. She likened those practices to the old TESA (Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement) practices that were developed by Phi Delta Kappa. When asked if she could recall any of the practices, the only one that Principal #6 (elementary) spoke of was probing for answers so that students don’t get away with saying they don’t know anything. Principal #13 (elementary) spoke of using strategies from the reading as action steps in the school improvement plan. As an example, the author of the book suggested

putting strategies in the school newsletter or disseminating a list of prerequisite skills for kindergarten to local pediatricians and daycare providers.

After reading *Inspired to Learn*, Principal #12 (elementary) recommitted to the idea of targeting “at-risk” African-American students by creating a Gentlemen’s Club. “In terms of targeting our students and wanting to close the achievement gap, it much more than just the academics. It’s really a relationship and a sense of belonging as well.”

Principal #1 (high school) tried to take something from each reading to share with her staff whether it was a specific strategy or something more philosophical in nature. The work of Jonathon Kozol resonated with Principal #11 (middle school) because he spoke of teaching every child and believing that every child can learn, which are areas that she is working on with her staff.

For the third question in this set, the researcher asked principals: Have you had an opportunity to share this information with your teachers or other colleagues? If so, how have you shared this information with your teachers or other colleagues? If not, what plans do you have to share this information with your teachers or other colleagues?

Eleven of the 14 principals stated that they had had an opportunity to share information with their staff. Seven of the 14 principals have led or participated in book studies with their staffs. Five principals have shared the information during staff meetings and three have shared the information at SIT (School Improvement Team) meetings. Two principals have used professional development time to share this information and two principals plan to use inservice time to share in the future. Principal #14 (middle/high school) stated that, “One of the things that we have planned as part of our professional development this year is to see how we can start to move our

conversations in that direction.” Principal #12 (elementary) has shared the information with his administrative team and his guidance counselors.

The school where Principal #2 (elementary) works is has a relationship with a local university as a PDS (Professional Development School) that allows faculty from the university to work with the staff at the school. Additionally, staff members have 24 hour access to PD 360 which is an online warehouse of video clips from national experts on a wide variety of topics including poverty.

Three principals mentioned not having an opportunity to share information with their staff. Principal #14 (middle/high school) was just finishing her first year at the school and had not had the opportunity to work with the staff on issues surrounding students in poverty but she planned to do so in the future. The other two principals had no plans to share the information with their staffs.

The last question in the set asked principals: How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Not unexpectedly, 11 of the 14 principals used informal walk-throughs and formal observations and the resulting conversations to monitor the use of information acquired from the principal or through professional development opportunities. Principal #11 (middle school) discussed the importance of follow-up. “We usually have to have a focus and then we hammer it, and hammer it and hammer it...I know that just because I tell them to read something or give it to them, it’s not going to change their beliefs and it’s not going to change their practice.” Principal #1 (high school) encouraged her teachers to invite her into their classroom to see something new they were trying. In the

school system of Principal #9 (elementary), teachers who are not on an evaluation year were able to do a professional growth plan individually or with a team. The principal met with the teacher(s) three times during the year to examine data and see how they are doing.

Five principals had discussions at staff meetings while three had discussions at grade level team meetings. Principal #14 (middle/high school) asked teachers to come back at staff meetings and report how well an actual strategy worked in their classroom. “We really want to see whether or not we, as a kind of professional learning community, are implementing it and what impact it is having and how we can refine it.” Since Principal #12’s (elementary) staff was so large and there was a need for a lot of communication, he blocked out every Thursday for one type of meeting or another. “We need to continue to share our knowledge and share our progress.”

Three principals examined student data to monitor the use of what staff had learned. When Principal #8 (middle school) examined the data, she would find students who were capable of performing and not doing so. This would cause her to question what was preventing the student from being successful and help her identify what avenues needed to be explored to change that. Principal #5 (middle school) stated that, “If you look at the distribution of referrals from certain teachers, you can see a high rate from a certain demographic and that is a red flag, not necessarily that the teacher is a racist but that the teacher doesn’t quite understand where a group of students from similar backgrounds is coming from.”

Principal #2 (elementary) made use of a quarterly staff feedback sheet to find out what teachers were learning about or what they would like to learn about. As part of the

evaluation of a professional development activity, Principal #4 (elementary) asked staff to reflect on how they were going to use the information in their classroom or share it with colleagues.

During each semester, Principal #7 (high school) had each teacher share an idea, suggestion or strategy that has been beneficial or successful in his or her classroom. The principal compiled the list and sent it out to everyone on staff. "So now instead of having one that you use, you have 40 that you can use. Since we do this twice...at the end of the year you have 80 things that are working in the classroom. Some of those things are working with students of poverty."

The fourth set of four questions asked the study participants about their perception of their teachers' professional preparation to deal with the needs of students from poverty. "The extensive research, when reviewed, confirmed that the single most important determinant of student achievement is the expertise and qualifications of teachers: what teachers know and can do makes the difference in what children learn." (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p. 38) But it is also shown in the research that there exists a difference in teachers' abilities, knowledge and skills. Person (1996) concludes that increasing teacher professional knowledge and skills so that they are willing and able to implement research-based best practices could impact on their own beliefs and confidence levels, which in turn, can impact positively on student achievement.

This set of questions pertains to research question four. Research question four asks participants to what extent do they perceive that their teaching staff has received appropriate preparation to provide for the needs of students from poverty in their classrooms.

As a result of the interview process and analysis of interview questions 4.1 through 4.4, several overarching themes emerged pertaining to research question four. The first theme that emerged from the data was the lack of awareness of teacher professional development in dealing with students from poverty. The majority of principals did not know whether their staff had received any training or read any professional literature that specifically addressed dealing with impoverished students. However, another theme that emerged was the universal acknowledgement of the need for more training for teachers. The opportunity to share with colleagues was the final theme that came to light during the researcher's analysis. The majority of the principals gave staff time to share information gleaned from readings or professional development.

The first question asked to the principals had three parts. The researcher asked: Have your teachers received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty? If so, describe the professional development opportunity(ies). If no, what kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to teachers?

Nine of the 14 interviewed principals were unaware or unsure of any preparation their teachers had received to deal with the needs of students from poverty. Principal #1 (high school) knew that 50-60% of her staff were taking courses toward recertification but she could not speak definitively that any of the work dealt with students of poverty. Principal #13 (elementary) was hopeful that some of her staff had training to deal with students of poverty during their undergraduate or master's degree work.

Four of the principals stated that some of their teachers were familiar with the work of Dr. Ruby Payne, either through participating in one of her professional development

opportunities or reading her book. Principal #2 (elementary) and #3 (elementary) reported that some of their teachers volunteered to become certified Ruby Payne trainers by participating in a two-day training. Principal #10 (elementary) stated that the previous principal had brought a lot of information from the Ruby Payne book to the staff.

Four of the study participants mentioned that their teachers had participated in the school-system required diversity course. Principal #4 (elementary) recalled that the course was a one-credit course that was required of all teachers.

Principal #2 (elementary) reported that some of his staff had signed up for online courses dealing with multiculturalism and that other members of his staff were accessing PD360, the online warehouse of professional development videos. He also thought that some of his teachers had some undergraduate and graduate level coursework in multiculturalism, diversity and African-American studies. However, he was unsure whether any of the coursework was related to poverty.

Principal #3 (elementary) thought that the PBIS, Positive Behavioral Incentives and Supports, conference that some of her teachers attended may have touched on issues of poverty. Principal #9 (elementary) sent two of her teachers to a two-day multicultural conference. The two teachers came back and shared what they learned. She also mentioned that her staff had some sporadic diversity training.

Principal #7 (high school) thought that there must be a lot of preparation being done in the areas of classroom management, discipline and sensitivity to minority issues because when he recruits new teachers, they talk competently about these issues during interviews.

When asked what the school system should do to help teachers deal with students from poverty in the classroom, seven of the 14 principals thought a diversity course that included a focus on poverty and classroom strategies to use with their students would be helpful. Principal #5 (middle school) stated that, “Colleges do a good job of explaining the research behind things and explaining the methodology but when it comes to nuts and bolts, you’re in this building, you’re in that classroom and here is your group of students, I think that needs a little more work especially when you talk about students in poverty.”

Principal #1 (high school) further explained that she would like to see a variety of courses, including one that deals with students of poverty, available to teachers. The teachers would be required to take one course each year. She felt that this would communicate to the teachers that the school system values this mission and that they understand it is an issue within the school system. As the principal, it would be her job to help guide her teachers to take the right course. “You don’t want to be too demanding because you want people to participate; you want them to be willing but at the same time, you want them to professionally grow.”

Principals #6 (elementary) and #14 (middle/high school) both commented that they appreciated the school system allowing individual schools to plan staff development that they need. “One of the things I appreciate is...allowing us, as school leaders, to share what we are doing in our building with each other and to determine what would best fit our school and the students we serve. It’s not a one structure for every single school but we’re experimenting and sharing ideas of what might work with our staff.” On the other hand, Principal #7 (high school) spoke of the need for county-wide inservice because there are issues, like students from poverty and special education, that span all schools.



Principal #2 (elementary) felt that the collaborative observation process focused on student learning that has been a part of recent administrative training will be helpful to teachers because they are part of the conversation about what is happening in their classroom. “Teachers are able to be more reflective about the lesson and talk more about the outcome of the lesson...That has done a lot to focus on specific students and because of that, the students of poverty in the class will certainly be highlighted a lot more than they ever were before.”

Principal #3 (elementary) would like to see the school system develop a summer program that is enriching for students. Additionally, she spoke of the need for additional staff to really meet the needs of the students. Principal #8 (middle school) thought that local colleges and colleges across the country needed to be partners in helping to close the gap.

Principal #7 (high school) would like to see teachers have the opportunity to shadow teachers in a different setting for a week or two so they could understand what it is like to work in a large inner city school. He also talked about extending the school day and the school year. “Most of our kids are home before the parents even think about getting home because they have to work.”

Principal #9 (elementary) thought it was important to talk to the students and with parents. She feels that those in education forget to look through the lens of the students. How do they perceive what educators do? In a similar vein, Principal #9 (elementary) thought that parents often feel uncomfortable talking to a teacher because they feel as if they are being judged on their parental skills. “I had a teacher one day say to me, ‘My children wouldn’t behave like that’...Your children wouldn’t behave like that but you

cannot then take that mentality about what makes a well-behaved child and superimpose it on this middle schooler.”

The second question in this set had two parts and asked the study participants: Have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? Can you recall the titles or authors?

Six of the 14 principals mentioned the teachers had read the work of Dr. Ruby Payne. Other authors recalled by the principals included: (a) Carol Ann Tomlinson, (b) Jonathon Kozol, (c) Lisa Delpit, (d) David Cooper, and (e) Robert Slocum. Two principals were able to recall the specific titles of books their staff had read. These titles included: (a) *The Nurtured Heart*, (b) *Closing the Achievement Gap*, (c) *Literacy with ELL Learners*, and (d) *Differentiated Instruction*. Six of the 14 principals were unable to name any books that their staff had read. Principal #7 (high school) indicated that, “I’ll read book and I can’t tell you who the author is 10 days after that because all I’m reading for is content. I don’t need to know who wrote it, I just need to know what it is about that I could use to benefit our population.”

Four of the study participants mentioned that they or a member of their staff copy articles and give them to teachers to read. Principal #1 (high school) commented that one of her assistant principals was very good at locating short articles and sharing them with staff. “I think we need to do more of that because I really do believe that our teachers want to know more and want to learn more, but also want to learn that they aren’t alone. This is a bigger problem.” Principal #14 (middle/high school) collected some articles to share during staff development that she felt would be relevant along with some awareness activities that she would like to try. “I think, particularly in this area, where we have such

physical wealth in our community, sometimes it's hard to keep a perspective on where all of our students are coming from and the challenge that they face due to poverty.” When Principal #7 (high school) comes across something beneficial, he puts it in his weekly newsletter to the staff.

The third question, which has three parts, in this set asked the principals: Have your staff members had the opportunity to share this information with other colleagues? If so, how have they shared this information? If not, what plans do they have to share this information?

Four of the 14 principals had staff share information in book study groups. Principal #3 (elementary) discussed how she had staff share during a book study. The first time she did a book study, her staff read the same information independently and then got together and discussed what they had read and what they would implement in their classrooms. The next time, two staff members acted as facilitators. It was their responsibility to summarize the book and present the information to the rest of the staff. Another time Principal #3 (elementary) did a jigsaw activity where a group of teachers would read one or two chapters and decide on the important information and present that information to the entire group. Principal #7 (high school) mentioned that his staff wanted to do a book study but he was not supportive of the idea. “When are we going to have a book club? The obvious answer is after school but with all the other obligations...we're not a middle school or elementary school, we have activity going on here every day. I could have a staff meeting and I've got two or three teachers out because they are coaching this or that...so time has always been an issue for me.”

Three of the principals mentioned sharing information in staff meetings, department meetings, or grade level meetings. Principal #1 (high school) indicated that, “At every staff meeting, we have the first 15 minutes of sharing. They can share something they’ve learned or I actually invite a couple of people to demonstrate an activity.”

Three of the 14 study participants talked about sharing information in small groups. Principal #8 (middle school) held some small groups discussions and found them to be very effective. Principal #14 (middle/high school) would like to have teachers work in study groups so they can bounce ideas off each other and then bring their shared knowledge to the entire staff. “We find that staff is more engaged in the conversations, probably more honest in sharing rather than thinking that we’re looking for the right answer. It also allows them, as practitioners in the classroom with those students, to really hone in on what they’re seeing and how it can change their work.”

Two of the principals used professional development time to share information. Principal #1 (high school) described using her professional development time for a series of mini-workshops offered by her staff that other staff members could choose from based on interest. “What they said to me when I did the evaluation was ‘the one thing that really stood out in my mind was how I didn’t know that there were other people on staff that were interested in that’. I think just understanding that there are other people that are thinking about what you’re thinking about is a good thing.” During his professional development time, Principal #2 (elementary) had staff engaged in gallery walks in classrooms. Staff members were encouraged to write down the good ideas they saw in those classrooms and share with each other. “I think it is very helpful to talk with each

other about what they did with each student who was struggling...that helps, particularly with students from poverty.”

Five of the participants gave no indication of any opportunities to share information or mentioned any plans to do so in the future.

The fourth and final question in the set asked participants: What additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers?

Three of the principals would like to see additional training on diversity awareness and sensitivity which includes economics. Principal #10 (elementary) stated that, “I think some people have the mind set that the kids aren’t learning because they live in poverty.” Principal #9 (elementary) commented that the training was important because the county in which her school system is situated is impoverished. Four out of the five elementary schools meet the requirements to be a Title I school. Principal #11 (middle school) expressed a concern about the lack of integration of a particular part of the community. “We have a Haitian population down here that we’ve had for probably about 17 years. The thing that really disturbed me and shocked me the most when I came back to this school after 10 years on my administrative jaunt around the county was the acclimation of the Haitians into the school here and next door has not happened at all...We haven’t done anything in 17 years to help these students in this community get more integrated. And that to me was very, very telling but it was very sad because, again, poverty comes into that.”

Three of the 14 principals thought it was important to differentiate teacher professional development. Principal #4 (elementary) would accomplish that by creating a series of book study groups around the school system and allowing teachers to choose in

which books study they would like to participate. The use of PD 360, the online warehouse of professional development videos, was mentioned by three of the 14 principals as another way to differentiate staff development for teachers. Principal #12 (elementary) indicated that, “I think it is really imperative that we differentiate our professional development for our staffs because we’ve got people who have been teaching for 35 years and people just walking fresh out of the classroom, so the needs are vast. I think through technology, we’ll be able to hit every type of learner and every type of teacher.”

Principal #5 (middle school) would like to see teachers get out in the community to help them understand the population they serve. He mentioned touring the community, having community forums and listening to community members. “I think more tours of the areas that they serve so that they can get a visual for what they’re dealing with for the purpose of understanding the task at hand, not for feeling sorry for the person coming from that environment.” Principal #7 (high school) would also like to take teachers on trips but his would focus more on professional development. “When I was at the middle school, we went to a school in New Jersey to look at a successful reading program. To go to schools similar to yours, to go to schools that are not like yours just so that you can have a different perspective and see how things are going.”

Principal #1 (high school) commented on the need for greater communication when transitioning students from elementary to middle and from middle to high. “A counselor came over with his kids...He already knew his kids...He knew their potential. He knew their strengths. He knew their weaknesses. He knew their interests. There is something

very powerful about that and I think that's also an answer to dealing with kids from poverty."

Principal #13 (elementary) felt it was very important to do greater staff development on creating a culture of high expectations for all students in a building and on analyzing data on individual students. "I think the high expectation piece, the climate and culture of the school coupled with really helping teachers become better at diagnosing through data analysis and prescribing programming based on that data to move kids along would be one of the best things we can do for our kids."

Principal #1 (high school) and #14 (middle/high school) want to go back to the whole concept of relationships. Principal #14 (middle/high school) stated that, "When we look at our individual student data, you can just see the growth being more pronounced in those classrooms where those students feel a clear connection with the teacher." Principal #1 (high school) created a homeroom concept in her high school to assist teachers in building relationships with students. "I think this homeroom concept will really help our kids from poverty because the kids will have the same homeroom teacher all four years."

Principal #6 (elementary) would like some additional funds to purchase resources for teachers to use. "When you watch these videos, you might come across some resources that you really want to go further into and I would like to be able to have the resources to do that." Along with resources, Principal #1 (high school) would like to see more time devoted to professional development. "I think teachers are really social creatures and they don't have that time to be social creatures...That's why they are in

education; they're adult learners. We sometimes don't give them enough time to be adult learners."

### Summary

The findings cover a range of perspectives that indicate that experiences and training of principals and teachers in dealing with the needs of students from poverty are limited. The majority of the principals in the study came from middle class backgrounds which had little impact on their preparation to deal with students of poverty. While they were able to relate to their students of poverty on a certain level because of geography or temporary financial circumstances, most of them had not experienced the hardships that come with generational poverty.

When talking about what it takes to meet the needs of students from poverty, the principals were in agreement that building relationships with the students is one of the most important pieces of the puzzle along with having high expectations. Both resurfaced when the principals were asked what they thought their teachers would identify as needing to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty. The principals were able to competently articulate what "the business of school" meant as well as the kind of language and vocabulary development they say happening in the classrooms in their building. As with relationships and high expectations, instructing students in the business of school and aiding in language and vocabulary development happened in many of the classrooms but not all.

Providing feedback to teachers is routine part of the principal's job so it was quite easy for them to expound on how they would give feedback to teachers if they saw a weakness in what needed to happen in the classroom to meet the needs of students of



poverty. Most expressed that they made use of informal and formal dialogues with teachers to give feedback.

When it came to the professional preparation of both the principals themselves and their staff, it was apparent that neither group had received any extensive training in dealing with needs of students from poverty. The one commonality among the principals was the universal appeal and familiarity with work of Dr. Ruby Payne. Many of the principals articulated that they and/or members of their staff had participated in one of her trainings or had read her book. The principals were relatively unfamiliar with any other experts in this field beyond Dr. Payne.

Beyond participating in a Ruby Payne training or a locally-offered diversity course or taking an occasional course in multiculturalism at the graduate level, the principals and their staff had little training on dealing with the needs of students from poverty. Consequently, when asked what needed to improve their practice or the practices of their teachers, the principals felt that a diversity course that included a focus on the diversity of economics was needed.

The findings indicate that principals are aware there is an issue surrounding level and depth of their preparation and the preparation of their staff to deal with students from poverty in the classroom. They also recognize that additional training for themselves and their staff is the way to mitigate this issue and that this training needs to focus on awareness and understanding of economic diversity and the classroom strategies and practices that positively impact achievement of students from poverty. The findings also suggest that there is a need to expand the principals' knowledge base beyond just the work of Dr. Ruby Payne. The work of Dr. Payne has merit and value but to have a

greater impact on the achievement of students from poverty, principals need to be well-versed in the full spectrum of the research in this area.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine K-12 principals' perceptions of their own preparedness and the preparedness of their staff for dealing with the students of poverty that populate classrooms. Chapter I presented the problem to be studied: What are the perceptions of K-12 principals from small, rural school systems about their preparedness and the preparedness of their staff to deal with students of poverty in the classroom? Chapter II contained a review of the pertinent literature that focuses on childhood poverty, poverty and equity in schools, the culture of poverty in schools, poverty and successful schools and instructional leadership. Chapter III contained a description of the methodology used in this study to evaluate the responses of the K-12 principal in small, rural school systems. Chapter IV included an analysis of the data collected. Chapter V summarizes the findings and contains recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

Four research questions were investigated: (1) To what extent do principals understand what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty? (2) To what extent do principals perceive that they have received appropriate preparation to provide leadership to classroom teachers to meet the needs of students from poverty? (3) To what extent do principals perceive that classroom teachers understand what must occur in classrooms to meet the needs of students from poverty? (4) To what extent do

principals perceive that their teaching staff has received appropriate preparation to provide for the needs of students from poverty in their classrooms?

In order to investigate these four research questions, fourteen K-12 principals from small, rural school systems were interviewed in their offices or the office of the researcher and asked questions related to the research questions.

### Summary of Research

As the number of students who enter school from impoverished backgrounds continues to grow, so does the body of research that examines the culture of this subgroup and what can be done to impact their achievement. The research suggests that students from poverty benefit from being instructed in the business of school, from developing positive relationships with teachers, from explicit language and vocabulary development and from being a part of a classroom where teachers have high expectations for their achievement. The research also suggests that teacher quality and preparation play a crucial role in the academic success of students from poverty. Tangentially, the research also shows that teachers who receive coaching and support from their leaders are more likely to employ new practices that lead to increased student achievement. Consequently, it is important that school leaders understand the culture of students from poverty and are well-versed in the practices that can positively impact the achievement of this subgroup. The researcher analyzed responses in order to determine the preparedness of the school leaders and their staffs and to lead the researcher to conclusions based on the similarities and differences in their responses. The findings of this study are summarized and explained in the following paragraphs.

The first research question was: To what extent do principals understand what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty? In order to answer this question, study participants were asked four questions that pertained to the best practices that should occur on the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty and one question that dealt with teacher feedback. In order to ascertain the principals' understanding of some of the best practices that should occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, the participants were asked: The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you? Payne (1995) acknowledges that, typically many educators are raised in middle class, thus unaware of the "hidden rules" that exist in other classes or cultures. Similarly, schools tend to operate from middle class values and norms, which often conflict with the norms that impoverished children come to school.

The researcher found that 12 of the 14 principals interviewed discussed the need to instruct students from poverty in the daily operations and expectations of school including routines and practices. Two of those 12 principals discussed how students from poverty straddle two worlds; one foot is in the neighborhood and the other foot is in the world of the school. Three of those 12 principals talked about teaching students how "to do school," which included how to navigate the system, how to use the resources available to them and how to ensure they have the right materials to use.

The beliefs of 86% of the principals coincide with the literature discussed in Chapter II. Payne (1996) states that schools and businesses tend to operate from middle-class norms and hidden rules. Consequently, there is a mismatch of norms between the school and certain children from poverty. Students in poverty need to be educated about

the hidden rules of the middle class so that they are able to successfully navigate the educational enterprise. This researcher believes that principals understand that students from poverty must be re-acculturated when they enter school so that they can equitably and successfully participate in that world. Principal #7 (high school) summed it up most eloquently when he likened education to a game; if you learn the rules, you can play the game. He stated, “If you go into a classroom and you do exactly what a teacher asks you to do and you play by their rules, you’re going to be successful in the class.”

The researcher asked the study participants: The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you? All 14 of the principals agreed that establishing positive relationships involved showing students that you care and that you are interested in them. They talked about taking time to get to know students, their interests, and their families, trying to understand them in terms of their background and experiences, and finding out their strengths and focusing on them. A representative statement of the feelings of the principals came from Principal #14 (middle/high school) when she stated that, “I think it is going beyond just teaching your content and actually teaching kids. It is getting to know kids as individuals and their strengths and weaknesses whether or not they come to their classroom looking like they are prepared to learn.” Principal #10 (elementary) had a unique perspective on this question in that she did not speak of building relationships in terms of students from poverty. She stated that her staff is not aware of students’ individual socioeconomic status but they are aware of the community from which the school pulls so there is no effect on how they relate with their students. “You develop a

relationship with every one of your students regardless of their circumstances so the teachers don't do anything differently.”

This unanimous response is supported in the literature in Chapter II. The ability of teachers to forge relationships with children from impoverished backgrounds is identified by Haberman (1999) as a key factor in a high-performing school. This notion is supported by the work of Borman and Rachuba (2001) that focused on building resiliency in students. They identified “strong and supportive” relationships as critical. Beegle (2003) found that college graduates who grew up in poverty reported that, “They believed their lives would have turned around sooner had they experienced teachers who believed in them and treated them like they were ‘somebody’.” (p. 15)

This researcher found the passion with which all the principals spoke about the importance of relationships to be compelling. Even though each principal had a unique perspective when it came to discussing how they believed relationships were formed, all 14 were unanimous in their agreement that forging relationships was the cornerstone in the foundation of teacher success in dealing with students from poverty in the classroom. This researcher believes that the strength of conviction of the principals confirms that the importance of relationships has been ingrained into the hearts and minds of members of their school communities and the districts at large.

The researcher asked the principals: The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies do you see teachers employing? Two of the 14 principals talked of supporting student language acquisition by immersing them in a language rich environment to help shore up language skills that children of

poverty often don't have by getting students to talk, having books readily available, and reading aloud. Two others discussed the importance of building background and prior knowledge through the use of videos or sources of information.

More frequently, the principals discussed the way students learn the language. Eight of the 14 principals mentioned observing the direct instruction of vocabulary in classrooms. This instruction took the form of pre-teaching unit vocabulary, using vocabulary development programs and texts, encouraging students to use a thesaurus, or posting word walls in the classroom. However, one principal acknowledged that teachers in her building were still using "drill and kill" as a way to explicitly teach vocabulary. Two principals mentioned seeing teachers use writing as a way to expand vocabulary by helping students understand that there are lots of different ways to say something and providing strong feedback on their writing.

In addition to vocabulary development, four of the 14 principals discussed the importance of teaching grammar through activities like teaching nouns, pronouns and the other parts of speech, rephrasing incorrectly phrased student responses in the correct grammatical structure, or putting sentences on the board and asking students to find the mistakes and correct them. Only one of the principals, a high school principal, mentioned rarely seeing any language or vocabulary development done at his school other than in ESOL classrooms because it was the expectation of the teachers that students already had those skills and strategies.

The literature in Chapter II supported the majority assertion that vocabulary and language development is a regular part of classroom instruction. Researchers found that, on average, professional parents spoke more than 2,000 words per hour to their children,



working class parents spoke about 1,300 words and welfare parents spoke about 600. “At four years of age, children of professionals had vocabularies that were nearly 50 percent larger than those of working-class children and twice as large as those of welfare children.” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 41) This work supports the notion that there is a connection between social class and the amount of vocabulary a person possesses. The language norms of people in poverty are not rewarded or reinforced in the educational setting. Teachers need to be aware so that they assist students in adjusting to the culture of the schoolhouse. “To survive in poverty, one must be very sensory-based and non-verbal. To survive in school, one must be very verbal and abstract.” (Payne, 2002, p. 21)

This researcher found it interesting that 93% of the principals interviewed have observed some sort of language and/or vocabulary development happening. Language and vocabulary development are an important part of the instructional program at the elementary level. In fact, vocabulary and language development are a daily part of the consistent patterns of Language Arts instruction at that level. However, it was most surprising to this researcher that the secondary school principals talked of teachers making use of word walls; modeling appropriate grammar and helping students use context to understand vocabulary. Principal #14 (middle/high school) lauded the efforts of her middle school teachers to reinforce vocabulary by reading in context and encouraging students to find it anywhere they can, including in music, in a newspaper or in an advertisement. It is the experience of the researcher that most language development at the secondary level is often either non-existent or confined to ELL or other support classes as identified by Principal #7 (high school) or, if it does occur, takes the form of “drill and kill” talked about by Principal #11 (middle school).

The last question about the principals' knowledge of best practices asked them: Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty, how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students? Six of the 14 principals interviewed agreed that teachers should have the same high expectations for their students from poverty as the other students in the classroom. The idea of high expectations for students of poverty is supported in the literature in Chapter II. High poverty schools with a culture of high expectations that is shared by all members of the school community including the principal, the teachers and the students, are often high performing. The central tenet to this culture is the belief that all students can learn and be successful academically. In fact, research has identified this belief to be the dominant theme that makes schools successful in high poverty communities. (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, Carter, 2000, Ragland, Clubine, Constable, and Smith, 2002, Williams et al., 2005, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988)

Four of the 14 principals discussed the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the need of individual students. This included assessing the students' level of academic achievement and getting them into an appropriate intervention or enrichment program based on the assessment data. The literature in Chapter II supports the principals' assertion that students of poverty need differentiated instruction to be successful. For most schools, the state assessments mandated by NCLB provide a comparison of student progress against an external standard, however, at high-performing schools, the purpose of testing is to diagnose and determine the instruction of individual students. The use of ongoing assessment practices allows teachers to individualize

instruction for students by determining the areas in which they need help and changing the instruction to meet these needs. (Corallo & McDonald, 2001, Carter 2000, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002)

Monitoring progress of students was mentioned by three of the 14 interview participants. These principals all agreed that the expectation was that every student who came into a building would have the same opportunities and access to the same resources to be successful. This notion is supported in the literature in Chapter II. Barth et al. (1999) surveyed high-performing schools in 21 states and found that 81 percent of these schools had developed a comprehensive assessment program, which allowed teachers to monitor student progress regularly and frequently so that they could quickly intervene with those students who were struggling.

Three of the 14 principals felt it was important not to feel sorry for the students from poverty. Teachers needed to move beyond the excuse model because it is what Principal #11 (middle school) called “a dead horse”. “...The time for making excuses that blame the students, or their families, or their communities is long past...” (Haycock, 1998, p. 2) Principal #5 (middle school) talked of the balancing act between teachers understanding where students come from yet not feeling sorry for them because of where they come from. The impact of teacher attitude and perceptions is found in the literature in Chapter II. When the economic backgrounds of teachers and students differ, it is incumbent upon teachers to examine their attitudes and beliefs and the impact those may have on students. Ferguson (1998) (as cited in Lawrence) contends that perceptions influence teacher expectations and hinder their ability to accurately predict student learning potential. In fact, some researchers suggest that “teachers’ perceptions,

expectations, and behaviors are powerful enough to be partly responsible for (a) the underachievement of students of color and of students from low-income homes and (b) the Black-White achievement gap in scores.” (Lawrence, p. 351)

It is notable that when speaking of rigor and high expectations in the classrooms, only one of the principals mentioned using state standards to measure progress or curriculums to challenge students. This is contrary to the findings in the literature in Chapter II, which suggests that requiring instruction that follows established standards or curriculum ensures that students are taught the materials they will need to be successful on their grade level assessments. (Barth et al., 1999, Kannapel and Clements, 2005, Corallo and McDonald, 2001, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) Barth et al. found that 80 percent of the high performing schools reported using standards to plan curriculum and instruction, 94 percent reported using standards to measure and monitor student progress and 59 percent used the standards to assess the effectiveness of the teaching staff. Williams et al. (2005) indicated that teachers from high-performing schools reported “school-wide instructional consistency within grades, curricular alignment from grade-to-grade, classroom instruction guided by state academic standards and up-to-date and sufficient curriculum materials in Math and Language Arts aligned with the state’s standards.” (Williams et al., p. 1)

Similarly, none of the principals talked of the use of instructional practices that were challenging. Data from the work of Barth et al. (1999) found in Chapter II indicated that top performing schools were moving away from low level instructional practices like the use of dittoes towards developing higher order skills by offering more opportunities for the discussion of work and increasing the use of technology. “Those encouraged to

work with challenging content, to solve problems, and to seek meaning from what they study will make far greater academic progress than students limited to basic skills instruction.” (Commission on Chapter I, p. 7)

The last question that addressed research question one asked principals: If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers? When a perceived weakness was seen in the classroom through a formal observation or informal walk through, all 14 interviewed principals met with the teacher and had a discussion about what they saw occurring in the classroom. However, what occurred during the discussions varied. Two principals shared specific instructional or relationship building strategies with the teacher. Cotton (2000) identified understanding teaching and learning and modeling appropriate strategies for their staff as one of the roles of effective administrators in student learning. Three principals helped teachers think critically about the actions they had taken by sharing student oriented feedback. The work of these three administrators would allow them to be classified as a *learning leader* identified in the work of Rick DuFour. DuFour defined a learning leader as a principal who was driven by questions that addressed the extent to which students had learned the intended outcomes and what could be done for both students and teachers to give them the support and time they needed to improve learning. Examining individual student data was part of the conversation for two other principals. One principal shared observational data that consisted of the number of times students were called upon, what groups the teacher spent time with or the location of groups of students in the classroom with the teacher.

Other activities mentioned by individual principals included brainstorming, sharing resources, talking about perceptions, and understanding the teacher's thought process.

Although the literature on instructional leadership in Chapter II does not specifically mention providing feedback to teachers as one of the roles of a principal, it does support the notion of principal as coach or resource. By engaging teachers in discussions of their professional practice, the study participants were serving as what Andrews and Soder (1987) identified as an instructional resource. As instructional resource, the principal gave priority to instructional issues, served as a coach and model of desirable behaviors and actively engaged in professional development.

Research question 2 was: To what extent do principals perceive that they have received appropriate preparation to provide leadership to classroom teachers to meet the needs of students from poverty? In order to elicit these perceptions, participants were asked four questions about their professional preparation and their role as staff developer.

The first question asked principals: Have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the students from poverty? If so, describe the professional development opportunity(ies). If no, what kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to you?

None of the 14 study participants had any coursework at the undergraduate or master's degree level that dealt with the needs of students from poverty. The only principal that talked about having any type of coursework was Principal #2 (elementary), who had a multicultural course in his doctorate program. The lack of appropriate coursework during principal preparation programs is contrary to the literature in Chapter II. In *Education Week* (2007), Jon Schnur stated that a quality leadership preparation

program should provide aspiring leaders with learning about groups of students who are at risk of not succeeding in school. In the same discussion, Gene Bottoms talked about a new kind of master's degree program that he would like to see developed where at least a third or more of the preparation would be centered on curriculum and instruction.

Some of the principals did participate in other types of professional development opportunities that focused on the needs of students from poverty. Six of the principals talked about participating in a workshop or training by Dr. Ruby Payne, a nationally recognized authority on students from impoverished backgrounds. Two principals were part of a book study group that read Dr. Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Three other principals mentioned attending a school system-wide diversity course that may have touched on poverty issues or doing some reading on their own and attending some conference sessions that dealt with students from poverty. The importance of principal participation in professional development opportunities is supported in the literature in Chapter II. Dufour (2002) stated that principals needed to become, what he called, a *learning leader* rather than an instructional leader. It is not enough to know what works theoretically, school leaders must be the *chief learner*, knowing what is needed now and what will be needed in the future to ensure continual improvement. (Bottoms, 2001)

Of the principals who did attend a professional development opportunity that dealt with students of poverty, most could remember some of the details of the training including the time-frame and/or location. When asked to recall some of the key learnings from their professional development, six principals responded and each focused on something unique from their training. Despite the uniqueness of their responses, the

principals did convey a better appreciation of some aspect of the culture of poverty and how that impacted on the achievement of students. When asked if they sought out the professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of their jobs, six of the seven principals who participated sought out the opportunity on their own. Only one principal was required to attend.

The researcher questioned the principals about what their districts could do that would be helpful to them in terms of meeting the needs of students from poverty. Eight principals felt that there should be some kind of course offered that focused on the issues surrounding students from impoverished backgrounds. The literature in Chapter II suggests that when the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn, they are said to be part of a professional community. Two of the principals talked about programs for aspiring principals. This idea is supported in the literature in Chapter II. In *Education Week (2007)*, Gene Bottoms discussed the need to create an aspiring principal program at the university level that would involve redesigning coursework to reflect what future school leaders needed to know and be able to do to create effective schools in the current culture of accountability. The new program would also involve internship experiences that allowed aspiring school leaders to observe and work in a variety of schools.

One principal thought that the school system should provide additional personnel to assist students. Another principal would like to see someone to follow up on the different trainings conducted at the schools with updated information or additional opportunities as principals often got caught up in other things and couldn't always follow up. In a similar vein, another principal felt it was important to keep the issue in the forefront. In a



contrary opinion, one of the 14 principals felt strongly that schools needed to stop looking at them as students from poverty but look at them like all other students.

The second question that pertained to research question two asked principals: Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? Can you recall the titles or authors? In your readings, what are some of things you used or will be able to use with your teachers? All 14 of the interviewed principals had read a book or article dealing with needs of students from poverty. Most of the 14 principals could recall the title and/or author of a book. Nine of the 14 principals stated that they had read Dr. Ruby Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Two of the 14 principals mentioned reading Paul Slocum's book entitled *Hear My Cry: Boys in Crisis*. Additionally, two principals read *What Is It About Me You Can't Teach?* by Eleanor Renee Rodriguez and James A. Bellanca. Nine additional titles and four additional authors were mentioned by individual principals as books or authors they had read. The literature in Chapter II supported the idea of the principal as a consumer of professional knowledge. Saha & Biddle (2006) found that research knowledge has a strong effect on the thinking and actions of principals. When asked about the sources of the research knowledge, principals in the study mentioned reading professional journals, bulletins or books.

Some of the principals also read professional articles that dealt with the needs of students from poverty. Three of the 14 principals mentioned reading professional articles from *Educational Leadership*, the journal published by ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). One principal read articles in the *Principal* magazine published by NAESP (National Association of Elementary School Principals)

and another read professional articles provided by the superintendent. None of the principals mentioned reading any journals that were refereed or primary sources of current educational research. This is commiserate with the findings in the literature in Chapter II. Saha & Biddle (2006) found that most principals are not regular consumers of primary sources of research knowledge but rather consumers of secondary sources. “Most respondents did not report attending professional meetings organized by and for educational researchers, reading refereed journals in which reports of educational research first appear, or examining monographs that are written for scholars.” (p. 33)

Some of the principals indicated that they shared ideas or concepts from their readings with staff. Six of the 14 principals took specific strategies or ideas from their reading to implement in their school or become action steps in their school improvement plan. Three principals used the readings to help raise the awareness of their staffs and help them understand where their students came from and how they could make school experiences positive. Six of the principals talked about sharing the importance of relationships with staff.

The third question asked principals: Have you had the opportunity to share this information to your teachers or other colleagues? If so, how have you shared this information with your teachers or other colleagues? If not, what plans do you have to share this information with your teachers or other colleagues? Eleven of the 14 principals stated that they had had an opportunity to share information with their staff. Seven of the 14 principals have led or participated in book studies with their staffs. The importance of principal participation in professional development opportunities with staff members is supported in the literature in Chapter II. Barkley, Bottoms, Feagin, and Clark (2001)

maintained that leaders must exhibit the behavior they want from teachers or what the authors label *modeling the model*. Administrators modeled the model when they attended professional development opportunities with teachers.

Five principals have shared the information during staff meetings and three have shared the information at SIT (School Improvement Team) meetings. Two principals have used professional development time to share this information and two principals plan to use inservice time to share in the future. One principal shared the information with his administrative team and his guidance counselors. The literature in Chapter II suggested that when the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn, they are said to be part of a professional community.

Three principals mentioned not having an opportunity to share information with their staff. Two of the three principals had no plans to share the information with their staffs.

The last question that was used to ascertain the perceptions of principals on their own professional growth asked them: How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development? Not unexpectedly, 11 of the 14 principals used informal walk-throughs and formal observations and the resulting conversations to monitor the use of information acquired from the principal or through professional development opportunities. The researcher found the responses of the majority of principals to be consistent with the literature in Chapter II. Scheeler, Ruhl and McAfee (in Savrock, 2005), found that teachers relied on performance feedback from supervisors as a means of developing

effective practices for classroom instruction. Five principals had discussions at staff meetings while three had discussions at grade level team meetings.

Principals #5 (middle school), #8 (middle school), and #10 (elementary) examined student data to monitor the use of what staff had learned. The use of data to monitor staff professional growth has support in the literature in Chapter II. Principals of high-performing schools in the Williams et al. (2005) study reported using assessment data from multiple sources including curriculum programs, commercial assessments, district-developed assessments and state and national assessments to monitor the progress of targeted students and, additionally, evaluate teacher practice so that support for instructional improvement could be provided to teachers whose students were not showing increased academic achievement.

Principal #2 (elementary) made use of a quarterly staff feedback sheet to find out what teachers were learning about or what they would like to learn about. As part of the evaluation of a professional development activity, Principal #4 (elementary) asked staff to reflect on how they were going to use the information in their classroom or share it with colleagues. Principal #7 (high school) compiled a list of teacher-submitted ideas, suggestions or strategies that had been beneficial or successful in the classroom and sent it out to everyone on staff. The literature in Chapter II supported the idea of monitoring staff practice although it does not mention any specific manner through which that monitoring must occur. Cotton (2000) noted that effective administrators expected improvement in the instructional program and monitored staff practices to ensure that improvement.

The third research question asked: To what extent do principals perceive that classroom teachers understand what must occur in classrooms to meet the needs of students from poverty? In order to elicit these perceptions, the participants were asked five questions pertaining to classroom practices.

The first question asked the study participants: The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom? Nine of the 14 principals mentioned specific routines or practices that they saw when they walked through classrooms. These included organizing materials and supplies, establishing routines like how to pass out papers, walk into a room and get materials, providing course syllabi, setting schedules, reinforcing character lessons, or helping students to solve problems without adult intervention. Two of the 14 principals talked of setting consistent, clear and high expectations for students. Principal #13 (elementary) talked of observing teachers leveling the playing field for children of poverty by pre-teaching to compensate for the lack of prior experiences or providing classroom supplies that parents may not have been able to get. Principal #11 (middle school) noted that she did not see as much of it as she should. However, when she did see it, the instruction was very explicit.

The researcher notes that the fact that the majority of principals saw teachers instructing students in the business of school is in line with the findings of the research in Chapter II. Payne (2008) states that people need to know different rules and behaviors to survive in different environments. The actions and attitudes that help a student learn and thrive in a low-income community often clash with those that help one get ahead in school. The researcher believed that the consensus in responses to this question indicated

that teachers realized that not all students came to school with the same norms for behavior and learning.

The second question asked principals: When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty? When discussing how they saw teachers building relationships with students in the classroom, the principals' responses ranged from physical expressions of caring like hugs and high fives, proximity, a caring tone of voice, eye contact and gentle touches on the back to more intangible expressions like not passing judgment, maintaining high expectations, not giving up on a student and allowing students to maintain dignity and self esteem in front of peers.

Two of the 14 interviewed principals asserted that they could tell what kinds of relationships were established by the teacher as soon as they walked into a classroom. Three of the 14 principals stated that the way students responded to the teacher was indicative of the relationship with that teacher. "You can tell right away when a student does well with a teacher where he or she may not be doing well with other teachers. The student is usually on time for class, his or her work is of a much higher quality in the class and he or she fully participates in class." remarked Principal #2 (elementary).

Five of the 14 principals saw teachers taking time to talk with students while three of them saw teachers taking time to be a good listener. Teachers greeting students by name was observed by two of the 14 principals. Principal #7 (high school) and Principal #11 (middle school) both talked of observing teachers using humor or respectful banter to build relationships with students. Principal #12 (elementary) talked about the importance of the use of wait time with students. Principal #2 (elementary) commented that students

from poverty do well when teachers use rubrics and performance assessments to hold them accountable because students know where they are going. Principal #13 (elementary) talked of teachers being mindful of the students' unique circumstances that might put them at a disadvantage and trying to proactively head that off.

This researcher found the responses of the principals to be consistent with the literature on relationships in Chapter II. Payne (2008) indicated that when an individual is learning something new, learning should happen in a supportive context. Teachers should help all students feel part of a collaborative culture.

The researcher asked the principals: The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies do you see teachers employing? Two of the 14 principals talked of supporting student language acquisition by immersing them in a language rich environment to help shore up language skills that children of poverty often don't have by getting students to talk, having books readily available, and reading aloud. Two others discussed the importance of building background and prior knowledge through the use of videos or sources of information.

More frequently, the principals discussed the way students learn the language. Eight of the 14 principals mentioned observing the direct instruction of vocabulary in classrooms. This instruction took the form of pre-teaching unit vocabulary, using vocabulary development programs and texts, encouraging students to use a thesaurus, or posting word walls in the classroom. However, one principal acknowledged that teachers in her building were still using "drill and kill" as a way to explicitly teach vocabulary. Two principals mentioned seeing teachers use writing as a way to expand vocabulary by

helping students understand that there are lots of different ways to say something and providing strong feedback on their writing.

In addition to vocabulary development, four of the 14 principals discussed the importance of teaching grammar through activities like teaching nouns, pronouns and the other parts of speech, rephrasing incorrectly phrased student responses in the correct grammatical structure, or putting sentences on the board and asking students to find the mistakes and correct them. Only one of the principals, a high school principal, mentioned rarely seeing any language or vocabulary development done at his school other than in ESOL classrooms because it was the expectation of the teachers that students already had those skills and strategies.

The literature in Chapter II supported the majority assertion that vocabulary and language development are a regular part of classroom instruction. Poor children are, in general, not read to aloud as often or exposed to complex language and large vocabularies. Researchers found that, on average, professional parents spoke more than 2,000 words per hour to their children, working class parents spoke about 1,300 words and welfare parents spoke about 600. “At four years of age, children of professionals had vocabularies that were nearly 50 percent larger than those of working-class children and twice as large as those of welfare children.” (Rothstein, 2004, p. 41) This work supports the notion that there is a connection between social class and the amount of vocabulary a person possesses. The language norms of people in poverty are not rewarded or reinforced in the educational setting. Teachers need to be aware so that they assist students in adjusting to the culture of the schoolhouse. “To survive in poverty, one must



be very sensory-based and non-verbal. To survive in school, one must be very verbal and abstract.” (Payne, 2002, p. 21)

This researcher found it interesting that 93% of the principals interviewed have observed some sort of language and/or vocabulary development happening. Language and vocabulary development are an important part of the instructional program at the elementary level. In fact, vocabulary and language development are a daily part of the consistent patterns of Language Arts instruction at that level. However, it was most surprising to this researcher that the secondary school principals talked of teachers making use of word walls; modeling appropriate grammar and helping students use context to understand vocabulary. Principal #14 (middle/high school) lauded the efforts of her middle school teachers to reinforce vocabulary by reading in context and encouraging students to find it anywhere they can, including in music, in a newspaper or in an advertisement. It is the experience of the researcher that most language development at the secondary level is often either non-existent or confined to ELL or other support classes as identified by Principal #7 (high school), or, if it does occur, takes the form of “drill and kill” talked about by Principal #11 (middle school).

The last question about the principals’ perceptions of teacher knowledge of best practices asked them: Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers’ expectations are often low for students from poverty, how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students? Six of the 14 principals interviewed agreed that teachers should have the same high expectations for their students from poverty as the other students in the classroom. The idea of high expectations for students of poverty is supported in the literature in

Chapter II. High poverty schools with a culture of high expectations that is shared by all members of the school community including the principal, the teachers and the students, are often high performing. The central tenet to this culture is the belief that all students can learn and be successful academically. In fact, research has identified this belief to be the dominant theme that makes schools successful in high poverty communities. (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, Carter, 2000, Ragland, Clubine, Constable, and Smith, 2002, Williams et al., 2005, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988)

Four of the 14 principals discussed the importance of differentiating instruction to meet the need of individual students. This included assessing the students' level of academic achievement and getting them into an appropriate intervention or enrichment program based on the assessment data. The literature in Chapter II supports the principals' assertion that students of poverty need differentiated instruction to be successful. For most schools, the state assessments mandated by NCLB provide a comparison of student progress against an external standard, however, at high-performing schools, the purpose of testing is to diagnose and determine the instruction of individual students. The use of ongoing assessment practices allows teachers to individualize instruction for students by determining the areas in which they need help and changing the instruction to meet these needs. (Corallo & McDonald, 2001, Carter 2000, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002)

Monitoring progress of students was mentioned by three of the 14 interview participants. These principals all agreed that the expectation was that every student who came into a building would have the same opportunities and access to the same resources

to be successful. This notion is supported in the literature in Chapter II. Barth et al. (1999) surveyed high-performing schools in 21 states and found that 81 percent of these schools had developed a comprehensive assessment program, which allowed teachers to monitor student progress regularly and frequently so that they could quickly intervene with those students who were struggling.

Three of the 14 principals felt it was important not to feel sorry for the students from poverty. Teachers needed to move beyond the excuse model because it is what Principal #11 (middle school) called “a dead horse”. “...The time for making excuses that blame the students, or their families, or their communities is long past...” (Haycock, 1998, p. 2) Principal #5 (middle school) talked of the balancing act between teachers understanding where students come from yet not feeling sorry for them because of where they come from. The impact of teacher attitude and perceptions is found in the literature in Chapter II. When the economic backgrounds of teachers and students differ, it is incumbent upon teachers to examine their attitudes and beliefs and the impact those may have on students. Ferguson (1998) (as cited in Lawrence) contends that perceptions influence teacher expectations and hinder their ability to accurately predict student learning potential. In fact, some researchers suggest that “teachers’ perceptions, expectations, and behaviors are powerful enough to be partly responsible for (a) the underachievement of students of color and of students from low-income homes and (b) the Black-White achievement gap in scores.” (Lawrence, p. 351)

It is notable that when speaking of rigor and high expectations in the classrooms, only one of the principals mentioned using state standards to measure progress or curriculums to challenge students. This is contrary to the findings in the literature in

Chapter II, which suggests that requiring instruction that follows established standards or curriculum ensures that students are taught the materials they will need to be successful on their grade level assessments. (Barth et al., 1999, Kannapel and Clements, 2005, Corallo and McDonald, 2001, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) Barth et al. found that 80 percent of the high performing schools reported using standards to plan curriculum and instruction, 94 percent reported using standards to measure and monitor student progress and 59 percent used the standards to assess the effectiveness of the teaching staff. Williams et al. (2005) indicated that teachers from high-performing schools reported “school-wide instructional consistency within grades, curricular alignment from grade-to-grade, classroom instruction guided by state academic standards and up-to-date and sufficient curriculum materials in Math and Language Arts aligned with the state’s standards.” (Williams et al., p. 1)

Similarly, none of the principals talked of the use of instructional practices that were challenging. Data from the work of Barth et al. (1999) found in Chapter II indicated that top performing schools were moving away from low level instructional practices like the use of dittoes towards developing higher order skills by offering more opportunities for the discussion of work and increasing the use of technology. “Those encouraged to work with challenging content, to solve problems, and to seek meaning from what they study will make far greater academic progress than students limited to basic skills instruction.” (Commission on Chapter I, p. 7)

The last question used to elicit principal perceptions of teacher knowledge asked them: If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

Of the 14 principals, eight thought that teachers would say relationships had to occur in the classroom. As Principal #2 (elementary) stated, “If you don’t have that relationship with that child, with the child’s family and with the community that the child lives in, it is going to be very, very difficult for you to be successful with that child.” This researcher found the fact that more than half of the interviewed principals mentioned relationships affirming the findings in the literature and confirming the responses earlier in the interview that there was a commitment to the belief that positive relationships with students of poverty are important and must occur in every classroom.

Five of the 14 principals mentioned that teachers would talk about high expectations for all students. The literature in Chapter II suggests that the central tenet to a culture of high expectations is the belief that all students can learn and be successful academically. In fact, research has identified this belief to be the dominant theme that makes schools successful in high poverty communities. (Kannapel & Clements, 2005, Carter, 2000, Ragland, Clubine, Constable, and Smith, 2002, Williams et al., 2005, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1988) This researcher found it disheartening that the majority of principals did not think that teachers would talk about having high expectations for their students of poverty. This lack of response belies that notion that there are still teachers who do not believe that all students can learn and be successful. While changing mindsets is a difficult process, it must occur if students of poverty are to reach the same lofty academic goals as their more affluent peers.

Three of the 14 principals thought that teachers would mention good teaching practices. Having access to intervention and remediation would be mentioned by teachers as something that had to occur for students of poverty in the classroom

according to four principals. Similarly, having access to the same opportunities, like athletics, outside the classroom as other students was mentioned by two principals. Principal #7 argues that, “Backgrounds are different but once they come to school, we have to do everything we can to balance what is taking place at home and what takes place in the classroom.”

For two of the 14 principals having a better understanding of the students’ background would be part of the teachers’ answer. This researcher found that the lack of a greater number of responses in this area confirmed what the literature in Chapter II stated. The Commission on Chapter I (1992) found that students in poverty were more likely than students not in poverty to be taught by teachers who had negative attitudes towards students and perceptions that children of color and those from low-income families are deficient. There is little or no understanding of what it means to grow up in poverty. Principal #13 (elementary) thought her teachers would say that students in poverty need a higher degree of support than students that came from more privileged backgrounds. Two of the fourteen principals thought teachers would talk about parental support and involvement. This researcher found it interesting that parental involvement and support was not a prevalent issue in the principals’ responses because the literature in Chapter II supported the idea of involving parents in the education of their children. Schools that work together with families and encourage their participation in the school and at home empower students to learn and meet grade level expectations. (Barth et al., 1999, Carter, 2000, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) Parents are often viewed as “critical partners” in learning process of their children. (Ragland, Clubine, Constable, & Smith, 2002)

Research question four was: To what extent do principals perceive that their teaching staff has received appropriate preparation to provide for the needs of students from poverty in their classrooms? In order to elicit these perceptions, study participants were asked four questions dealing with teachers' professional preparation to deal with students of poverty in the classroom.

The first question asked principals: Have your teachers received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the students from poverty? If so, describe the professional development opportunity(ies). If no, what kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to teachers? Nine of the 14 interviewed principals were unaware or unsure of any preparation their teachers had received to deal with the needs of students from poverty.

Four of the principals stated that some of their teachers were familiar with the work of Dr. Ruby Payne, either through participating in one of her professional development opportunities or reading her book. Four of the study participants mentioned that their teachers had participated in the school-system required diversity course. Principal #2 (elementary) and #9 (elementary) had teachers participating in professional development opportunities in the area of multiculturalism.

This researcher found the majority response to contradict the research in literature in Chapter II. Hord (1997) suggested that teachers were the first learners. Through participation in professional learning, teachers became more effective and student outcomes increased. It is apparent to this researcher that the participating school systems have not undertaken a systematic effort to provide their teaching staff with professional development to assist their students from poverty in the classroom. As this population

increases across the mid-shore area, it will be incumbent upon the school systems to ensure that their teaching staffs are fully prepared to help these students be successful.

When asked what the school system should do to help teachers deal with students from poverty in the classroom, seven of the 14 principals thought a diversity course that included a focus on poverty and classroom strategies to use with their students would be helpful. Principal #5 (middle school) stated that, “Colleges do a good job of explaining the research behind things and explaining the methodology but when it comes to nuts and bolts, you’re in this building, you’re in that classroom and here is your group of students. I think that needs a little more work especially when you talk about students in poverty.”

Principals #6 (elementary) and #14 (middle/high school) both commented that they appreciated the school system allowing individual schools to plan staff development that they need. “One of the things I appreciate is...allowing us, as school leaders, to share what we are doing in our building with each other and to determine what would best fit our school and the students we serve. It’s not a one structure for every single school but we’re experimenting and sharing ideas of what might work with our staff.” On the other hand, Principal #7 (high school) spoke of the need for county-wide inservice because there are issues, like students from poverty and special education, that span all schools.

This researcher found the majority response to first part of the question to contradict the research in literature in Chapter II. Hord (1997) suggested that teachers were the first learners. Through participation in professional learning, teachers became more effective and student outcomes increased. This majority response to the second part of the question suggested that the principals were aware of the need for professional development to assist teachers with dealing with students from poverty, which confirmed



the findings in the literature in Chapter II. A distinguishing characteristic of the professional development at high performing schools is its direct link to a change in instructional practice in order to increase student achievement. (Barth et al., Jesse, Davis, and Pokorny, 2004, Kannapel and Clements, 2005, McGee, 2004, Izumi, Coburn, and Cox, 2002) It is apparent to this researcher that the participating school systems have not undertaken a systematic effort to provide their teaching staff with professional development to assist their students from poverty in the classroom and their school leaders are keenly aware of the deficit. As this population increases across the mid-shore area, it will be incumbent upon the school systems to ensure that their teaching staffs are fully prepared to help these students be successful.

The second question asked principals: Have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? Can you recall the titles or authors? Six of the 14 principals mentioned the teachers had read the work of Dr. Ruby Payne. Other authors recalled by the principals included: (a) Ann Tomlinson, (b) Jonathon Kozol, (c) Lisa Delpit, (d) David Cooper, and (d) Robert Slocum. Two principals were able to recall the specific titles of books their staff had read. These titles included: (a) *The Nurtured Heart*, (b) *Closing the Achievement Gap*, (c) *Literacy with ELL Learners*, and (d) *Differentiated Instruction*. Six of the 14 principals were unable to name any books that their staff had read.

Four of the study participants mentioned that they or a member of their staff copied articles and gave them to teachers to read. When Principal #7 (high school) comes across something beneficial, he puts it in his weekly newsletter to the staff. This researcher found the statement of Principal #1 (high school) a perfect summation when she stated, “I

think we need to do more of that because I really do believe that our teachers want to know more and want to learn more, but also want to learn that they aren't alone." Additionally, Principal #1's (high school) statement serves a confirmation of the literature in Chapter II. The expectations that high-performing schools set for their students is often mirrored in the expectations for continual improvement that are held for the teaching staff. The teachers who are successful in these schools "have embraced the culture of high expectations; they are committed to seeing all children achieve. They love learning and relate well to children. They work hard, for long hours, but have high morale and devotion to their work." (The Center for Public Education, 2007, p. 4)

The third question asked principals: Have your staff members had the opportunity to share this information with other colleagues? If so, how have they shared this information? If not, what plans do they have to share this information?

Four of the 14 principals had staff share information in book study groups. Three of the principals mentioned sharing information in staff meetings, department meetings, or grade level meetings. Principal #1 (high school) indicated that, "At every staff meeting, we have the first 15 minutes of sharing. They can share something they've learned or I actually invite a couple of people to demonstrate an activity." Three of the 14 study participants talked about sharing information in small groups. Two of the principals used professional development time to share information. Five of the participants gave no indication of any opportunities to share information or mentioned any plans to do so in the future.

Although the principals did not articulate the notion that their staffs were participating in professional learning communities in a formal sense, this researcher

found that their descriptions conformed to the findings of the literature in Chapter II. “Teachers must have time and support to experiment, to evaluate, and to analyze. They must themselves become a learning community—focused on improving student learning.” (Commission on Chapter I, 1992, p. 11) The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals by engaging in professional development, collaborating, and dialoguing in a reflective manner so that students benefit.

The last question asked principals: What additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers? Three of the 14 principals thought it was important to differentiate teacher professional development. Principal #6 (elementary) would like some additional funds to purchase resources for teachers to use. Along with resources, Principal #1 (high school) would like to see more time devoted to professional development. “I think teachers are really social creatures and they don’t have that time to be social creatures...That’s why they are in education; they’re adult learners. We sometimes don’t give them enough time to be adult learners.”

Three of the principals would like to see additional training on diversity awareness and sensitivity, which includes economics. Principal # 10 (elementary) stated that, “I think some people have the mind set that the kids aren’t learning because they live in poverty.” Principal #5 (middle school) would like to see teachers get out in the community to help them understand the population they serve. This researcher found that the notion of awareness and understanding to be a reoccurring theme in the interviews. A few of the principals recognized that if there was not awareness or understanding, there could be negative consequences for students, which is noted in the literature in Chapter II. When Beegle (2003) studied college graduates who grew up in generational poverty,

she found that 89 percent of her participants reported that their teachers did not believe in them; the participants saw the teachers as the “enemy”. Participants felt that “their teachers had the power to make them feel included, cared about, and safe from ridicule or violence but didn’t exert that power.” (Beegle, p. 15)

Principal #13 (elementary) felt it was very important to do greater staff development on creating a culture of high expectations for all students. Principal #1 (high school) and #14 (middle/high school) wanted to go back to the whole concept of relationships. This researcher found it notable that these principals acknowledged that there was still a need for more work in the area of high expectations and building relationships. While they understood the importance of these ideas, their response belied the notion that all teachers did not fully understand their importance. The literature in Chapter II indicates that teachers must understand the importance of these ideas. “Educators can be a huge gift to students living in poverty. In many instances, education is *the* tool that gives a child life choices. A teacher or administrator who establishes mutual respect, cares enough to make sure a student knows how to survive school, and gives that student the necessary skills is providing a gift that will keep affecting lives from one generation to the next. Never has it been more important to give students living in poverty this gift.” (Payne, 2008, p. 52)

### Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to assess principal perceptions of their professional preparedness and the preparedness of their staff to deal with students of poverty in the classroom.

Four research questions were investigated: (1) To what extent do principals understand what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty? (2) To what extent do principals perceive that they have received appropriate preparation to provide leadership to classroom teachers to meet the needs of students from poverty? (3) To what extent do principals perceive that classroom teachers understand what must occur in classrooms to meet the needs of students from poverty? (4) To what extent do principals perceive that their teaching staff has received appropriate preparation to provide for the needs of students from poverty in their classrooms? In order to address these research questions, 14 principals were interviewed in their offices or the office of the researcher and asked questions pertaining to the research questions.

#### Research Question #1

To what extent do principals understand what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty?

The responses given by the principals led this researcher to conclude that principals do understand what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty. This researcher found that principals understood that students from poverty must be re-aculturated when they enter school so that they could equitably and successfully participate in the educational enterprise. This researcher also found that the strength of conviction of the principals confirmed that the importance of relationships has been ingrained into the belief system of many of the members of their school communities and the districts at large. The importance of language and vocabulary development being more than just drill activities was communicated by the principals who spoke of staff using word walls, incorporating language development into writing

and encouraging students to find vocabulary in contexts all around them. The principals recognized that teachers must have high expectation for all students, monitor student progress and differentiate instruction to meet student academic needs. Of particular note was a comment by one of the principals that it was the job of the teacher to help students maneuver through the obstacles of their lives to meet expectations which implies the need for teachers to reach beyond school to impact students. Most elementary principals understood the need to nurture the whole child but this was not echoed in the comments of the secondary principals. In fact, there was a feeling among some secondary principals that students should have attained a certain level of readiness so that school becomes more about educating the student rather than nurturing the child.

This researcher noted that when discussing rigor, the principals failed to mention using state standards to measure progress, adopting curriculums to challenge students or implementing challenging instructional practices all of which have been shown to impact achievement for students at-risk. Also missing from the comments of the principals was what they perceived as their role in impacting the achievement of students from poverty. They articulated what teachers had to do but did not place themselves into the situation. The participants reported using direct and explicit feedback to teachers to ensure the continuation of these effective classroom practices.

#### Research Question #2

To what extent do principals perceive that they have received appropriate preparation to provide leadership to classroom teachers to meet the needs of students from poverty?

The responses given by the principals led this researcher to conclude that school leaders were given little preparation to provide leadership to classroom teachers to meet

the needs of students from poverty. The reported lack of coursework in undergraduate or graduate programs confirmed that little time was spent at the university level preparing principals to assist teachers with the students from diverse background that populated their classrooms. Personal interest and desire led the principals to participate in professional development opportunities beyond collegiate-level coursework that focused on the need of students from poverty. Despite the variety of the opportunities, the principals did convey a better appreciation of some aspect of the culture of poverty and how that impacted on the achievement of students. There was support among the principals for continuing professional development in this area.

This researcher found the principals to be consumers of professional readings in the form of books and journal articles. However, the responses of the principals led this researcher to conclude that the principals did not see the necessity to pursue scholarly readings in the form of refereed, primary source journals where current educational research is first published. All the journals that the principals mentioned reading were secondary source journals.

This researcher found that the principals understood the need for sharing information from their readings and professional development opportunities with their staff in a variety of settings. After sharing, the school leaders followed up with their teachers through formal and informal observations and the resulting conversations, discussions at meetings, and monitoring student data.

### Research Question 3

To what extent do principals perceive that classroom teachers understand what must occur in classrooms to meet the needs of students from poverty?

The responses of each principal led this researcher to conclude that principals perceive that classroom teachers understood some of what must occur in classrooms to meet the needs of students from poverty. The researcher found that the consensus in responses of the principals indicated that teachers realized that not all students came to school with the same norms for behavior and learning and they used a variety of methods to cultivate language and vocabulary in their students from impoverished backgrounds. This researcher found the fact that more than half of the interviewed principals mentioned relationships confirming the responses earlier in the interview that there was a commitment to the belief that positive relationships with students of poverty are important and must occur in every classroom. This researcher found it disheartening that the majority of principals did not think that teachers would talk about having high expectations for their students of poverty. This lack of response belies that notion that there are still teachers who do not believe that all students can learn and be successful. While changing mindsets is a difficult process, it must occur if students of poverty are to reach the same lofty academic goals as their more affluent peers.

#### Research Question #4

To what extent do principals perceive that their teaching staff has received appropriate preparation to provide for the needs of students from poverty in their classrooms?

The responses of the principals led this researcher to conclude that the participating school systems had not undertaken a systematic effort to provide their teaching staff with professional development to assist their students from poverty in the classroom and their school leaders are keenly aware of the deficit. As this population increases across the mid-shore area, it will be incumbent upon the school systems to ensure that their teaching



staffs are fully prepared to help these students be successful. Similarly, the responses of the principals indicated to this researcher that the teachers were not as prolific in their consumption of professional readings as the principals. But when they did read or participate in professional development, the teachers were able to share that information. The principals did not articulate the notion that their staffs were participating in professional learning communities in a formal sense but this researcher found descriptions of loosely created professional learning communities in the responses of the principals.

When discussing what needed to happen for teachers, the principals' responses indicated to this researcher that there was a need for coursework in the area of economic diversity that would focus on awareness and understanding. This researcher found the notion of awareness and understanding to be a reoccurring theme in the interviews. A few of the principals recognized that if there was not awareness or understanding, there could be negative consequences for students. This researcher also noted that the principals acknowledged a need for more work in the area of high expectations and building relationships. While they understood the importance of these ideas, their response belied the notion that all teachers did not fully understand their importance.

#### Policy Recommendations

1. A teacher evaluation system that focuses on student learning and engagement rather than teaching.
2. A push for quality universal pre-kindergarten program for all students.
3. A policy on new hiring that focuses on quality teachers that have training in dealing with students from poverty.

4. Preparation programs for aspiring school leaders that focuses on preparing these leaders to deal with the diverse students that will populate the classrooms in their buildings.
5. Undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation programs that focus on preparing them to deal with the diverse students that will populate their classrooms.

#### Practice Recommendations

1. Mandatory participation for all certified staff in a series of locally developed courses that focus on awareness and understanding of economic diversity and the classroom strategies and practices that positively impact of achievement of students from economically diverse backgrounds.
2. Professional development that focuses on developing cultures of high expectations and cultivating positive relationships with students that includes all members of a school community.
3. Replacement of non-committed staff with staff members who are committed to the belief that all students can learn and be successful.
4. Access to professional libraries for all teachers and principals that include professional books that deal with the needs of students from poverty and refereed primary source journals where current educational research is first published.
5. Development of professional learning communities where teachers can share and discuss strategies and practices that positively impact on the achievement of students from poverty.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

1. A study of principal perceptions in other small, rural school systems to compare results.
2. A study of principal perceptions of their preparedness and the preparedness of their staff to deal with students of poverty in large rural, suburban and urban school systems.
3. A study investigating the perceptions of teachers in small, rural school systems related to their preparation to deal with students in poverty.
4. A study investigating the perceptions of parents of students of poverty on the preparedness of teachers and principals to deal with their students.
5. A qualitative study that examines teacher behaviors in dealing with students of poverty in the classroom.
6. A qualitative study that examines teacher relationships with students of poverty.
7. A qualitative study that examines the practices of teachers in dealing with students of poverty in the classroom.
8. A study examining teacher preparation programs across the country investigating how teachers are prepared to deal with diverse students in their classrooms.
9. A study examining programs for aspiring school leaders across the country investigating how these leaders are prepared to deal with diverse students in the classrooms of their teachers.
10. A qualitative study investigating the quality of professional development programs that focus on students from poverty.
11. A qualitative study that investigates the contents of professional development programs that focus on students from poverty.

12. A comparative study of teachers that have received additional training in dealing with students from poverty and teachers that have received no additional training in dealing with students from poverty investigating student achievement.

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Appendix A  
Principal's Letter

Dear Principal,

My name is Lisa Donmoyer. I am completing my dissertation as part of the requirement for my doctorate in Education Leadership, Management and Policy at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services on the subject of principal perceptions. The title of the study is *Principal Perceptions of Their Preparedness and the Preparedness of Their Staff to Deal with Students of Poverty in the Classroom*. This qualitative study will be comprised of six background questions and twenty seven open-ended interview questions concerning your preparation and the preparation of your staff to deal with students from poverty in the classroom. The interview questions are enclosed for your reference.

I am requesting to conduct a face to face interview that should last no longer than ninety minutes. The interview will be held in your office at a mutually agreed upon time. If your office is not available, arrangements can be made to meet in a different location. With your permission, I will tape-record the dialogue and make notes of your responses during the interview. The information gathered will be used solely for the purpose of analysis. The confidentiality of the interview will be preserved as notes and tapes will be coded by number and no personal information will be revealed. All recorded and documented responses will be kept in a secure, locked cabinet in my home for three years and destroyed after that time period. Only myself as the researcher and my dissertation committee will have access to the data.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you, as the participant, have the right to terminate involvement at any time. Refusal to participate in the study or discontinuing

participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits that the subject is otherwise entitled.

It is my hope that this study will enhance our understanding of the preparation of principals and staffs in dealing with students of poverty in the classroom. If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the enclosed reply form. I will contact you to arrange a time and place for our discussion. If you have any questions, you may contact me at (443) 995-0521. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa A. Donmoyer

Appendix B

Reply Form

**REPLY FORM**

Principal Perceptions of Their Preparedness and the Preparedness of Their Staff to  
Deal with Students of Poverty in the Classroom

Name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

School System \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Best time to contact \_\_\_\_\_

A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you  
in advance for your participation.

Return to Lisa A. Donmoyer

Appendix C  
Informed Consent Form

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### **Researcher's Affiliation**

Lisa A. Donmoyer is completing a dissertation as part of the requirements for completing a doctorate in Educational Leadership, Management and Policy in the College of Education and Human Services at Seton Hall University.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of Lisa A. Donmoyer's study is to investigate principal perceptions of their preparedness and the preparedness of their staff to deal with students from poverty in the classroom.

### **Procedure**

Participants will be interviewed by the researcher. The researcher will tape-record the dialogue as well as make notes of the responses of the participants. The interviews will be conducted in the office of the participant and will last approximately ninety minutes.

### **Instruments**

The interview will consist of six background questions and twenty seven-open ended questions in an attempt to gain perspective about principal perceptions about their preparedness and that of their staff when it comes to dealing with students from impoverished backgrounds in the classroom. Some of the open-ended questions will explore the participant's understanding of research based strategies that are effective with students from impoverished backgrounds. Other questions will solicit information on the professional preparation, in the form of coursework, workshops or professional literature, in which the participants and their staff have participated or read and how information



from those experiences has been shared. An example of a question is: *The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?*

### **Voluntary Nature**

Participation in this study is voluntary and the participant has the right to terminate involvement at any time. Refusal to participate in the study or discontinuing participation at any time will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits that the participant would otherwise be entitled.

### **Anonymity**

This is no anonymity due to the face to face interview conducted in this study. However, the information gathered through the interview process will be used solely for the purpose of analysis.

### **Confidential Records**

The confidentiality of the participant and the school system will be preserved. To maintain accuracy and confidentiality, each subject will be assigned a number code.

The researcher and her mentor will review the raw data including all notes and recordings. All documents and recordings will be saved in a secure, locked cabinet in the researcher's home for a period of three years. After three years, the materials will be properly destroyed.

### **Risks and Discomforts**

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

**Benefits**

The anticipated benefits from participating in this study include a greater understanding of the professional preparation of principals and that of their staff in dealing with students from impoverished backgrounds.

**Alternative Procedures**

There are no alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be advantageous for the subject as a result of this study.

**Contact Information**

Lisa A. Donmoyer, the researcher and a student at Seton Hall University, may be contacted for answers to pertinent questions about the research and the research subject's rights. In addition, the researcher's mentor and the chairperson of Seton Hall University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) may also be contacted.

Lisa A. Donmoyer, Researcher

Seton Hall University

Department of Education

400 South Orange Avenue

South Orange, NJ 07079

(973) 275-2853

Dr. Daniel Gutmore, Researcher's Mentor

Seton Hall University

Department of Education

400 South Orange Avenue

South Orange, NJ 07079

(973) 275-2853

Dr. Mary Ruzicka, Director of Institutional Review Board

Seton Hall University

400 South Orange Avenue

South Orange, NJ 07079

(973) 313-6314

**Audio Tapes**

Signing this Informed Consent grants the researcher permission for audio taping. The subject has the right to review all or any portion of the tape and request that it be destroyed. Each tape recorded interview will be assigned a number code and the recordings will be analyzed and transcribed by the researcher. Raw data may also be reviewed by the researcher's mentor. The audio tapes will be kept in a secure and locked cabinet in the researcher's home for a period of at least three years following the termination of the research. After that period of time, the audio tapes will be properly destroyed.

**Copy of Informed Consent Form**

A copy of the signed and dated Informed Consent will be given to the subject.

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**Subject or Authorized Representative**

---

**Date**

Appendix D  
Transcripts of Interviews

## Principal #1

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

Two years, I'm getting ready to start my third year.

Question 1.2 How many years, in all, have you been an educator?

25 years.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

I would say during my childhood we were probably lower middle class. My dad was an airman in the air force and my mom was a nurse part of the time when I was younger. Some of the time she actually took off to stay with us so I would say lower socioeconomic status.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I always think experience can have impact. I believe that any time you come from a situation you probably better understand that situation. I think there are children that come from a lot more poverty than I have ever experienced but I can probably understand them a little bit better about not being able to have what you don't have. I also know that sometimes you don't know what you don't have if you've never had it and I've learned that through experience. So I do believe any time of experience helps you understand a situation

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

I also understand children sometimes with single-family homes, because I remember growing up my father being an airman and he was a flight engineer. He wasn't home very often and he would come home on crew rest for three days and go back out for two weeks and then come home for three days and go back out so that's another. I know it doesn't have a lot to do with poverty but in a way it does because you're dealing with a situation that's different. My dad was in Vietnam for two years so when I was growing up those are things that when you say you can kind of relate to students. When my dad was gone it was harder on my mom, economically and physically.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

The business of school is really just the expectations of being able to have parameters and understating rules and understanding. We always assume children know how to line up and they don't know how to line up. We may assume that they know how to turn in papers and take notes and do things. I think what that means is we always hear people say how do you do school. It's learning how to do school, learning what those expectations are. I think for teachers its understanding that you can't always assume

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom?

I think a teacher that is very clear with their expectations and it helps any student, but especially students that may not have that structure at home. I think any time a child knows those clear expectations, they are willing to adhere to those expectations and those rule and those parameters. I also think consistency is huge. If you have rules and expectations and you're consistent, I think students learn that they get something out of that situation. It's very clear what they are striving and their goals and what they strive to get.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?

That is the key. To me that is essential. I think relationships with kids is probably the key to working with students from poverty. That is just my opinion. I really truly believe that the child needs to know that you care, that you may not understand everything that they are from and that they've dealt with and the baggage they bring to school, but you care enough to work with them to meet their goals. I think the relationship needs to be a sense of mutual respect. I think respect is earned. I see as an administrator a lot of the teachers that have the most problems, discipline wise with kinds or academically actually with kids are teachers that have not earned that mutual respect with student and that comes out of that relationship with students both academically and interest wise.

Question 2.2a When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

That comes in a variety of ways. There are people that don't do it at all and that's where I need to step in as a principal and really work with that, because there are people that truly teach one way and teach one child and just I taught it, they should have got it. So you have to work with those people and that's a really hard group of people to work with but that's part of my job. I also see people who work really hard at it but they're not good at it because they're not consistent or they're not truly honest with

themselves. I see people that don't really have to work at it at all because its part of their nature. It's really interesting to watch because when you're in a classroom and you're a teacher you only see your classroom so you don't really get to see all the other classrooms, but being an administrator, going into all the other rooms you really see the difference in the dynamics of a classroom. When you walk into a classroom you can tell the kinds of relationships the teachers have with their kids.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies do you see teachers employing?

I see a lot of modeling, modeling appropriate language structures. I see a lot of teachers ask certain questions to get students to think of things in a different way or ask students to retell something in a different way to get them maybe to learn a different way of using the language. Vocabulary is always a tough one. I think that when it says that student lack language development, I think a lot of the students from poverty have their own language. So when it says lack language development, lack appropriate language development, but to them they really develop their language. So I think it goes both ways. I think modeling with teachers but doing it in a positive way and not a demining way.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty, how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

Well I think you have to take that question back a step. First of all, do your teachers know who in their classrooms is from an impoverished family? I truly believe that just in the past two years at this high school, they have never looked at data. I think you need to know your kids. Once you know your kids and knowing who they are I personally think that you need to have high expectations for all of your students not just those from poverty, but what I find is that both ends of the spectrum. Some people have lower expectations because they feel sorry for them and that's not going to get them what they want. The kids really don't want that. Then you also have the other side of the coin where sometimes they set them so high that's its really hard for those kids to be able to reach those goals. For example, giving homework every night. Well that child may go from here to a job and they work till 2 in the morning. Maybe they didn't get homework done one day and the kid comes in the next day. I'm not saying don't give it but I'm saying sometimes you have to look at the situation. So I would say that I think that teachers can demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students by understanding where they're coming from and their situation, but also helping those children

understand how to maneuver through the obstacles in their life to be able to meet those expectations.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers?

That could come out a variety of ways. It could be just specific suggestions with instructional strategies or building that climate in the classroom. We're just getting ready to start a book study here at this high school and actually I had eight teachers that choose Ruby Payne's book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. They are very interested in learning more and I couldn't agree more. I think it's a good thing so that might be something. I think observing another teacher that might do very well in that situation. Sometimes giving them an article or something specific for them to professionally grow in that area. I think it really should be somewhat specific if you see a weakness because I think too many people if you just say you need to work on this, a lot of people don't know where to start.

Question 2.6 If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

I think you would get a lot of different answers. I think in the end I think they would say good relationships with kids, high expectations, and consistency. I think I would go with those three answers in the end would come out of that conversation. I don't think you would start there. I think they would say that parents need to be more involved. That's what I think you would get as an initial response; the parents don't care. I think you would eventually get to those other three things.

Question 3.1 As a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

In training to be a principal no, but that was a long time ago. But I have gone to conferences and read books and taken the opportunity to learn more about it, probably more so when I was at the elementary school. I did a Ruby Payne conference in Cambridge. It was a three-day conference. I brought the book back and we did a whole-school book study. I did go to another conference to actually hear her speak and I specifically picked that conference because I knew she was doing some follow-up sessions. So I have done some things on my own. I also had I want to say Larry Bell, but I don't think that's the right name, but I had at a conference heard a man speak specifically about impoverished students, African American students, and had him actually come and work with me



and my staff at the elementary school, my first year there. The reason I had him come was because we needed to get our school rules and discipline under control and build a culture. So it was a culture building first then we got into instructional strategies second.

So this was more of a professional development that you sought out as opposed to a requirement of your job.

Correct. We also take the culture of diversity course that does touch on some aspects of poverty.

Question 3.2 How about anything that you have read. Are there any other books or professional articles that you've read?

Our superintendent gives us quite a few articles to read but I couldn't tell you exactly who the authors or the titles were. I just finished reading *To be Popular or Smart: Black Peer Groups* and I don't know how to pronounce that person's last name. A guidance counselor gave that to me so I read that. I'm reading books periodically though but for me to tell you which books and which articles I don't know.

Question 3.2b In your readings, what are some of the things you used or will be able to use with your teachers?

I always try to find something to use with teachers whether it's a warm up activity with teachers, whether it's something I've read and I've shared with people and they've tried it. Then I would ask them to demonstrate it at a staff meeting so it's not just me, but it's people. I also think a lot of the readings you get philosophical ideas but then there's sometimes you get specific strategies. When you get specific strategies I think that's always good to share with people. Our school improvement team went through a process this year where we actually had conversations with students and we had a lot of sharing through that discussion. So that really wasn't a reading but it was a discussion.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

That's always the tricky part. I think that is through a lot of different ways. When we do book studies, we actually have discussion groups. We meet monthly to do our discussion group so you can monitor it that way. The other piece that we do is peer observations and observations of specific strategies. I always ask people to invite me in and not have it be an observation but just to invite me in to see something new something they've tried. It's a little harder in high school, I'll admit, than it was at elementary. They were a lot more inviting at the elementary level than

they are at the high school level. That's an area I still need to work on here.

Question 4.1 Now turning to your teachers, to the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the students from poverty?

It depends on the teachers. Most of the teachers at this high school, I would say a good 50-60% of them, are taking coursework somewhere doing something. Either's it's getting recertified. Now if it's in the specific area of working with poverty I don't know. I do know that that is an area that we have worked on in our school improvement plan because of our disaggregated data but I couldn't tell you specifically whose working on what courses.

Question 4.1b Is there anything the district or the school system should be doing that would be helpful to teachers since it's hard to pin down exactly what they're doing?

I think when our system tackled the cultural diversity we made a course for cultural diversity. I think that was a really good thing as a system. I think that a really good thing for the system might be to have a variety of types of courses and one of them be working with students of poverty. That they do offer each year and maybe a bank of courses where every year every teacher is required to pick one and take one and not that its lengthy maybe its just one two hour evening. That way the school system itself the teachers see the system as valuing this mission, this coursework and really understanding that they understand that it is an issue. Culture diversity is an issue, but within culture diversity then comes a lot of other issues. I think with the high stakes accountability now it would be good as a system to offer a bank of courses where you say to teachers, professional development we do it all the time pick one. Then as a principal I think it would be my role to guide them to take the right one, which is what I did with book study. We were doing eight books right now eight different books on different topics. I had them choose topics first, second, and third choice, but then I also guided them to the one that I knew that they needed to grow professionally. You don't want to be too demanding because you want people to participate. You want them to be willing but at the same time you want them to professionally grow.

Question 4.2 Have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

Actually, that's interesting that you ask because a teacher just came in here Tuesday and she had just finished reading the Ruby Payne book. She's in that book study and she's an overachiever and read the entire book since we began for the school. She would like to join the

educational multicultural committee in the county because she has some ideas. She's very excited and she brought me another article. So I do know there are people that are, since we have starting looking at data at this high school, there are people that are a little more interested in reading maybe a little bit more about other high schools that are dealing with similar situations. I think so many time people feel like we're the only ones. I think when they do read an article and, one of my assistant principals is perfect with this. He is so good. I want to be like him in this area because he's very good at finding really good brief couple page articles and then he'll make copies and put them in people's boxes for them just to reflect. I think he's done a really good job of that this year. I think we need to do more of that because I really do believe that our teachers want to know more and want to learn more, but also want to learn that they aren't alone. This is a bigger problem than this high school. I think just the idea that they were receptive to a book study I feel like I'm making growth. I know that's hard to believe but it's true.

Question 4.3 Have your staff members had the opportunity to share this information that they are reading about with other colleagues?

That the book study, that's what we're really trying. Also at every staff meeting we have the first 15 minutes of sharing and they can either share something they've learned or I actually invite a couple people to demonstrate an activity. For an example, one staff meeting one of my teachers had a really great warm-up activity that she used with index cards that she would kind of use as a warm up when kids walked in the door. So when I saw her do it one day I said, "Would you mind sharing that at the next staff meeting?" A math teacher had a really great tic-tac-toe activity to differentiate in her classroom and I asked her to share that at the next staff meeting. Another teacher had read something and she wanted to share what she had read. It was about, it was basically about writing skills and how we need to do more writing across the curriculum and we've kind of left writing out. We do ask. We try to get staff to share with others in that area. We also do mini workshops in the beginning of the year, in the middle of the year. Mini workshops where staff can sign up for three of four workshops and during those mini workshops they're choosing workshops they want to go to but they're also then discussing common topics of interest. What they said to me when I did the evaluation of that the one thing that really stood out in my mind was wow I didn't know the other people on staff that were as interested in that as I was. So I think just understanding that there are other people that are thinking about what you're thinking about, that's a good thing.

Question 4.4 You kind of touched on this early, but if you could elaborate a little on what additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers?

We need time. Time is probably the resource that we don't have enough of. I don't know how to get that time I know it's hard but when you only have two days a year. Really at the high school level it ends up going to laptop technology professional development. I'm not against technology professional development it any way, but there are so many other areas that we need to professionally develop. Really what I think I'm going to have to do is have this really frank discussion with our whole system. When we do this professional development maybe a half day for technology, but maybe a half day where we are talking about topics like what do we do with students that are from poverty, what do we do with students that don't speak the language, how are we helping our students. I'll tell you one area that I think we need to do more of here at this high school, and I guess knowing the kids the way I know them coming from elementary, I have students here at this high school that I had at the elementary and at the other elementary. I know what their reading ability was in fifth grade and they have not made any progress when they got here. So what happened in sixth, seventh and eighth? I don't know what happened but I am starting to have a growing concern as to what are we doing with kids and I don't mean all kids. There are some kids when I had that discussion with students, especially African American students, and I also had a discussion with some of my kids from poverty about who motivated them to take AP courses. Where was their turn around time? How did they choose to motivate themselves? They said it was a fifth or sixth grade teacher that did it. We need to really look at that fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grade time because we're losing some kids. I know we're losing some too but there are children that are choosing not to do what they are capable of doing and that concerns me at this high school. I think it's just because I probably wouldn't notice it as much, but when I knew them in elementary and I knew what they were in second grade, third grade, fourth grade and fifth grade. I knew how much work they put into it and how far they came. Then I see them here and they just choose courses that I know they are capable of doing much more, but people here don't know they're capable of doing much more. So I'm really wondering, so I think I got off topic but to that I think professional development opportunities we need to do more with middle school/high school. That is something that the principal of the middle school and I started but at a very low level. It must happen this year. It must happen. We need to have more communication with what's going on transitioning kids from elementary to middle and middle to high. I really believe when a guidance counselor came over with his kids, I think that was such a plus. He already knew his kids. He could do his kids' schedules because he knew their potential. He knew their strengths and he knew their weaknesses. He knew their interests and there is something powerful about that. I really think that's also an answer to dealing with kids with poverty. That's why we started our homeroom concept. You didn't ask that but I think that's a huge thing with your topic. We started a

homeroom concept at this high school. Some people ask me, "Why do you do that?". I said, "Well, we have kids that truly come to school every day and never say a word." I know that sounds impossible but it should not be. We need to build more relationships with kids and it goes back to my strong belief about relationships. So I said to the staff, "We have got to find a way for kids to have someone to talk to everyday. Somebody is going to say nice new shirt. I see you got your hair cut, cool shoes. What were your grades on your algebra test last week?" Yes, sometimes you can say we're the surrogate parent, but we are. I think this homeroom concept will really help our kids from poverty because the kids will have that same homeroom teacher all four years. They will go to that same room with the same locker all four years. They're randomly put in homerooms. It's alphabetical by class of so they're randomly done. I periodically would go through the homerooms. We're not right where we should be as far as what we're doing. We have it very structured. We have teachers who work really hard coming up with activities the kids love. The ice breakers that we did during homeroom where they all get to know each other a little more. I think we're going to do more with that this year because I think people are starting to feel more comfortable with their kids. The other thing that I know there were teachers, this is no lie, there was a teacher that there was one kid in the homeroom that kept oversleeping and was late everyday to school so the kids did a phone tree. A different kid in the homeroom would call the kid to wake him up to get him to come to school. I had a teacher that she would check their interims' and their grades and if anybody brought their grade up one whole letter grade she baked them a cake. It was a little cake. It was one of those little tiny six-inch cakes. You wouldn't believe how many kids in her class ended up with a cake by the end of the year. This is homeroom. This is not I'm your teacher this is I am your friend and I am your mentor. I think when your talking about kids from poverty a lot of those kids really don't have someone making that connection. I still remember a little boy at the elementary school and I'll never forget this. If he didn't have his planner signed everyday, they would not be able to go out for recess. One day he didn't have his planner signed and he signed his mom's name. So, of course, the teacher recognized that he had signed his mom's name. He didn't get to go out for recess and he had to come see me to talk to me about forging his mother's name. What he said to me was, "I don't see my mom for two days on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. She works three jobs and she doesn't come home. I really, really wanted to go out for recess. I know it was wrong but I didn't see my mom." I thought to myself why isn't somebody asking him why he did what he did as opposed to assuming that he did it to be deceitful. I think those are the kinds of things that we really need to stop sit back take a look. Not that we excuse it because what he did was wrong but maybe we need to say, "Your mom needs to sign your planner once a week and that way she can really see the kinds of things that your doing." We need to set it up with

that parent. “We understand that you’re working three jobs so every night might be really hard for you. Why don’t you pick the night that is a good night for you? If you can’t pick a night, pick one and flip through it.” That’s still setting a high expectation. It’s still setting a standard. It’s not making an excuse but it’s being realistic. I think that’s what we need to be doing. If we can get more time to do more professional development opportunities, I feel that it energizes your staff. I feel that your teachers feel more competent and more confident when they have professional development opportunities. I think that teachers are social creatures and they don’t have that time sometimes to be social creatures. They are learners. That’s why they are in education. They’re adult learners and we sometimes don’t give them enough time to be adult learners.

Principal #2

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

I have been in my current assignment for three years.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

This is the conclusion of my 14<sup>th</sup> year in education.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Well, growing up I would say that we were definitely lower socioeconomic status definitely poverty.

Question 1.4a Did your family’s socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I would say so. We grew up in the government housing projects in Pittsburg, PA and so many of the families in the elementary school have similar situations. So I would say growing up around families of poverty, knowing how to deal with situations like that and coming from that situation and being able to draw on those experiences, I would say that has prepared me pretty well.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

Well I sort of know what its like to not have a lot of brand name items, to not have the ability to go out and eat certain types of fast foods all the time or go to fancy restaurants, to not have the latest toy or gadget that some of the other students in the school have because we didn’t have the growing

up. So when I see that there are students in the school that are struggling with the same situations or struggling to fit in with the in crowd or with the students who have certain things, I struggled with that same thing. I can definitely relate to those students. I do have conversations with students and I did as well as the assistant principal at the other elementary building because those students were a little older. I don't really have to do that as much as the principal of this building because of the age level of the primary students. Some of the students do struggle with those issues, but I can remember with the older students at the upper elementary school having to deal with the issues of wanting to be popular, wanting to have the latest and the greatest things. It's definitely an issue for them. It's definitely something that is in the forefront of their thoughts. So I think drawing on the experiences that I had growing up, I was able to have conversations with them and talk to them about how best to deal with that. Certainly education for me was the way out so I am able to let them know that getting a good education and being a good citizen are certainly ways that they can escape from the stranglehold of poverty.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

Well certainly school is a business. Many students from poverty have to straddle two worlds. They have one foot in the neighborhood and the other foot in the business world of schooling. There's a different language, there are different mores, different ways of acting, speaking, and talking in school then there are when they get home. So we have to do a great job of teaching students how to behave in both worlds because both have value. Certainly when they get home there are certain ways that they have to behave and when they are in school there are certain ways that they have to behave and it's ok that they are able to do both. We want to teach students that both are ok. We certainly wouldn't want them to devalue their home situations because there are certain things that they are learning for their neighborhood that they will need to survive in their neighborhoods. Without those skills, they would not be able to navigate their neighborhoods and that particular skill set is definitely an asset for them while they are living in their particular situation. Just as we need to teach them that while they are in the school building, there are certain things that they need to understand and to grasp as well so that when they are going off to high school and college and post college opportunities they are going to be making a better way for themselves and hopefully for their families. They certainly need to just have both of those opportunities available for them I guess is what I'm trying to say.

You mentioned about teaching them about language. Are there any other specific examples of doing school that you can think of?

It's not just language. It's ways of behaving. It is habits of mind. It is ways that you treat other people and study habits, ways of thinking about certain situations, thinking about other people about other cultures. Those are things that they have to learn in school and that we have to teach them

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom, what do you see teachers doing?

Well I think our teachers are reinforcing character lessons through our Character Counts programs, certainly through our social studies programs. They are learning about different cultures around the world, different cultures around their neighborhoods and other neighborhoods and the larger society. They are talking about programs like cooperation with their peers. They are talking about problem solving, about peer mediation. Those are all programs that are designed to prepare students for the world of work and for the time for when they are out of school and there are no grownups around for when they are able to solve these problems on their own without adult intervention. They are going to need to know how to do these things and it's hard to learn in the neighborhoods and out on the streets.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?

The old adage is true that students most certainly do not care what you know unless they know that you care. You have to be positive with students, especially students from poverty. They already have police officers and a bunch of other people around them all the time in their neighborhood telling them what to do, bossing them around. So they have a lot of authoritarian figures in their lives at every turn telling them do this and do that, so they need teachers certainly in their lives providing structure, providing rules for them. But with that, they do need someone being a positive cheerleader in their lives, letting them know that they can be successful, that they are smart, that they do have the ability to succeed at a number of things. Maybe their talent is not art but their talent is reading or if their talent is not reading, their talent may be math if its not math then maybe they would be a great social studies person, or if their talent is not in social studies maybe its science. It is our job as educators to find what each student's talent is and to boost that child up so high that they believe that they can be whatever it is that they want to be by focusing in on their strengths rather than their deficiencies.

Question 2.2a When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?



When it is evident, it's a wonderful thing to watch. Unfortunately it's not evident everywhere. I wish it were. It would certainly make my job as principal a lot easier. When it is evident, you can tell right away. That student does very well with that teacher, where as he or she may not be doing well with other teachers. That student is usually on time to that class. That student is usually present everyday in that class. His or her work is to a much higher quality in that class. He or she participates fully in that class. Their work is to such a degree better in that class. They are more engaged in that class. Kids are kids everywhere. They want to be challenged. They want structure. They want to know what the outcome is going to be when teachers use things like rubrics and outcome based education. Things like performance assessments are also key with kids from poverty so they know where they're going. When teachers hold them accountable for the end product, kids do very well in situations like that. It is holding them accountable for their attitude and their behavior in a way that's not so in your face but in a private loving way so that they know that you care about them but that you have standards for them.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies do you see teachers employing?

That research is very powerful. We know that in a poverty home parents, if they are present and not working, are not as often speaking to their children in as many words as some of the other parents are from other socioeconomic groups. In the classroom, we certainly see teachers who are using as many words for different items as possible. They go over synonyms and antonyms and they are just they are really focusing in on vocabulary development skills everyday. They are doing phonemic awareness activities everyday. It has to be every day. It's all day. It's not just an isolated phonics or spelling lesson. It is little games when you line up to go to the bathroom or to go to special or at the end of the day to leave the room. Just little chances here and there, little word games. I've seen teachers do little pocket word cards for every child. They have their list of words that they are working on three or four or five for the week on index cards in the kids' pockets that they carry around everywhere. It's just constantly working, especially with kids from poverty, on that vocabulary development. It has to be school wide as well. It can't just be one teacher or two teachers or a group of teachers working on it. It has to be a systematic, a school wide vocabulary program. If you have that then you know all students benefit, especially students from your impoverished backgrounds.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty,

how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

Yes, I definitely think that compassion and coddling is a problem. I don't think teachers do in intentionally. We look at a child and, as teachers, we naturally feel sorry for students of certain backgrounds. But we can't do that because the stakes are too high today for students. I definitely believe that students have to raise the bar and academic rigor is really the only way. I wish we could take a lot of these curriculums set aside for the gifted and talented students or the advanced students and allow all of our students to be exposed to it because I think we would be surprised at what our student from poverty can do. Many of our students from poverty have had to be extremely creative in their home environments. In having to navigate through that environment; it's not an easy environment to live in. Trying to feed a family of five or six on a budget that is only designed for three is quite a math problem. There's the social studies involved in some of those communities. Many of these students can tell you a lot of the social dynamics that are going on in their neighborhoods and the science experiments that are happening in a lot of these neighborhoods and households. Our young kids can tell you a lot that's happening. It would be wonderful if we could bring a lot of these rigorous curriculums that are out there and allow our students from poverty to be exposed and have an opportunity to participate in them. I think we would be shocked and amazed at what they can do. As far as what I see teachers doing, a lot of them are doing a lot through higher level thinking questioning. They are doing a great job. We have a new science curriculum. They are doing a great job with the science experiments and the great questions there and allowing students to take the lead on that. Our math program is very challenging. *Everyday Math* is a wonderful program and it leads to a lot of great discovery and investigation. With reading, we have leveled reading. Students are really taking off with their small group instruction and reading. I think they do a great job of trying to individualize instruction and push students as much as they possibly can, but we still have a long way to go.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers?

I try to give very specific feedback as far as very specific names of students to teachers. I think that this student could have done x, y and z when you did this with this child. I think he or she could have benefited through this or that. So the feedback that I give is very student-oriented. In the county this past year, we did a great year long development with our administrative staff on changing the way we observe. The focus really has been on student-centered rather than observer and teacher centered. I

think it has really changed the way that we go about doing our observation and post observation conferencing. I think it's done a lot for teaching.

Question 2.6 If you brought your teachers together at your building and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

Because we did a year long book study on the Ruby Pain training and so I think a lot of them would cite a lot of the information from that training. But I think they would not specifically point out students from poverty because I think a lot of what they would say would benefit all children. But I think some of the things they would say would be to keep your level of expectation high for those children, to make sure that you are prepared every single day and that you know your content. We preach and I preach all the time that it's about relationships, relationships, relationships. If you don't have that relationship with that child, with the child's family and with the community that that child lives in, it's going to be very, very difficult for you to be successful with that child at all. So again, high expectations, knowing your content as an educator and building a relationship I think are the three keys for being successful.

Question 3.1 Looking at your professional development have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

Not necessarily. As an undergraduate, I did not. In my Master's program there was a multicultural course that I took. In my doctoral program there was a multicultural course that I took. As an employee of the school system, I had a chance to go to Dr. Ruby Payne's training and as a follow-up to that become a trainer of trainers. With that, there was a significant amount of training on students from poverty so I feel that that was a lot of coursework and preparation.

Question 3.1a If so, describe the professional development opportunity(ies).

Where and when did you take it?

It was two summers ago, so that would be the summer of 2006 and it was in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

What was the length of the class?

It was for three days.

What were some of the key learning's that you took out of that training?

Again the three things that I mentioned before that is about relationships, relationships with the child, relationships with their family and knowing about the community from which that child lives. It's about keeping your expectations high for that child no matter what situation that child comes from. You can still have extremely high expectations for the child just as you would a child from wealth. You can have the same academic expectations for both children. Again knowing your content. If you're not prepared as a teacher and you're not constantly learning as much as you can as a teacher, you are doing that child an injustice. Communication, communication, communicating with the parent, communicating with the child and knowing how to communicate with that child. It's not really what you say to that child, it's how you say it and that goes back to that relationship. They really want to know that you care about them. If you're being that drill sergeant in the classroom that really does not communicate caring, or loving. Trying to build a relationship with that child. You really have to watch how you come across. You can be an organized teacher. You can have great classroom management without being a drill sergeant. I think there's a difference between having routines versus being regimented. We all like routine but I don't think many of us would do well with regimentation.

Did you seek out the professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of your job?

No, I did seek it out. I did seek it out because I thought that as a school principal, especially a school principal of a Title One school, that it would definitely help me in my position.

Question 3.1b If no, what kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to you?

I think requiring the Ruby Payne training, not necessarily that specific training but training like that, be a requirement for all staff. We've done something like that. There's a diversity course that touches on many of the same topics that is a requirement for all school system employees. I think that's a great first step. There's some talk about having a three credit diversity course as a follow-up to that as a requirement for school system employees. I think the county really is on the right track and understands that we have quite a diverse population here in this county. If we don't understand that population, it's very hard for us to work with the population that we have. It's our obligation to understand our customer base.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty and if so can you recall the titles or authors?

Oh yes. There's so many. I like many of them. There's Lisa Delpit and many things that she's written, Jonathon McGregor. Of course Ruby Payne writes a lot of things. There's Jonathon Kozol's work. I would say there's something Dr. Lorraine Monroe's *Nothing's Impossible* is a great book. Just many, many things. Of course I can't recall now.

Question 3.2b In your readings, what are some of the things you used or will be able to use with your teachers?

I intend to really revisit a lot of those things at our faculty meetings. I have used a lot of these things at our faculty meetings to just talk about the population that we have. We have a lot of students from poverty who are struggling so any resources that I can use to help our teachers understand that this is where our students are coming from and this is the mindset. Typically, we have to really understand that some of our students are thinking differently. It's not about us, it's about them. They don't need to change we need to change to meet their needs. So I intend to use the research that's out there so they can understand that this is the situation that our students are dealing with every day. Sometimes school is not the first thing on their mind and that's ok. We need to make sure that when they are here, that their experiences are positive. It's our obligation to do everything that we possibly can to make it positive and to get them to learn as much as they can so that when they go home they can do what they need to do and wake up the next morning and come back and have another great experience with us.

Question 3.3 You mentioned sharing this information with your teachers at faculty meetings, have you thought about any other plans or other ways you may convey this information to teachers?

This elementary school has a partnership with a local university through their PDS. They are a Professional Development School. With that partnership comes the ability to have university faculty actually teach some classes to our elementary school staff. So that's certainly a possibility to have staff take courses there. We also have staff development funds available to us for teachers to take classes online. We have money. It's free of charge to staff for them to take online classes and they can take it on anything they want. There are classes available that deal with diversity and multicultural issues. There's also something available to us that's coming up that's called PD360.com. That's a warehouse of online clips from various experts around the country that teachers can even from home access 24 hours a day of streaming video and online articles and research. They can go on and basically teach themselves about different areas that they are struggling with or that they would like to know about related to again diversity or multicultural issues or poverty and so forth.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Certainly through walk throughs and through formal and informal observation. I do a quarterly staff feedback sheet and it's basically what are you doing, what are we doing now, what should we start doing, what should we stop doing, what are you learning about that's not on the sheet. I do ask often what are you learning about, what would you like to learn about. Is there something that you learned that you found interesting. Usually at certain faculty meetings I ask is there something that you found interesting, is there something that you're struggling with, something that you want to share about today's meeting. I am just constantly asking for feedback in some form.

Question 4.1 Now looking at your teachers, to the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the students from poverty and if so can you kind of elaborate on those opportunities?

There are some teachers who accompanied me on the Ruby Payne training. The entire staff actually participated in a two day workshop Ruby Payne training and then some of them actually became trainers of trainers through Ruby Payne. Plus there are many of them, except for I guess the new teachers, have already completed the school system diversity course, which is 15 hours. Most of them have completed that. Some of them have already signed up to take online courses and some of them are related to multiculturalism. Many of them are already accessing PD360 and will have access to PD360. Some of them have had undergraduate and graduate coursework in multiculturalism and diversity and African American studies which may or may not be related to poverty but they do have training in diversity.

And for the most part, did they seek these professional opportunities out or was it a requirement of their job?

No, they did seek them out actually. The school system diversity course was a requirement of their job but the others they did seek out.

Question 4.1b What kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to teachers?

I think things like the PD360 website where they can go on at anytime. I think that's going to be very helpful offering the online courses where they can go on at any time. That's going to be very helpful. Offering a follow-up three credit course to the diversity class to anybody who wants to take it is going to be very helpful. I think the county is doing really everything

that it possibly can to help teachers. Training the administrative staff in this more collaborative observation process I think was very helpful to teachers because now teachers are not just sitting there listening to principals says this is what you did well or this is what you need to do better. It is more of a collaborative process focused on students and student learning and teachers are able to talk more about their strengths more about their observations during the teaching of the lesson. They're able to be more reflective of the lesson and talk more about the outcome of the lesson better. I think that has done a lot to focus on specific students. Because of that, the students of poverty in the class will certainly be highlighted a lot more then they ever were before.

Question 4.2 Have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty and if so can you give me some information about those?

Yes, again at our faculty meetings and our staff development workshops. Again, we've done some of the same authors and trainings that I mentioned before, Ruby Payne, Lisa Delpit, Jonathon Kozol and many of those same authors and Lorraine Monroe, all of those.

Question 4.3 Other than staff meetings, have your staff members had the opportunity to share this information with or other colleagues in other ways?

Yes but, again, it's still in the context of school. We have our half day and our full day workshops. A lot of them are set aside for one day. This past year we had our first grade teachers together and they got together and they would bring two or three great ideas and they would share them with each other. Then we did a gallery walk where they go to walk through each other's classrooms and see what's in each classroom. They would write down all the good ideas from each classroom and I think that was very helpful. They talk to each other about what they did with each student who was struggling in certain areas and so that helps, particularly with students from poverty who are struggling. To just sit in a network and talk a lot about what strategies work and which ones didn't work.

Principal #3

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

10 years.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

Public school educator for about 18, private for about 11.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Very, very middle class and not real upper middle class just middle class.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I don't believe so.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

As a child, I just wasn't aware of other students being poor. I think it was a new school and a relatively new neighborhood. Everybody seemed to be about the same when it came to money. There wasn't a whole lot of diversity.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

That means teaching students, very purposefully, the behaviors that they need to have so that they can be successful. One example would be teaching them to use the formal registry when they're dealing with adults instead of the informal and leaving the street behaviors on the street and adopting other behaviors in school.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom?

Talking with teachers about not being upset when kids use that informal registry with them. Teaching them to not be so upset about some of the language and the volume. Some teachers don't understand when kids talk very loudly but they live in loud environments.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?

I believe that the students aren't going to learn until they learn that you care about them little simple things like knowing about their ball games. We've had some teachers that would go to their ball games and then the next day be able to talk to them, just very briefly, a couple minutes. I also think that's why *Tribes* is so powerful because using that morning meeting let's everybody share experiences and get to know one another.



Question 2.2a When you observe in the classroom, you kind of answered this, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

*Tribes* and also a lot of them have either younger siblings or older siblings and making that connection that I knew your brother or your little sisters in pre-k and she's so cute or whatever. Really developing relationships with the parents as well.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies do you see teachers employing?

It's very, very important to teach the vocabulary before you start a unit. Building prior knowledge and background knowledge is so important. I've seen teachers use some really good National Geographic videos to give the kids an overall idea of what they are going to be learning about. Explicit teaching of vocabulary, both academic vocabulary and the unit vocabulary, is very important.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty, how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

By assessing their levels of academic achievement and getting them into interventions if they need interventions and to enrichment to keep them going, Our use of the *Accelerated Reader* program keeps kids going and won't let them not excel because we know exactly what they're doing. Also I think *No Child Left Behind* has set that standard and nobody can fall below it.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers?

A description of what I saw and trying to brainstorm with teachers. We've done a series of book studies to give them more strategies. The second Ruby Payne book has some really good cognitive strategies cognitive constructs the kids can use.

Question 2.6 If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

They would talk a lot about relationships and mentoring. We've tried several different mentoring approaches. It really makes a huge difference to the kids when they have somebody looking out for them and giving them that positive attention and encouragement. I think they talk a lot about the use of interventions and getting it to the kids young when it can really help them. We did *Black Saga* this year, which was really cool. That was a specific strategy to encourage students to excel and to be proud of their heritage. Every child is an individual and we talk about them as individuals.

Question 3.1 Have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty and if so can you give me a little description of that opportunity?

I went to the Ruby Payne training. I guess we went to Baltimore. Baltimore or Philadelphia, I can't remember which. As far as formal coursework as in college courses I would say none. But I have read on my own and gone. Whenever I go to a conference and there's a workshop on the achievement gap or children from poverty, I tend to go to those workshops.

Can you recall some of the key learnings that you pulled from some of the trainings that you attended?

An appreciation of just what it takes for a child to arrive at school ready to learn and how many things can just go wrong before they even walk in that door. An appreciation for parents who are really, really trying and doing the best that they can. An appreciation for how resilient the kids are in the environments that they're living in and how they walk in with a smile on their face where what maybe they have gone through in the last 24 hours would lay an adult low.

Did you seek out the professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of your job?

Maybe both. I sought them out and then it became a requirement.

Question 3.1b What kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to principals?

Well, through no fault of our own, our budget is tight and when I go and visit other school systems and I see the numbers of adults that they have that can help out when a child's having a bad day or a child needs immediate extra help. We operate on a shoe string when it comes to

personnel and I think that what principals need more than anything else is more personnel.

Question 3.2 You mentioned earlier that you had done some reading on your own. Can you describe what books, or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty and if you can recall the title or authors?

Well, Robert Slocum about boys. There was a lot in that book. I believe it was called *Hear My Cry*. That was the book study that we did this year. The two Ruby Payne books on poverty; the red one that's overall and the blue one that's on instructional strategies. A book that my past superintendent gave me called *No More Excuses* was about 24 schools that have made an impact on children from poverty. I forget the author's name. I saw her at a conference and she's written a book called *Just What About Me Can't You Teach*. That's a very good book. There is a book that another principal told us about that talks about accelerating learning that has a lot in there. I can't remember the name of that. It's a green book with gold print on the cover. Those are some of them. Lots of articles in *Educational Leadership*, a journal. Lots of articles in the *Principal* journal.

Question 3.2b In your readings, what are some of the things you used or will be able to use with your teachers?

The Ruby Payne books came with workbooks, which was neat. So those materials we used. There was another book called, what was that book called? It was on children with very difficult behaviors; *The Nurtured Heart* that we've used strategies for kids that were really having a crisis; strategies of how to give praise without them turning it off and how to build their ability to see positives in what they were doing. Those specific strategies we've used. We used the Ruby Payne strategies when children get into trouble. There's a series of questions you ask them that we've used, 1) What were you thinking?, 2) What did you do?, 3) What were you thinking, 4) What did you want?, 5) Did it get you what you wanted? The other thing that I've used with teachers and students; lots of times children from poverty, because of their language development and their different use of language of when they do get into trouble we have learned to say tell me the story and let them tell it to you in their own way because they don't remember things linearly and so you have to let them tell you the story and then tell it back to them and they will tell you no, no, no and then they will give you more details but that's a strategy we've used a lot.

Question 3.3 Have you had the opportunity to share this information? What are the ways that you and your teachers have come together with some of the information you've learned in your reading?

We've used a lot of it in our PBIS committee work and a lot of it in SIT and then with the book studies. Everybody in the school has the same experience with it so it would come up in staff meetings. It was basically with the book studies.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Through observation through the observation process and also committees our school improvement committees but particularly PBIS.

You mentioned PBIS before can you just tell me what that acronym stands for?

Positive Behavioral Incentives and Supports.

That program was instituted for what purpose?

To help in an effort to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment.

Question 4.1 Now we're going to turn to the professional development of teachers. Have your teachers, to your knowledge, received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the poverty and if so what are some of the details that you know about?

I'm not aware of any coursework that the teachers have taken. College course work, I'm not aware of any.

Have you sent them to any conferences or professional development opportunities like that?

Yes, PBIS conferences. A lot of the workshops touch on it. Then I had two of my teachers trained to be Ruby Payne trainers and they have done trainings at other schools in the county.

Do you remember how long that workshop was that they went to?

It was probably two days.

Did they seek out this professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of their job?

They volunteered. It was not a requirement.

Question 4.1b And along those same lines, what kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful for teachers to meet the needs of students from poverty?

We've talked a lot about what we do during summer schools and about designing something that would be a real enriching experience for some of these children. I think that would be a wonderful thing for us to do. We always run out of time every year but I really think a summer enrichment program would be great. I think that I already spoke about how we need more staff to really meet these needs. At one point we had social workers in the schools through a 21<sup>st</sup> century grant. I think that's the grant that paid for them. I think the diversity class that we offer. We've talked about having a second class that would follow-up on that that would talk more about these things and I think that would definitely be a worth while thing to do.

Question 4.2 You mentioned earlier about book study so obviously your staff members have read books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty. Were they the same books that you mentioned before or where there any other additional ones that you didn't mention other than the Ruby Payne and the Robert Slocum books?

*The Nurtured Heart.* The one we did before was a David Cooper reading book.

Can you talk a little bit about what happened in the book studies um in your book study groups how they shared the information they learned?

Well the first book study we did, we would read chapters on our own then come together and discuss them. The second one we read chapters, discussed them then teachers tried out some of the strategies in their classrooms. The second book study we did was facilitated by those two trainers that had gone away. Even though they weren't specifically trained in the second book, they presented that material. They gave teachers a lot of good handouts that condensed it and gave them strategies that they could just try quickly. Then with the Slocum book, we actually did a jigsaw where a group of teachers would take one or two chapters, read it, decide what was really important about it and present that back to the whole group. Then we did on chart paper what does this mean of us for next year.

Principal #4

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

15 years

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

19 years

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

I would say we were at the bottom end of the middle class. There were five children in our family. I was the oldest. I had hard working parents and they provided. We didn't have a lot of name brand things like a lot of people did. We never really went without and had really all the necessities, be it food or clothing, but it was not name brand. I would consider us the bottom end.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I would say no.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

I think understanding the difference between the haves and the have not's because a lot of times we were the have not's only in the respect that it wasn't the top of the line or the best. I know some of my sisters sort of resented a lot of times getting the hand me downs at times like that. I think it kind of helps me understand or walk in their shoes. I know what that's like and I know from hearing my siblings complain how they felt with that.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

I think teaching students how to do school, it's like that hidden rules in schools that helps them be successful whether it be in school and certainly when they leave school in the work field that's out there. We just need to help them understand and know when you're teaching them how to do it that there's a process, there's a procedure. You don't just bam walk into it. There are steps that you need to do in preparation in order to be able to know how to do it. It's sort of like following a recipe or direction of how to things.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom?

Well I think preparing kids certainly to communicate orally. Then certainly written communication is part of that process and success.

Knowing what the hidden rules are following that with students and with the teachers. Having teachers prepare kids beyond what the classroom is. So often kids just think I'm in this grade and this is what my life is and that's all it is and that's all there is about it. Good teachers help them to see beyond that grade and what it takes well beyond which is a hard concept for kids to understand because we all live in the here and now.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?

Teachers that connect with the students. Relationships is to me what its all about. When an individual teacher, principal whoever it might be shows an interest in that kids and really does not give up on them regardless even if the kids wants you to give up on them. It's sort of like a dog and a bone. You're just hanging on and you won't let go. I think kids know that you truly do care about them regardless and it helps build positive relationships.

Question 2.2a When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

I think my staff sees the kid for who the kid is as an individual. Often some of the staff already knows the parents and sometimes it's not easy to dismiss who your parents are from the kid but I have staff that do that. They speak with kids on a personal level. They engage them in personal conversation. It's not just an academic thing. They saw you at the in the grocery store, saw you at a movie. Those kinds of things they support the academic but they also support the kid as a kid.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies do you see teachers employing?

I think one of the things I really notice, particularly after doing the book study, is kids that respond in a certain sentence structure. They are allowed to say it and respond that way. What they'll do instead of saying, "No that's not the way you say it" is they just rephrase it in the correct grammar structure. I think that's one of the major things I see them doing. That's not a put down because this is how you talk coming from here. I have that slang as well and I know I do. It's a different dialect much like it is in lots of other little places. They have that and it is not correct all the time and yet teachers won't put a kid down for it or the parents. So often I've seen people correct parents and that's a big put off. It's like they do accept them the way they are. They do try to explain to them the right

way in that they just repeat it in the, they rephrase it using the right word usage.

Do you see any specific strategies for vocabulary development?

I think they do that a lot in the writing and trying really to get our kids to expand vocabulary using a thesaurus and things like that. I have a couple of strong teachers that really use written language. There's a lot of different ways to say something. They want you to use those kinds of things so they really try to expand that.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty, how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

First off they hold them to the same standards. You're in my classroom. I'm here to teach you and you're here to learn. I'm going to help you get there. I don't care where you came from or who your parents are or anything like that. They don't let the kids excuse and say, "Well I couldn't do this." They hold them to the same standard. They don't give up on them. There's no option in having them not work.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers?

Well I think I first have teachers talk to me about the perceptions about the child or the family. I do come from that area and sometimes I do know the perceptions a little better than the others. What their perceptions might be might not truly be true of the family's situation or of the kid or something like that. When they have an issue about a child, I encourage them to talk to me about it. A lot of times maybe the police have been there the night before and the next day the kid didn't do the homework. Teachers ready to jump on somebody and I say, "There was a major problem at that house last night. We heard it on the scanner." Those kinds of things. Just sharing with me first their perceptions and then if I can add any light to it. It kind of puts a different twist or a different tone to the whole situation and how they deal with the kid.

Question 2.6 If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

They believe that there is a team approach for learning. I really believe they feel relationships with the kids and relationships with their parents are key, regardless of where they come from. So if they would truly like



to see support in that the parent supports. Not so much that maybe the parent doesn't know how to do the work that would be ok for them, as long as the teacher feels that the parent supports them emotionally. When that child goes home and says, "I don't have to do this." that they say, "Yes you do have to do this." even if they don't know how to do the work which may be the case at times. They know they've got that strong emotional support that the parent is going to support them regardless. The teacher will teach. You just make sure you support emotionally so that when they're in that teaching situation, I'm getting most out of them.

Question 3.1 Now looking at your professional development as a principal Have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty and if so can you give me some information about those opportunities?

Well just this past year we had a great opportunity to participate in a book study by Ruby Payne and the book was *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Our central office SIT representative was the presenter of that. It truly was the first time in our school community that we had really ever delved into something like that. We typically didn't do it. I think most people feel when you think about poverty, it's a racial issue. Here on this island, the diversity is very minimal. It is almost 99% Caucasian so you don't see it that way. However our kids still are in poverty emotionally. Our FARMS this year is high with here and in another part of the county there. So that was sort of why I started to look at that. I personally had not looked into that or read. I heard a little bit about it but never read much of her books. It was really interesting and certainly from the evaluation everybody really got something from it. I was just thrilled that it turned out as well as it did.

What were some of the key learnings that you took from that professional development?

Certainly the hidden rules; the expectations at home. We always knew that it was different sometimes for different cultures, but didn't really understand how much it really played into it. I think teachers often saw student responses or remarks as rude. When they really thought about it after this book study I think it was seen now in a different light. Maybe they weren't trying to be disrespectful but this is how it is. The other key learnings that came out is it's so important to not let go of those kids, not give up on them because I think education and the schooling that these kids get from poverty is so critical that if we give up as educators, they are truly lost.

Did you seek out the professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of your job?

I sought it out.

Question 3.1b What other kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to principals?

I think one thing they could do and they may already do this and I'm really not aware of it. Certainly they receive a lot of updated information and I know that and maybe sharing with schools. Not like that the central office knows that we've done this book study but if something else comes along or a new sequel to this or something like that. Sometimes as principal I'm so caught up in other things, I don't really follow-up on some of them. But it would sort of be nice to kind of share that information say, "Hey I know you did this and you got a lot out of it. You might want to consider using this or here's some other information that you could use." So really just doing some follow up with us that we may not take the time to follow-up on with updated information.

Question 3.2 You mentioned the Ruby Payne book but are there any other books or articles that you've read that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty and if you can you recall any of the title or authors?

I really haven't. *Educational Leadership* did one whole article or one whole book on poverty and learning. Much of what was in there came from Ruby Payne and so what I did do was copy some articles out of there and share those with the staff while we were really into that. That was probably my first really big experience with poverty. We are going to continue this year with *Hear My Cry: Boys in Crisis* since most of our population is boys. We do have some boys that are pretty challenging in our area so hopefully that will kind of continue on some learning with that.

So were there any specific things that you recall from those reading in that *Educational Leadership* articles that you would be able to use with your teachers?

Well the one particular article that I really stressed and actually shared several times and referred back to several times in some of our meetings after that was the nine powerful strategies that Ruby Payne which actually came all from the book. We kind of had those and just really highlighting the importance of relationships which really stood out.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Conversations. Sometimes in the observation conferences we've mentioned some things just in passing. Conversations sometimes in the classroom, just side line chit chats, discussions something like that.

Sharing with each other. In fact one of the questions for the evaluation was how are you going to use this information or will you use this information and I will use this information with someone else. Three staff commented on their evaluations sheets said I already have so they're talking to other people which I thought was cool.

Question 4.1 Now talking about your teachers obviously they participated in the book study but are there any other preparations, such as coursework, that your teachers have received that deal with the needs of the students from poverty?

Not that I know of unless you consider maybe the diversity course that the school system offers which everyone goes through. They were talking about revamping that and revising that to some degree. I'm not sure how that will play out but it would be neat to see some of these other like Ruby Payne or some of those other ones really come out in that sequel to the diversity course or something like that. But to my knowledge, no. That was really the first time a lot of staff had really studied any of that.

Do you know about how long that diversity course was?

Gosh I don't know and I took it myself so I mean it was a weekly...

Was it a regular like three credit course so it would be 45 hours?

Oh no, no I think it was a one credit course I believe.

And did they seek out this professional development opportunity or was it a requirement of their job?

It's required.

Question 4.1b What kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be helpful to teachers in this area?

I think as they look at the diversity course, that first foundational course, I think really didn't meet the needs from what I hear people saying. I had mine several years back so it was awhile back. More information has come out since that class was started and required. I think everybody on board except new teachers have had that. I think they probably need to relook at that and make it more meaningful to classroom strategies understanding those because it really didn't do that. I mean it kind of gave you a global overview of like almost tolerance to me, accepting that everybody's different and that kind of thing. I don't think it really addressed poverty. If they really look at county wide truly, the county is poverty stricken in many ways. It looks like to me that it would make

sense to really gear the next course strictly to just pinpoint some needs and things like that. That they've seen based probably maybe on some of the test taking strategies and things like that because a lot of students of poverty aren't making the grade for that. So it might be some ways of looking at classrooms strategies or something to help meeting that.

Question 4.2 To your knowledge have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that dealt with the needs of poverty other than the ones you've already mentioned? Has anybody else talked to you about anything else they've read?

Not to me no.

Question 4.4 What additional courses or professional development is there anything beyond the diversity course revamping that you would like to see in terms of professional development for teachers in this area?

I'm not sure. What probably would be neat and, again time is the issue time for everybody, it would be neat if they had little study groups book groups like three or four different books out here. It was a book of interest and teachers did that on their own much like you see some of these book clubs that are not educating those kinds of things. Just something to chit chat about and those kinds of things. That might be a neat thing to do but again I know time would be an issue for staff. If you had three or four running at the same time and teachers could choose. If you had close schools in proximity that could be something. I don't have that option at mine because we're too far away but that would be a thought that you could do something like that.

#### Principal #5

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

Three years, I'm going into fourth.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

All together, 11 years.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

I would say we would be described as one of the poverty. We were on public assistance in inner city of San Diego.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I think so because if you experience it first-hand, it is much easier to be able to talk to someone who is in that situation as you are speaking to them because you can kind of see which way to lead them, so I think that made it easier.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

Again, I think it is understanding some of the nuances of what they are going through. For example, getting a check a certain time of the month; the first and 15<sup>th</sup>. Having to live without a lot of the things that the other kids have that you don't. So some of those things.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

Well, because I know growing up in poverty, I paid a lot of attention to the soft skills, the relationship building and that kind of stuff, but didn't understand the process of education, didn't understand that if you stay on the educational track, one day you could be successful. That was tough to understand for somebody who didn't grow up with a lot of money because you didn't have someone there to explain that to you, so I think having teachers there to explain that this is how the process works and you graduate from elementary, middle, high school and then you have a chance to go to college, hearing them constantly reinforce that, I think, helped.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classrooms in your school?

Again, I think, with our population, which is the majority of African-American population from the inner city of Cambridge is considered, I guess, inner city. We have to stress relationships because without the relationships first, you are not able to do the teaching. So a lot of that entails getting more information about the backgrounds that they come from, for those people who haven't experienced where they have been.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?

Well, it means having a relationship in which the student understands the point that you are trying to make. Some people think that the student has to like the person. It's not about like or dislike really. It is really about understanding. For example, you can have a student in the class that is

corrected by the teacher, and the student may not like it, but the student respects what the teacher is trying to do still, so, as long as it is not done in a way to demean the student that is a different situation.

Question 2.2a. When you observe in the classroom, how do you see your teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

Asking questions about their own environment, not in a way that is intrusive but in a way simply saying, “Hey, what’d you do this weekend?”. Students are going to tell you what went on in their environment. Just being there to listen to what they are saying, not passing judgment, not being critical of them, but just simply listening to the information that they are giving you, based on the question that you asked.

Question 2.3 The research also suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

Well, I know I have observed several language arts classes, teachers putting sentences on the board and asking students to correct them. They are purposefully going through the process of building grammar and building sentence structure with them. Taking a sentence and saying, “Ok, there are 20 errors here, in this sentence, I want you to identify all 20 errors” and then as a group, they go through and try to identify, calling on volunteers to try and correct the sentence.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in classroom should be for all students, research suggests that teachers’ expectations are often low for students in poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

Well, I would say, really, it depends on the teacher first of all, because I can honestly say we aren’t quite there in having our teachers really understand where all our students come from, because we have a relatively new staff over the last three years, but I think teachers first have to understand where the students are coming from. It is a balancing act, at the same time you can’t look at that and feel sorry for students from where they come from. They have to understand that structure is something that is probably absent and that is what you have to have in your classroom in order to reach them and be successfully, but for a lot of our teachers I think it is kind of promoting more understanding of where the students are coming from, what backgrounds they are coming from, but at the same time, having them understand that that is not the end of the road to them because of that.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur for your students in poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

You want to have them critically think about the actions that they take. For example, I can be doing a walk through and sit down and just kind of note some things and then just start asking them questions. I notice that you finished the sentence, finished the thought, of a student as opposed to letting them take it all the way out, or you're not asking the high ordered thinking questions with that student, but yet you have another student in the same room, that is obviously from a different background but you had more confidence in that student to give you the correct answer or if your being observed, you're calling on certain people, as opposed to, a, calling on some others. You have to point those things out any time you go in for an observation.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

More understanding of their backgrounds. I don't think we are quite there yet. Understanding how their backgrounds affect their readiness for school and, of course, they talk about, in the elementary school all the time, but in middle school there is a readiness that has to take place as well because of forced prior learning. Prior knowledge is something that is going to ultimately determine how far you have to reach down and grab them and bring them along so helping them understand the backgrounds for the purpose of building that prior knowledge for them to be able to get them to expand on answers.

Question 3.1 Now, looking at your professional development as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

No. In a short answer, no. Actually, I haven't come to think of it. That is not something that is really stressed. I think it has kind of been a one size fits all type instructional process for me. Now I went to a predominantly African-American college in Louisiana, so you would think that being out of predominantly African-American university, that the emphasis would be on teaching student in poverty and so on and so forth, but isn't not. It is still a process being taught there, even though it is predominantly African-American, so I would say on a Bachelor's level or Master's level, I really didn't see too much emphasis on students from poverty.

Question 3.1b What kinds of things would you like to see your district or colleges do that would be more helpful to your preparation as a principal?

Diversity training. I really do think that needs to be a part of the actual coursework and then having them apply that information they are receiving to a school with a high poverty population. That should be a part of the experience.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? If so, can you recall the titles or authors of those books?

Well, actually *Through Ebony Eyes* is one. I can't recall the author but it basically talked about a student's experience through their own eyes, and, again, it applies to a number of situations but that is something. We try to do a book club at our school every quarter. *Teach Me, I Dare You* is sort of along the same lines as that but, in terms of the content that was in it, it was basically all the same; trying to understand the relationships and do some of those things. So the research basically says the same things.

So those are some of the things from your readings that you were able to use with your teachers.

Question 3.2b Are there any other things from your readings, besides that, that you were able to pull out and use with your teachers?

Well, to tell you the truth, I have an advantage, I guess, in this area, because I have actually lived some of the stuff that they are researching. So it has actually been easier for me to just tell about my own experiences and I think that has kind of helped them to understand how I interact with kids from poverty, but, again, it is very difficult, even with the book clubs and things that we do. We see consistently in our scores that are areas that are deficient are with FARMS population and we have really the same amount of African-American students as representing our FARMS population as well and it's mainly because the two go hand-in-hand.

Question 3.3 How have you had an opportunity to share this information with your teachers?

Staff meetings and the back to school staff meeting. We set the goal and the vision for the year. We look at data and we try and use that data to determine what direction we need to go, and, in our case, it always points back to the same thing, which is okay. We've got to try to find a way to get the staff on board consistently. So you look for, again, book club opportunities throughout the year. We share information that way. Use your in-service days to bring professionals in and talk with them and show them strategies.



Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you shared with your teachers, or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Well, a lot of times you look at benchmark data. You look at MSA data when that comes out, but that is normally not until July when that information comes out. But what you can do is you can look at referrals because if you look at the distribution of referrals from certain teachers, you can see a high rate from a certain demographic and that is kind of a red flag that not necessarily that the teacher is a racist, but the teacher doesn't quite understand where a group of students from similar backgrounds are coming from. So that is one way we try and take a look at how effective some of the in-service training might be.

Question 4.1 Looking now at the teacher, and, you can answer as much as you know, to your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

I would say no, based on what I see and after working here and then comparing it to where I am now and looking at the critical need for more diversity training, it is definitely over there, because, again, my staff may be 5% African-American, 5-10% African-American but my student population is 56-57%, so right away you see the need for understanding. We are not just talking about African-American. We are talking about African-Americans in poverty, we are talking about whites in poverty, we are talking about anybody in poverty, so, I would say that, no, they don't come with those things and you really have to take a year or two to really understand who you are teaching.

Question 4.1b What kind of things would you like to see the district do that would be more helpful for teachers in this area of students from poverty?

Diversity course. I believe districts have to do what colleges and universities aren't doing. I think colleges do a good job of explaining the research behind things and explaining the methodology but when it comes to nuts and bolts, you're in this building, you're in that classroom, and here at your group of students, I think that needs a little more work, especially when you talk about students in poverty.

Question 4.2 You mentioned some books before that you have in book study, outside of those books, are you familiar with anything your staff members have read in this area, besides those two that you discussed from your book studies?

Lets see, no, because those would be things that they have read on their own so I'm not always aware of what they're reading outside of that but I just try and bring them information based on what I read sometimes. Sometimes I will copy articles out of different publications and I will

leave them in their mailboxes and some of those things but on a regular basis, they don't always share with me what they are reading.

Question 4.3 Do you know if they share with each other what they are reading?

I think on occasion, but I'm not sure all the time what they are sharing.

Question 4.4 In addition to that diversity course, are there any other kinds of professional development opportunities you would like to see offered to teachers?

I would like to see more emphasis put on touring the environments, listening to some of the community members, having community forums, doing some of those things to try to understand the population that you serve, and that is not just with students in poverty. A lot of times you hear students in poverty being interchanged with African-American students, but it is not necessarily the case all the time. It is the case primarily where I am working now, but you have a lot of areas where they are not African-American kids, but still they're in poverty and that problem needs to be addressed. I think more tours of the areas that they serve so that they can kind of get a visual for what they're dealing with for the purpose of understanding the task at hand not for feeling sorry for the person coming from that environment, which is definitely something you don't do.

Principal #6

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

This coming year will be my seventh year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

It has been 17.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

I am glad I had this. I would say middle-class group on a farm. We certainly weren't poor but we certainly weren't rich. So we were somewhere in the middle there.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I really don't think so. I mean, I didn't experience those things myself.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

Well, I don't know about impoverished. Now some farm areas, and especially these days, it is very hard to make a living farming and, we are in a farm community, so, you know, some of our economic, you know, needy children are from farm families, and it is a relationship that I can have with them. I grew up on a farm and I can talk about all that so.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

I would say that means school routines, because it doesn't just come naturally to people, knowing how to do school, and I have always told by kindergarten and Pre-K teachers they teach kids school, so they teach them that when they come into the classroom the routines that you do. You put your things away, how you head a paper. They teach them the ways that the routines of school and I think that that is a big part of doing school. I guess the other part of doing school would be knowing the knowledge that you have of course.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated, you have touched on it a little bit, but how do you see that demonstrated in the classroom? How do you see teachers instructing it.

Again, I think those teaching kids routines is so very important, for the teachers to know that you actually do have to teach the ways to do the little things during the day. How to organize your things, how to keep things in a folder, for the older kids, how to keep their notebooks together, you know, what materials and supplies to have available. I think all that is just important to actually teach the kids, where, you wouldn't assume when they come in that they already know those things.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships. What does that mean to you?

Well I think that means, um, you know, talking with the kids a little bit about their interests, their wants and needs, just showing that you can, you know, going that little extra mile to spend a few minutes with each child, getting to know them and letting them know that you, you really do care about them.

Question 2.2a. When you observe in the classroom, how do you see your teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

I think it is important that they, and this is with all students, I don't think they pick out any. I can't really say that because sometimes, especially in the older grades, those are kids who are the hardest to reach and teachers do spend extra time when they come in the morning, talking to them about how they are doing, how were things last night, kind of spending that morning and afternoon time with a few extra words for that child, but that is really with all kids. How you just want to make sure to give them that extra little bit of attention, which you can find times during the day to have that little extra talk to show them you really care. Was homework done? Why not? Can we help you in any way? Is there something we can do here at school to help?

Question 2.3 The research also suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

Well, content areas are great areas for vocabulary development, and I see a lot of work in all areas. In the reading, they always work on vocabulary ahead of time. In Science and Social Studies, you always pull out those vocabulary words and work on them. In Math even, you have vocabulary listed for the math, so I know it is true. We have talked about in our staff meetings and staff development before that vocabulary is very important for kids, so the teachers do, kind of spend that extra thinking about what words the kids need to know, that are important. We have gotten lists of words before that people say are important, but we really have to look at our curriculum and see.

Question 2.4 Although the rigor in classrooms should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

We have talked about this for our minority, all of our minority, students that you have to let the child know that they can do just as much as anybody else. Often they won't think they can, they don't see the parents doing those kinds of things. Often family members don't have the school experience, so I see the teachers saying to the child "now look at this is what we could do. This is what you could do". Give them some examples. If they do a really good example, use it as one of the models for the rest of the class. Look, can I use this because it was really good, and then put it in front of the class and show them. I have seen them do that kind of thing. Just to build up as much as they can that this child can do it. Catch them being able to do it and then build them up from there. Really do expect those high standards from every child, but sometimes you have to scaffold it for them to get them there.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the class to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

Well that is something that mostly is a discussion. If I see it in a few different classrooms, we can work on that as a group and talk about that in a staff development or in a school improvement team meeting. But normally it is more of a one-on-one discussion. I do a lot of walk throughs, lots and lots of walk throughs, and if you see something, if I see something that really needs to be talked about, that is a discussion. I would get with them later, just head in their room and have a little talk about how about if we do this or try to give them some ideas on how they could do that a little bit better.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you know they would say?

I think they would say really having high expectations for those kids, because often they don't think they can. I think they would also say having interventions, having extra something to help along the way, or having an afterschool or intervention block during the day. I think they would say that having a little something extra for those kids was important, as well as telling them they can do it. I am going to give you the support to do it.

Question 3.1 Looking at your professional preparation as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

No. I had to think about that and, no, I don't remember really in my coursework or in my work as a principal learning about the standards and all. I don't remember really. There wasn't a course but there really wasn't even a discussion on how to help kids in poverty so that was interesting to think about.

Question 3.1b Since not, what kinds of things would you like to see either the district, or even college preparation programs do that would be helpful to you as a principal?

I think it would have been good to talk about ways to intervene for kids because in teacher training, that is a big issue. You don't just need to know how to teach the curriculum, you need to know how to differentiate that curriculum and what kinds of intervention programs are there. So maybe even a course on intervention programs that would be really of

interest, I think, that would be of interest to teachers now. You have to go back and get your credits, wouldn't that be a great course to take.

But how about you as a principal?

Now, me as a principal, again, I would love to take something that talks about. I just got this. I was just going through my mail today and I got the *Guide to Reading Intervention Programs* that a few people worked on. I know this was one of them and looking through it I'm thinking that this is something that everybody should have, and if you could go to, if you could take a class to learn a little bit about each one of these, that would be so great in building your intervention block and knowing which program is really best for which kid. I would take a course that but I think that I can go on line now and I have seen some courses that talk a little bit about, more like, African-American achievements, minority group achievement. You don't really see one that says "achievement for low income". You see it in combination with other things, and as we go down the line I was thinking about some of that.

Question 3.2 So, have you read any books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

Now, I did go to the last time I went to a National Association of Elementary School Principals' conference, there were a couple of really good sessions but, again, it is in combination. It is really more in combination with culture. It does talk about economic disadvantage. There are two books that I did buy after going to two of the different sessions, but once I thought about it, I thought, wow we really are talking about economic disadvantage, but we are talking probably, under the umbrella of culture. So that was very interesting to think about.

Question 3.2a Can you recall the titles or authors of those books?

Well, I have these two here. So it's *The Culturally Proficient School* and it is by Lindsay Roberts and Campbell Jones, and the other one is *What Is It About Me You Can't Teach?* and that is by Rodriquez. And I heard Rodriquez speak and she was just outstanding and she did talk a lot a out disadvantages of people.

Question 3.2b What are some of the things that you used, or will be able to use with your teachers from those readings?

We have started working on *What It Is About Me You Can't Teach?* and there were 15 best practices. They are the old TESA practices but she is saying that they are a key. After going through those with staff, we do realize that those are 15 key practices. What we did was we went three at

a time. I went through and did walk throughs, we discussed them as a staff, then we came back and discussed again how they used them, what I saw maybe which ones they need to use a little bit more, they thought they were using but I didn't see. So we are going to continue working on those and continue with that book. It talks about no excuses so we talked a little bit about no excuses. We read some articles and *The Culturally Proficient School*. We really haven't gotten to yet but that is something that we will start this year in staff development sessions. I use staff meeting time and some of our in-service time to do those kinds of things with the staff.

Can you give me an example of some of the practices that were in those 15 best practices?

Well, I haven't looked back at that since so I have to take my notes out but things like when you call on a student and they don't know something, don't just let them get away with not knowing. You need to probe a little further because you know there is something in there, so probe them a little bit, and they figure out they do know something more than maybe they thought they did, or maybe they were willing to give and after probing a little bit. I am going to be coming back to you later, so don't let kids get away with telling you they don't know something. They are just really good practices that you hear a lot about, but they are just what we say are the 15 just top best practices.

Question 3.4 You kind of touched on how you monitor the use of what you have shared with teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development. So one way you mentioned was doing walk throughs.

Yes.

Are there are other ways that you monitor that?

Actually having grade level team meetings. When you are talking about student achievement, you are talking about how we do staff development and team meetings, those are the ways to reinforce what we have learned so far and maybe are we using those things just within the normal frame of meetings.

Question 4.1 Now, turning to your professional staff, to the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deal with the needs of students from poverty?

I would say, no, I don't think so because in all of our discussions, in all of our readings, I haven't had teachers refer to classes they've taken or information that they have gotten through any kind of class, so that would lead me to believe that they have not had that.

Question 4.1b Since they didn't, what are some things that you would like to see the district do that would be more helpful for teachers in this area of students from poverty?

Well, I think we are doing some things with talking about the African-American achievement. We are talking about when the principals get together it is really nice that we have been able to, we have been given some staff development from the county, and we bring that back to our teachers and I know the county has tried to let the buildings do the staff development that they have needed. But it might be nice to have some sessions that are county-wide again where teachers can come and maybe pick a session that they need within the frame of their school improvement if we could do something like that. I know we have done some things with parents where they have had different sessions they can choose. I don't see why we can't do that with teachers. Principals could do different sessions and teachers would have a wide variety to choose from. I think that that would be very enriching for everyone.

Question 4.2 Other than the two books that you mentioned previously, are you aware if your staff members have read any other books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

Well, we have done some work with Ruby Payne. We did that a couple of years ago in a Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals' conference. I heard Ruby Payne speak and then got some of her materials and shared it with the staff. Ever since then our main groups are African-American and special education that we seem to have more trouble with. Our FARMS group does better. We do have some pockets where they don't do quite as well. But they do much better than our African-American or special e populations, so we really have looked more closely at those areas, especially in the last two or three years. We have really been focusing on that, but, like I say, under that umbrella you do talk about the economic issues.

Question 4.4 You mentioned that kind of round robin staff development, are there any other additional courses or professional development opportunities you would like to see offered to teachers?

Well, I think with the new PD360 website that the county is I guess, becoming a part of they are offering that, and I am really thrilled that they are. I think on that site we are going to be able to get a multitude of just rich staff developments to be able to differentiate for staff, because there are so many options there and it is something that they can get on and you can move around and make sure they are doing their little things, but that is a big one for me, that I think that will do well, and I think we are also going to get a little pocket of money. It may not be as much since they



have bought into the PD360, but I am hoping we do still get a little bit of money where we can purchase a few resources, some books for book study, etc. to continue with those kinds of things with staff. When you watch these videos, you might come across some resources that you really want to go further into and I would like to be able to have the resources to do that.

Principal #7

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

This is going on my fifth year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

It has been 25 years.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

I would say that we were actually, by family we discuss it all the time, and they say we weren't poor, but if you really look at it, I guess we were poor, lower economic. Father worked, mother stayed home, took care of the kids. She did some work in homes, cleaning homes, that kind of thing, but, for the most part I guess we were poor, but during those times, it didn't seem like that because everybody else was poor, so it really didn't matter.

Question 1.4a. Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

Yes. I think that the fact that we grew up in a community where there were a lot of needs, and it makes me even more sensitive today to families who have similar needs, if not worse, in reference to when you have been blessed, pass it on, and so I often share with people that you can't really judge a person until you walk in their shoes, and for those of us who have we have to be mindful of the ones who have not because we just don't know. Because with a couple of decisions and a couple of things that could happen to us, we could certainly be in those same predicaments, and so, I think my background growing up, has a lot to do with the way that I deal with parents who come through my door or anybody who comes through my door.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

It makes me a little bit more aware, sensitive. I am able to share stories, insight, give analogies that they can easily relate to because of their experiences and they can see that although I'm a principal, have degrees, what they say, I've got it made or whatever I can quickly share with them that I've been there. It's just a matter of how you are going to work with your opportunities and what God has given you.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

That means to me that teachers explain the game to them and this education thing is a game and if you learn the rules, you can play the game, and you can play any game. I often share with students that you don't play football with basketball rules, because if you did you wouldn't be very successful. Well, school is the same way and it's about the business of school. Well, if you play by school rules, if you go into a classroom and you do exactly what a teacher asks you to do, and you play by their rules, you're going to be successful in that class. Now, if you take those same set of rules and go to a different classroom, and they're not the same, you're not going to be as successful. So, Nike came out with a commercial some years ago that said, "Just do it". Well, that is the same thing I tell kids, just do it. If that what the teacher asks that's what you do and then if the other teacher asks something different, just do what they ask, and if you play games, you are going to be successful.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in your classrooms?

I see it demonstrated in the fact that I have a school-wide course syllabus that every teacher has to submit to me. I share that with our parents. I share it with the community. There shouldn't be any secrets in education. We are here to educate children and so we are always on the same page in reference to what goes on. I have an open door policy as a principal. I have an open door policy as an educator. What we do, we're supposed to do every day, all the time, so it doesn't make any difference who comes in or when they come in. If you're doing your job, what difference does it make. So, when I walk in the classroom, I have certain expectations for every teacher, and if I don't see it, then we have discussions.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with students. What does that mean to you?

That means everything, because it is quite clear, after 25 years in this business, that it's all about relationships, and I don't care if it's poverty or what it is. When a teacher establishes a relationship with students, they're

going to be successful with their kids, bottom line. All that means to me is you go to find something that is going to work with that child.

Question 2.2a. When you observe in the classroom, how do you see your teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

Well, I can tell a lot by the way that the students respond to the teacher, the repertoire that the teacher has. You can see some teachers use a sense of humor with students, students are receptive to the sense of humor, or some are just organized in their structure, and in a way that some students need to be sometimes. So there are a lot of different ways that I look for that kind of relationship being built in the classroom. If a teacher doesn't call on students, a certain portion of the room is not called on because of what I think are different variables that I take note of those kinds of things too. For the most part, I'm looking for the relationship, the way the students respond because, again, it's not about how much the teacher knows, it's about how much the kids know, so I'm looking for that transition as well.

Question 2.3 The research also suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary skills. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

Well, at this particular level, and now if I were in the elementary school and I have been in the elementary, middle and high school levels, I could see some of those strategies. In the high school, I don't see a whole lot of that. I think it is a given that, once they get to the high school they should know these things. I mean it's nothing negative to say about the high school, but I guess because of the pressures that we're under with the High School Assessments and trying to make sure that they're successful that a lot of that kind of stuff gets pushed aside and the expectation is that, they already have those skills, they have those strategies. It's time for us to get ready for High School Assessments. So I very seldom see a whole lot of that done other than in the ESOL classrooms, second language classes.

Question 2.4 Although the rigor in classrooms should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

Teachers themselves are expected to have high expectations and I think a lot of it has to do with the leadership at the top, being the principal. I don't accept second best from my teachers. I don't accept second best from any of my students, no matter what their backgrounds are. The expectation is that every student who comes into this building will have

the same opportunities, the same resources to be successful and, if they're not then we have to take a look at that, and then we start looking at individual contracts, individual plans. Every month we assess every student who is not being successful in the classroom. Teachers are required to submit to me specific names of students not being successful. If they're not being successful, then it's our responsibility as a team, as a school, to find out what's going on, and then we bring in our child study team, take a look at all those recourses, data, things going on in the classroom, things going on at home. We include the various community agencies, etc., to make sure that everybody is playing on a level playing field and, because of my experiences, not always having opportunities and other people seeing me as a person who's not going to do but so much and low expectations, etc., I am keenly aware that that is something that can easily happen to my teachers as well and I try to make sure that they understand that here at Regular High School that is not going to be accepted and that is not acceptable behavior here. Every child, no matter who it is, if we could pick the kids that come to our classrooms, that's a different story, but we can't, and so the ones that come in our classrooms, we're going to do the very best that we can for each and everyone, every single day.

Question 2.5 You mentioned before that if you see some issues in a classroom, you have a discussion with the teacher. If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

We have professional development opportunities, but individually, as a principal, I have a wealth of resources in this office alone that I can share with them, strategies, proven strategies that work all over the place. But just to have discussions with teachers to find out a little bit more about them as a person, sometimes gives me an idea of where I need to go as far as helping a teacher. Of course, we have the observation/evaluation process but I'm more of a hands-on kind of person and an informal kind of person. I think I can get more done talking to you one-on-one, informally, than I can when it comes to having an observation or written documentation in front of you, because it takes away some of the relationship that I'm trying to build with the person, especially with teachers who're having some difficulty. So I try to let them know in my experiences, I've been in the elementary school as a principal, middle school as a principal, and now high school as a principal. I taught 17 years in the middle school, taught first grade, so I've done a lot in 25 years, and so I try to give them the benefit of my expertise and to let them know that it's okay not to have all the right answers, but it's not okay not to find the right answers, because they're out there. So, you know, it's okay if you don't know everything, but just know where to find it, that's all. I try to help them feel comfortable about not knowing everything, having some

weaknesses. There are a lot of gospel songs out there that talk about everybody is going to sin, everybody has weaknesses, everybody has issues. Well that's the same thing with teachers too, but society has said, time and time again, that teachers have to be perfect. I can recall playing monopoly or board games or whatever, and people were quick to say, "you didn't know that and you're a teacher". Teachers are supposed to know everything? So we don't know everything. Unfortunately, some of the teachers, especially new teachers who come in, they have this in the back of their minds that they can't show their weaknesses because, as a principal, I am going to see that as a sign of weakness, which may mean, that at the end of the year, they're not coming back. So, I try to let them know that everybody started at the same place you're starting. We all have to start somewhere and we learn through that process and I try to be a support system for them that way.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you know they would say?

They would probably say there has to be a genuine concern for students. They would probably say that they have to have the same opportunities that everybody else has. Unfortunately, backgrounds are different but once they come to school, we have to do everything we can to balance what is taking place at home and what takes place in the classroom. They would also say that we have to provide students with opportunities outside of the classroom to be successful with your academic, as well as your athletic program, and specifically, for those who need it, an opportunity to get remediation so that those who need it, can take advantage of it; those who don't need it, can go on their own way. I think those are the kind of things that they would say. I feel comfortable with that answer because, we just finished our school improvement process and that's what we said.

Question 3.1 Looking at your professional preparation to be a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

But I am finding going through the Master's Program in Administration and Leadership or having gone through it and going through this doctoral program on Educational Leadership and my under-grad degree, there are a lot of things that I don't think we actually are trained on or taught that would make us good principals. I don't understand how, and I've often said when I retired that I would like to start a program, just like the student teaching program, but it would be for principals, because too often we take teachers and turn them into administrators without formal, proper training, and the expectation is, because they were good teachers, they are going to be a good administrator and I don't understand how we keep doing the

same things over and over again. The expectation is that you're going to take a teacher who is certified in a specific area but now they're responsible for all areas, some of which they never taught, never had the experience knowing first-hand, but now they have to be the master of everything. I don't get that. Now, and then, you have your part about instruction, and you have to be an instructional leader because the trend now is that principals need to be more instructional leaders instead of managers. Well, when are you going to teach us to be instruction leaders with the other 700 things that we have to do in a course of a day or for several months or a year. I just don't see how you can ask a principal that has everything that he should have to be successful, other than he's just a lucky person. I don't get that, but it's just so much that a principal has to do, but there's never enough time to give them the training that they need, I mean, when are you going to do it during the summer? And you can't do it during the summer because you need a vacation, you can't do it during the school year because you're needed to run the school, so when are you going to give me all this formal training? I have a life. I don't get it.

Question 3.1b So what kind of things would you, you kind of eluded to it, the kind of the Principal Academy for aspiring principals, but what other kinds of things would you like to see either the district or, maybe in a college program, do that would be more helpful to you as a principal?

I would like to see the same format that they do for student teachers. Every principal, before taking the job of principal, would actually have to shadow an attending principal and if the principal is going in to replace a principal, if at all possible they would shadow that specific principal for six months. If a principal is retiring then the expectation would be that he could retire but come back the next year and mentor the new principal. That's the kind of program I think, because a lot of the stuff that we do you can't learn in a book. I mean, you just gotta be on the job. When that parent comes in and, if I'm sitting here, cause I thinking, well my time's almost up, but I would love to be able to sit in the same room with the new principal and see him interact with parents, and teachers and students, and be able to critique him afterwards and say this is what I would've done or I think this would've been better or you would have gotten this. Give them the benefit of 30 years experience, a different perspective, not that they have to do what I say, but just throw some things out on the table because as a principal right now I can make a decision and then, if I think about it, if I read, go back and get different perspectives from different people, I probably would have done it differently too, so why not benefit from all of the experience. We have retired principals that could easily come back and share their wisdom and knowledge that could benefit systems. We don't do it.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty and, if so, can you recall any of the titles or authors?

Yea, the last one that I, cannot, let's see, Ruby, what's the one

Payne

Yea, Ruby Payne. Read that book and our economic system is not as bad as the book talks about. They're talking about inner city students more so. We're in a rural area and to make those kind of comparisons are not the same. It's not apples for apples, but, there was a lot of information in there. I'm from the old school. A lot of the stuff that we have read over the years in education is the same old stuff, it's just a different twist on it, and if you use common sense, I mean, that's what everybody's talking about. DuFour and all these other people out here talking about what we need to be doing, it's common sense, it's old school stuff that if we had just stayed with the basics and all those things, we wouldn't be in the situation that we're in now. And here's another problem I have with DuFour and all these other people writing these books and telling everybody this is the way to do it, this is successful. Well, if you think that what you're selling is so good and is going to help kids, why does it cost so much. That's the first thing. Why are you making millions of dollars talking about what we need to be doing as educators and then charging us for it? I go to conference after conference and pay all these bills to go. This conference is \$500.00 or \$1,000.00. Why am I paying anything if I'm going to come back to my school and help kids. You should be paying me. But these people, so called experts in the field, are making millions of dollars and we're still no better today than we were 30 years ago. We still have the same problems in education that we had 30 years ago. What school, and I can't wait to see, what school in 2013/2014, is going to have 100% in everything. It's not going to happen. It's never going to happen, and they know it's not going to happen, and why they have set us up to take all of the pressures that we have taken for the last four of five years getting ready for something that you can't do, I have no idea. I know you're sorry you asked me asked that question It is incredible. Now, I believe in the No Child Left Behind, the concept, the premise, because it just makes us better as educators, teachers, kids. I like that. I just don't like the fact that if you don't do exactly what they say you should be doing every year, then you're penalized. The superintendents look at the principal, the principal is looking at the teacher. It should be we did this well, let's work on this not I think we may need to go. We're going to lose a lot of good educators because of the restraints that we put on educators to try to meet this 2013/2014 deadline.

Question 3.2b In your readings, what were some of the things that you used, or will be able to use with your teachers?

Well the first year that I read the book, we actually invited her to this county and she came down as a professional development opportunity. We had all the teachers there and then we also had the lady from Chicago who started all those schools. I can't think of her name. But anyway, that was another professional development opportunity. I used to work in Calvert County and I used to work in Williamsburg, Virginia. I often tell my teachers that you really can't understand what it's like unless you've either lived it or you actually experience it. A lot of the teachers that are here, this is all they know. They went to Salisbury University. They're from this area so they've never been across the bridge, never worked in another state and so they really don't understand what it's like to go home and not have food, to have to try to get your homework done during the day hours because you don't have electricity, or you have burning candles, or when you go home, you know, your foot touches the ground instead of a floor. So I encourage home visits with an administrator or with the PPW. I also encourage, during professional development days, that we take field trips. Now, that hasn't worked because of cost and those kind of things, but I believe that if you have a chance to see the other side, then maybe you're going to be a little more sensitive and you're going to be more receptive to what you call now "excuses". Maybe you'll be a little bit more receptive to accepting some of those excuses when you know that there is a strong possibility those things are happening at home. One of the other things that we do here is you cannot refer a child for anything here unless you have made contact with the parents. If you send a child down to the office, the first thing I'm going to ask is have you called their parents and if you say no, why are you sending him to me. You need to build that relationship with the parents and the student before I get involved, because when I call a parent and a parent says Principal #7, I could've easily taken care of that if the teacher just called me, they're absolutely right. I'm the one who says, right is right. It doesn't make any difference who it is, right is right, and if a teacher is wrong, they're wrong. Now, I not going to publically make a fool out of them but I am going to pull them aside and say "look, now that parent was right, that child was right, you were wrong, and you need to go back and take a look at that and when you get yourself together, you may want to apologize or do whatever". Those are some of the kind of things that I do, look for, etc. I ride school buses. This year I will be riding, hopefully, every school bus that comes in this building so that I can actually see all the different areas that my students are coming from, the kind of houses that they live in, the neighborhoods they live in, how long it takes them to get home, the first stop, second stop, so I have a better understanding of my student population, what goes on, all those kind of things. When I was in an elementary school seven years ago, when I first came to this county, I rode



the school busses and that was probably one of the best things that happened because then the bus drivers thought that I was the best thing since sliced bread cause they didn't have any problems that day on the bus. The other thing is that it just made me more of a person to them, instead of a principal. I also have, and I encourage the teachers too, to go to the student's churches. That is another way to build those relationships. I have a church outreach program where I try to go to a different church where my kids go once a month and then I go to my home church the other times, but it makes a difference when they see me in their church. It makes a difference to the parents. See, here's the thing, you can't come in and curse me out when I've just seen you in church Sunday. See, you can't do that any more. So they understand and they know that I know that I just saw you in church. Now, how are you going to come in here and act like a fool, cursing and doing all these things, when I just saw you in church. So that makes a big difference too. I build a relationship with the ministers. We have two ministers currently, and I have opened it up to all, but I have two ministers who come in during our lunch times and they just walk around and talk to the students. Of course they know the separation of church and state thing, but they understand that. They just come in and mentor or come in and volunteer to just help out and just make sure that things are going well. So we do that here too.

Question 3.4 How to you monitor, you kind of touched on a little bit, how do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Well, each month, now I just started this year, but each month, and well I want it to be each month, but it just looked like it was too much, so I went with each semester. We have two semesters, so each semester every teacher in the building, has to submit an idea or suggestion or strategy or something that has been beneficial or successful in their classrooms to me. I put them all together and I send them out to everybody. So, now instead of you having just one that you use, you have 40 that you can use, and so we do that twice, and so at the end of the year, you have 80 things that are working with you in the classroom. Some of those things are working with students of poverty. What kind of things they do, others can just be a strategy they use for a warm-up technique or whatever, but put them all together, out of 80, you're looking at maybe 30 you're going to be able to use in your daily instructional practices. So, those are some of the kind of things.

Question 4.1 Turning to the preparation of your teachers, and this is to the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deal with the needs of students from poverty?

I would say, yes, because a lot are familiar with Ruby Payne, a lot are familiar with the lady I was talking about out of Chicago. I recruit a lot for the county, and I have noticed that there is a lot more preparation being made to those kind of issues, classroom management, discipline, sensitivity with minorities. I mean those are some of the key terms that are being used now when you go to these interviews. The kids know the language to say, things, all the key terms etc. and so I think schools now are doing a better job with that. I would think schools that are in high poverty areas would probably be doing more of that, but like I said, around here, I don't think, Salisbury, Cambridge, Easton maybe.

Would you imagine that they sought out this professional development or do you think it was seen as a requirement of their job?

I would hope that it is a requirement, but I think you'd have to seek it out. It is probably an elective course you could take or something like that. I know that one gentleman I just interviewed recently said, he was a white gentleman, said that he took black studies or something like that. It wasn't required, it was something that he did because he just wanted to know more about the African-American culture, things like that, because he knew that he was going to be teaching black students, and he just wanted to know a little bit more about it. Those kinds of things should be mandatory as far as I'm concerned, but for the most part I don't think they are. They're elective kind of things.

Question 4.1b What kind of things would you like to see the district do that would be more helpful for teachers in working with students from poverty?

Well, we could start with county-wide in-services. Now, it is pretty much left up to individual school. It's personalized based on their individual needs. I understand that too, but this issue, as well as student drop-out, graduation rates, special education, there are a lot of generic topics that could be county-wide things that I think the county could start with. That's the first thing. The second thing is, and I think it would be beneficial, if we could do some of this changing; rural areas, 500 students. My teachers don't know what it's like to be in a building with over 1,000 kids. Maybe we could switch for a week or two, not necessarily switch, but just let them go and shadow other teachers, go to an inner city school just so you could know what it's like. Those kinds of opportunities, professional development. I'm hopeful that some day I'll be a superintendent and it may not be a popular decision, but I would certainly love to entertain extending the school year, as well as the school day because of the way society is going, education really hasn't changed a whole lot in it's format from when it started, but when it started, things were a little different. It's just like the Bible. Things were different when the Bible was written then it is now, and we have to be able to relate what

we're doing currently with what we perceived things to be then. Well, education is the same thing. Well back in the day, they had the farmers and that's why we don't go to school in the summer and all that. How many kids farm today? If they do, they could do it in no time with these tractors that cost more than your house so it's really not necessary for us to be of the entire summer, it really isn't. I believe in year-round school. You give me three weeks off every semester or term, I'd be happy as a lark. Why do we need the summer off? The school day. Most of our kids are home before the parents even think about getting home because they work and they have to work. All of our parents are working now. If you have parents staying at home, that's pretty much a luxury, and if they are staying home and taking care of kids, trying to save money because of gas, daycare fees, whatever, so I would certainly entertain extending the school year, as well as the school day.

Question 4.2 To your knowledge, have your staff members have read any books or research or professional or research articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

I would say yes because of the way that they are interacting with their students that I can see when I do my observations in the classroom, because of the conversations that I actually have with them. I'm not one to quote books that I've read or authors that I think are good. Now, if I come across something that I think that is beneficial for the staff then I put it in my weekly newsletter. I read this article in *Education Leadership*, or something like that and now I will do those kind of things but to sit down and read books. Now, I'm getting ready to read this one and because I've been reading the Kelly books, his father, as well as his son, but I don't do a whole lot of that, but teachers do. My teachers will be, Principal #7, I just read this book. They like all that kind of stuff. I'll read it. Now, I'll read this book right here and I can't tell you who the author is 10 days after that because all I'm reading for is content. I don't need to know who wrote it. I just need to know what it is that I could use to benefit our population.

Question 4.3 Do your staff members have an opportunity to share their information with their colleagues that they read about?

They have department meetings. It's funny because they were talking in the school improvement about a book club. I ain't doing it, but they were talking about a book club. When I came and I told them, I said, here's the deal here, you know, I taught 17 years in the middle school. I always said if I became a principal, I'm going to take things off your plate instead of putting things on your plate so things that I can do without coming to you, I'm going to try to take care of it for you so you don't have to worry about it. My issue has always been time. When are we going to have a book

club? I mean, the obvious answer is after school. Well, but with all the other obligations. We're not a middle school or elementary school; we have activity going on here every day. I could have a staff meeting and I've got two or three teachers out because their coaching this, they're coaching that, they're doing that, so time has always been an issue for me. But if you go to the year round school, we can build in that kind of time for professional development. After school then extending the school day, we're still doing the instructional thing. We add another instructional period in, but then we also add in activities that are going to make kids want to come to school. I used to play basketball on the team and I did well in school, don't get me wrong, A/B average, but when I had a basketball game, I was looking forward to being there that day, so that I could play. Just remembering those kinds of things, kids, and especially poverty kids, they may not be excited about coming to your class because you're giving a test but they may be excited about playing in the sport, participating in the play, being in the parade. We've got to give them opportunities outside of the classroom to want to come to school. If you take a look at it, they say four kids out of every 10 are dropping out of school. Why? Because they don't see a need to come to school. What do you come to school for? They don't think that the education that they're going to get is going to benefit them enough to come so let's get them something else to look forward to. So that's where all those extra curricular activities come into play for me, and especially poverty kids because I don't know how much sports you watch but if you watch sports and you're talking to these kids or grown ups now that are successful in professional sports and if they came from poverty, what it is that they say is a reason why they stuck it out and went to school and they're athletes. Two things always stick out. They had a teacher that cared. Okay, we talked about that earlier, and the second thing is that they had a reason to come to school and it wasn't academics. Any successful person that I've ever heard talk came out of poverty, that's the two things that they'll say. They'll be quick to say "I had a teacher who would buy me things". The other day I was watching one of those professional basketball players talking about he had a teacher, because he didn't have any money, the teacher would buy him tennis shoes, and because he didn't want the kids to laugh at him and he felt bad because he couldn't afford to buy the brand-name things, the teacher would take her own personal money and buy him tennis shoes. Now, of course, she doesn't have to worry about anything now because he's making millions of dollars and he's taking care of that teacher. But those are the kind of things, you have to have a teacher that cares and a community that cares and then you have to give kids reasons and opportunities to be successful. The YMCA's and the Boy Clubs and the Boy Scouts and all that kind of stuff, they have given a lot of kids reasons not to drop out of school and that's what we have to take advantage of.

Question 4.4 Just to wrap up, are there any other additional courses or professional development opportunities you would like to see offered to teachers to help them deal with their students in poverty?

I just had an interview last week with a young man from New York, the Bronx, and he said this is his third year teaching. We were interested in him teaching math for us. He said that his school was closing down. They knew it for the last two or three years that they were getting rid of a grade level each year, so he was looking to come to Maryland. He was talking and we were going through the interview, and I could tell by the way that he was answering questions that they had a lot of issues. You could just tell by his answers and so after it was all over, I said to him, out of curiosity, let me ask you a couple of questions. He said sure, no problem. I'm a little confused about some thing especially classroom management. Just to give you an example, we had three fights at our high school last year. What are we talking about for your school? He says, well I'll give you a better example, let's just take my classroom. I had five or six fights a day. I said wait a minute, I don't understand. So, what happens when the kid fights then? You send them to the office? He said, no, we don't send them to the office. He said, what I would do with, after they got finished fighting, he said now the only way we were told to break it up is if a weapon showed up. If he saw a knife or a gun then we were supposed to break it up. He said, but other than that you let them fight it out. When they're finished, put them in the back of the room, one in the front and one in the back. You got to continue with the lesson. I said, now you did that every day. He said yeah I did that pretty much every day for about three years. Why is it that you couldn't send them to administration? He said because they wouldn't do anything. And I said, so what's the reason for having them. He said I don't know. And so I'm listening to him and he's talking about five or six fights a day, how much learning is taking place. He said what he did, and what pretty much everybody does at the school, is that kids who want to learn sit up front, kids who don't, they sit in the back and do whatever they want to do. He said that's pretty much all you can do. I'm thinking, now there's got to be a better way. Now when I was at the middle school, we went to a school in New Jersey to take a look at successful reading program, just professional development field trips. To go to schools similar to yours, to go to schools that are not like yours, just so that you can, you know, have a different perspective and see how things are going. As far as courses are concerned, I know when I first came to this county, they had some sensitivity training. They did a lot of that sensitivity training for administrators, but with the leadership changes and superintendents then they bring in different things. I know now the current administration is, the assistant superintendent is a big Covey fan so we get a lot of professional development with Covey. I like some of the things, the win/win situations and treating everybody right. One of the things that I think has made me a better person is that, in the past, I used to

have discussions about people in general, and now, one of the things that Covey says is that if you can't have that same discussion in front of the person, then you shouldn't have it behind their back. So I try to use that now because, like I said, I would talk about people like everybody else talking about, but now I try to be professional in the way that I deal with people. If I'm in a conversation, and I don't feel comfortable, I just say, Hey, if I can't say anything good about a person, I'm not going to say anything at all, or if I can't say it in front of their face, then I won't say it at all. So, I don't do as much of that as I used to. But that kind of training, and I think, like I said, Covey. Covey information that has been shared with us on professional development, because we read once a month and we talk about some Covey habits and all that kind of stuff. I think that has usually when I go to professional development things I don't pay that much attention because it's like a one-time thing. There's no accountability and who cares. The new assistant superintendent, it's not a one time thing with him. You go to a meeting and he'll say, what were we talking about. You know this guy, he ain't playing, so you gotta know, and that makes you a better person, because all of us, if we know that we're not going to be held accountable and nobody's going to ask you about it, what'd you need to worry about it for, but if you know, when you go to that meeting that month, he is going to ask you about something you should've learned, because when he says read page 51 to 100, and you don't read it, he will give you a quiz on it. Administrators we don't like to look bad, so, I'm right on it, 51 to 100, that's what I'm reading, but, no, just a sense of accountability, making sure that everybody understands what the expectations are and that we're all in this together. You know, unfortunately, everybody has not been blessed with the same opportunities, same recourses and we still have a lot of teachers, and maybe not a whole lot, but we still have some teachers with the expectation that when a kid comes to their class, they know everything they should know to be in that class and, when they put it out there, they get it then they get it, if they don't, nah. Those days are gone and most teachers understand now that you may have to do a little bit more. You may have to differentiate instruction, you may have to set them aside, talk to them, reach out and do whatever it takes for them to be successful. I try to equate and use the analogy with my teachers of money. Money is a driving force for a lot of people and so teachers who are not being successful and they don't understand what I'm talking about. I'll call them in and I'll say, something like, I had a phone call with the assistant superintendent and finance has called me and, because of the amount of students that are not being successful in your class, then they want to reduce your salary. They look at me like whoa, whoa, I ain't never heard that. I said, "Well, see here's how it goes. The expectation is that you're going to be successful and every kid in your classroom is going to be successful and it's just like if you paid a plumber to come out to your house, you want him to fix everything 100% or 80%, and so you want that

same expectation when it comes to your money, so the Board now is saying, if you're only teaching 80% of your class, then we'll pay you 80%." Then we have that discussion. "That's why it's important for you to make sure that every kid is successful in your classroom." And then I throw in things like, "If I gave you a million dollars, could you make sure that every kid passed the High School Assessment. If you could do it for a million, then you can do it without a million because the million dollars is not making the kid be successful, it's what you're going to do." So we have all those kinds of discussions. And then, after we're done talking, then the realization comes that, he got me again. I should've been doing all this stuff in the first place, which is true. You know, money is not the reason why you're kids aren't being successful, you're the reason why your kids are not being successful. I like to have fun and go through things like that, and they get it after a while.

Principal #8

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

3 years.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

This is my 19<sup>th</sup> year. I'm going on my 20<sup>th</sup> year.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Middle class. I would say middle class low middle class.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I would think so yes because being in a lower middle class family growing up that way, my parents they had to work hard but they were blue collar workers. They taught us to appreciate a dollar. I never had to experience being hungry or anything like that however it wasn't always my favorite food to eat. I always had food and those types of things and inexpensive clothes. Ss long as our clothes were clean, that was appropriate. We didn't wear name brand stuff. The goal was just to make sure we had changes of clothes and just enough to get us through a week.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

I think I can relate to students who might have had maybe two pairs of shoes like a pair of sneakers a pair of dress shoes and, in some cases, wearing the sneakers to church. You had shoes to cover your feet. The fact that you had food but it may not have been exactly what you wanted. That kind of thing. I think those types of things help you to relate to those who are a little less fortunate. I didn't have to experience not having a roof over my head and not having running water and toilet. We had all that. I will just say I had a hard working family. My parents worked hard to provide some of the things, the luxuries of life that they weren't fortunate enough to have. I just think that that experience with them talking to us about what they had to go through. My father talked about not having shoes. He was pretty much near an adult when he got his dress shoes. It helped me to appreciate the fact that I had two pair of shoes when he walked around from time to time with no shoes. I think those types of things helped with that.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

The business of school, I guess the business of school. How do you define the business of school? The business of school is, I would assume, would be the operations the daily operation of how school functions, the routines and practices that you have in place in school. I don't think you can always look at it as the business of school because sometimes you have to be able to relate to your students and where they're coming from. You can't just sometimes do school. You have to do more than just school when kids come to school because sometimes they're not ready for school. You have to take students from where they are when they hit the thresholds of the door to make sure that you're meeting their needs. Sometimes that requires you to do more that might be out of your realm outside of the building.

Question 2.1a How do you see teachers helping kids with the business of school in the classroom?

I think just by talking with them and sharing real life experiences. Sometimes it helps if they know that you have experienced the same things. You're not afraid to share those things that you've experienced. It can sometimes really impact a child so that they don't feel like they're the only ones going through a certain type of situation.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?



Showing that you care. Students need to know that. I think you can get students to perform if they know that you care about them. They'll perform if they know that you can relate and you really, really express or show that affection with them. I think many times through the course of a school day, the hustle and bustle and rush of things, you try to get everything in sometimes that can get lost but adding that personal touch is so important.

Question 2.2a When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

I see the greetings in the morning or when the changes of classes; greeting students, talking with students, talking about their weekend, talking about their outfits, complimenting, making suggestions which is ok. That's typical of middle school students to be critical of dress. If something looks nice, they'll tell you that. I think also just going that extra step and taking the time with students being it during lunch time or after school. Before lunch to help them with things that they're struggling with and sometimes just a gentle touch on their back or something like that just to let them know that you care about them. Smiling, of course, is something that's needed.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

I look at them and they use a variety of things. Actually I see the word walls a lot. We have vocabulary tests sometimes still students putting vocabulary in context. I noticed that's used a lot rather than being out of context. They like using it in context. When the teachers are introducing the vocabulary, they try to make sure they use it in a context in which the students understand the vocabulary so that they can figure out what the language means or what it says. So I think those strategies are very effective. I've also seen with some of our ELL students. Our teachers use pictures to make sure that they help develop the vocabulary.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in the classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty, how do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

One of the things that we struggled with, and I don't mind mentioning this, is that sometimes it's harder for teachers at the secondary level to differentiate. That's something we still continue to struggle with. Some teachers do it really, really well and some teachers still struggle with it. I

find that they all try to put the students in the same group. Making sure that they're rising to the same level of expectations in terms of work or what it is they're doing. I just think that they have those expectations of students because they hold them accountable for not doing the work. They do have discussions with students about not completing their work pulling them aside and keeping them back and having them come down for lunch detention to talk about why their work isn't being done or why didn't you study for my test. Those types of things help me to understand that they are holding kids accountable for what it is they're doing.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers?

I think immediate feedback is important. Quick feedback whether you're in there formally or informally. I think pulling that teacher aside and just letting them know that you've got to make sure that you have the same expectations for all kids. We noticed that so and so is sitting in the back of the room with his head down. You went over a couple times to try to get him up seated in his seat however he continued to put his head down. What can we do about that? Have we tried calling home? Have we tried scheduling a conference with the school counselor or getting your assigned administrator on duty to help with intervening? Maybe having that administrator intervene with that child in the hall and talk with him about it. Those are many things that we do to make sure that that happens.

Question 2.6 If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

I think they would say a variety of things. They would say, first of all, they had to meet all their students from where they were when they entered into the classroom. Once they've established that positive working rapport with kids, they established also that level of expectations. The kids know that they're accountable for what is that has to be done. They're accountable for the work that has to be done in that particular class. The teachers will strongly say that they think the relationships make the difference. That foundation starts in the very beginning of school year. So that as people come through and observers come through in the middle of the school year and at the end of the school year, it looks like a smooth running class. It looks like teachers are so positive. The kids are very receptive in that particular class. Then in another classroom and another setting, they may be totally different. So you ask the teachers, "What are you doing differently from this teacher that he's being very successful?" He knows I won't tolerate that. I've had student just say to me, as the building administrator, "I like Ms. so and so but, guess what? She doesn't

play when it comes to her work. She's nice and cool and all that but she doesn't play when it comes to her work." Those are the kinds of things that reaffirm to me that positive working relationships are occurring and the level of expectations are there, too.

Question 3.1 Turning to your professional development have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

No, none whatsoever.

Question 3.1b So what kinds of things would you like to see either the school system do or at graduate school or undergraduate levels do that would be helpful to you as a principal to prepare you?

I think that there should be multiple courses in your undergraduate studies. I've been very fortunate while working here in the county to have the staff development have the professional training that's necessary to help me to cope with different populations of kids. I think that needs to be done more at the undergraduate level. We have method classes on the different theorists. We need classes that pertain specifically to students in poverty and having a variety of students in your classroom and dealing with all ends of the spectrum in the classroom because you got to make it function as one unit.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty and if so can you recall any of the titles or authors?

I've read a lot, but recalling the titles, I'm a blank. With my studies, I've had no choice but to read tons and tons of research on students who live in poverty. I can't, for the life of me, recall any right now.

Can you recall some of the key learnings or some of the things you can use or will be able to use with your teachers from what you've read?

Yes. One of the things that's emphasized over and over and over again is establishing the positive working relationships with the families and making sure you're known in the community. Sometimes being visible in a community with the extra curricular things that happen seems to be a strong point in something. That seems to be a trend with most of the articles in the research I've done with students that live in poverty is making sure that you can relate to them and that they see you sometimes in their community and see you functioning. That's important.

Question 3.3 Have you had an opportunity to share this information with your teachers or other colleagues?

Yes I have. One of the things I did when I first arrived at my current assignment is to do home visits. I thought that was really important to do that. We went out and when I say we, the administrative staff, we went out and we did home visits of students who were struggling in school and students who had behavioral issues in school. I think that left an impression on not only the families but the staff. I know that because students went back to school the following school year and said, "The principal came to my house and I was shocked to see her. She just wanted to introduce herself as the new principal of the school." We continue to do home visits and that an ongoing thing with us. So we try to model that and we try to encourage teachers to do that along with the school counselors or student service workers to go out to homes to visit.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

I think you monitor it through a variety of ways observations but also through the data that you collect in terms of student performance to see how well students are performing. Many times when you have a student who you know is very capable of performing and they're not performing. You start questioning what is it that is stopping them. What's preventing them from performing the way or at the level in which they can perform? I think that it's important to understand that when you start looking at a child who is not successful that you've got to look at all those various avenues. That's one of the things that you would look at.

Question 4.1 Turning to the preparation of your teachers. To the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of the students from poverty?

It doesn't appear to be that way. As I said more work needs to be done, I believe, in the undergraduate realm.

Question 4.1b If not, what kinds of things would you like the district or college programs do that would be helpful to teachers?

I just think more training more diversity training. When we say diversity, that encompasses a lot of things. We don't talk specifically only about ethnicity but also economic status as well. I just think with school systems doing that more, it will help. I also think that dialogue needs to happen and a partnership needs to happen with the local colleges and colleges around the country to make sure that we're giving feedback to the various institutions to make sure that they're implementing something to close that gap.

Question 4.2 Again, to the best of your knowledge, have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

Yes. We did a study on Ruby Payne, an intense study on that. We did research on that to make sure that we were implementing some of the things that she mentioned and that she felt that was really, really effective with students who lived in poverty. So we've done a lot of work with Ruby Payne.

And in what kind of settings? Were they staff meetings? What kinds of setting did you do that work

We actually did some in small groups early on. I thought it was very effective because many of the things that we learned from Ruby Payne that we were doing we weren't aware of. So I think that's where the institutions need to step in. We need to know before we step into the schools these things that we're finding out. We've done it in a variety of ways. We've met in small groups to do that and had discussions as well.

Question 4.4 What additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers?

I still think diversity. I think more needs to happen with diversity, I truly do. Understanding the diverse needs within a particular learning environment. I really think that strongly.

Principal #9

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

This will be my third year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

This is my thirtieth year.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Middle class. We were middle class.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

Growing up, we weren't in a diverse area. I don't think it impacted how I look at children of poverty because I've been in this county since I began teaching. I really don't think it did.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

I don't think I can relate to that. I can empathize and show compassion, but because I didn't grow up with friends that were poor. I grew up in basically a middle class neighborhood.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

That's a question I was looking at. Business of school. I've never heard it termed that way. So, this is how I feel. I feel that a teacher needs to know her students or his students. That means where they come from, what are their needs and hold the belief that all children can learn.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom?

High expectations across the board. It doesn't matter where the children come from, the teacher should have high expectations for all students.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with students. What does that mean to you?

Again, I think that is just going above and beyond instruction. It's caring for the child, knowing the child, knowing the family, not necessarily the parents well, but just being able to make contact. I think of a couple of teachers here that talk about, "I had conferences with the mother and I know they're dealing with certain things." They know that the child comes to school some days, not necessarily well-fed or in a good mood, or something has happened, and all that impacts.

Question 2.2a When you observe in the classroom, how do you see your teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

When I do my walk throughs, I certainly don't look at the teacher and think, they're establishing a relationship with a child that comes from economically depressed home. What I see is, and this is good teachers, we have a lot of good teachers, we have some that need to step it up a little bit. Good teachers listen to their students. They listen to them and have those high expectations and are willing to go over to them and help them.

Question 2.3 The research also suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary development. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

The really good teachers do a lot of talking, a lot of background building. Just getting kids to talk especially in our Pre-K and our primary grades because we do have many children that come with language deficiencies because they're not spoken with at home. So I would say that books are readily available and they're reading aloud. Just lots of literacy and a lot of interaction and speaking.

Question 2.4 Although the rigor in classrooms should be for all students, as you said before, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

Again, I'm thinking of certain teachers that do demonstrate high expectations. They pre-test their students and that's across the board. If the student doesn't do well on the pre-test then, of course they're grouped in to a particular group that studies those concepts. They go back to look at those students and continue. I think it's those teachers who continue looking at the students, not where the student comes from just what the student can do. Let's continue making sure that that student gets where he or she needs to be.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the classroom to meet the needs of these students, what kind of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

We do a lot of walk throughs. Lots of times I run back and make a note because most of the time I don't take a piece of paper with me because they're very informal. Both the administrators try to get around the building each day, not that we always get to every classroom every day, but that is our goal. I have a conference with them. I have a conference with the teacher. It doesn't take long, but I make a note to conference with them and follow up.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

We have over 68% free and reduced lunch students here at this school, so many of the students that our teachers have come from impoverished background. So I think they would say that they try to meet their needs. If you know that a student has a rough life at home, not that you're going

to make exceptions, but you might handle the child in a little different way. All kids don't learn the same way. They don't react the same way.

Question 3.1 Turning to your professional preparation as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals specifically with the needs of students from poverty?

No coursework. No. Not anything, formalized course. Definitely, we've had some workshops. Ruby Payne presented. We also have her book and that's been several years ago, probably a good five years ago. Excellent book, I wish there had been more follow-up.

Question 3.1a Do you recall some of the key learnings that you pulled from that workshop?

A couple in particular, that parents who are struggling, it's a day to day thing. They don't see a goal. Their goal is to get through the day and make sure that they have food on the table, if they have any. It's getting through the day, so that they don't really see goals for their kids, going to college. I remember that just stood out.

Question 3.1a Do you remember how long your workshop was; was it a day workshop? Do you remember any details about it?

It's been more than three years. It's been a while. I think that we had, maybe the speaker and then we broke up into groups in the afternoon. There wasn't a lot of follow-up. It was excellent.

Question 3.1a Did you seek this out, or was it a requirement of your job?

The county sponsored it. It was a county in-service.

Question 3.1b Since there wasn't very much preparation in your background, what kinds of things would you like to see your district do, or schools of education do to better prepare principals to deal with students in poverty?

Well, I think it would be great to have a course, even if you don't end up in an area that is impoverished or a school. But you're more than likely depending on how long you stay in the profession that you will end up. It would be great if our county, in particular, would build upon the Ruby Payne in-services that we have had.

Question 3.2 You mentioned Ruby Payne. Are there any other books or professional articles that you've read that have dealt with students from poverty? If so, can you recall any of the titles or authors?



No, I can't.

Question 3.3 You said there wasn't any follow-up. Was there any opportunity to share the Ruby Payne information with your teachers or were all your teachers there with you?

All the teachers. That was before I was an AP. It was at the very beginning and I was an AP for seven years.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you've shared with your teachers, or what they've learned through their own professional development?

In this county we have just piloted, and it will probably be implemented, a new observation/evaluation policy where teachers who are not on an evaluation year do a professional development plan, professional growth plan. They can do it individually or they can do it with their team. In September I meet with them, again in January and then again in May and see how their data is looking, how they are doing, do they have any questions. Then if we have an in-service that is school-based, we follow-up with it through faculty meetings and team meetings.

Question 4.1 Turning to the preparation of your teachers, and this is to the best of your knowledge. Have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

I don't know about coursework. I've just never seen that.

Have they had any kind of diversity course training? Have they mentioned anything like that?

Well I sent two of my teachers to a multi-cultural conference and then they share.

Do you know how long that was?

It was for two days. We've had sporadic diversity training.

Question 4.1a Did they share any key learnings that they got from that multi-cultural workshop with you?

Just about the different cultures that I remember. That certain cultures might look you straight in the face or might listen to you but not look at you. Sometimes the Hispanic population doesn't necessarily look eye to eye.

Question 4.1b Did they seek that professional development opportunity out, or was it a requirement of their job?

They sought it.

Question 4.2 Again, to the best of your knowledge, have your staff members read any books or research or professional articles in this area of poverty that they've shared with you or with each other?

No, especially not that they've shared with me. We concentrate an awful lot on the large Hispanic population.

Do you have any plans to delve into the area of poverty in your school improvement initiatives or anything like that?

We haven't but you brought it to my attention and that's going to impact on it. I was doing interviews Monday, and the girl was talking about diversity training. I had mentioned Ruby Payne. She had never heard of her, but she is very well-known. But that is something to think about because there are certain things that kids from impoverished backgrounds have. Because of their parents, few books at home, those kinds of things and just their whole mindset of trying to make it, day to day is different. Goals aren't set necessarily because you're struggling to get through the day

Question 4.4 What additional courses or professional development opportunities you would like to see offered to teachers in this area of dealing with students of poverty?

I would like to see more county-wide, and I say that because this count is an impoverished county. We have several schools, well four out of five of our elementary schools, that are Title I and meet the need for free and reduced lunch. Well all schools have free and reduced lunch but some are very high. I would think it would help all of us understand where kids come from a little bit better.

Principal #10

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

This is my third year

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

15

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Middle class.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

No.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

There is not really any correlation because I haven't worked with students who were in poverty and when I was in school, the kids who was in poverty didn't stand out any differently than the kids that weren't.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

Here at this elementary we have made a big point, with this being the third year we've had the same administrative team that we don't look at students in poverty any differently than any other student. They come through the doors of the building, they're greeted as every other student, and they're here to learn. You have students from middle class families that have issues at home, the same issues that kids in poverty so that plays no part in their educational process in this building.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with their students. What does that mean to you?

Well, we have small class sizes here at this elementary school and that's just the way that our staffing has been able to play out, with this building being a school that was a school improvement. What it means is that you develop a relationship with every one of your students, regardless of their circumstances. The teachers don't do anything differently. They don't know the socioeconomic status of the kids in their room. They just know what area of the community that we pull from, so it really doesn't affect how they relate with their students.

Question 2.2a. When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers establishing positive relationships?

You'll see them kidding around. You'll see them giving them high 5's, giving them hugs, basically relating with them in a way that the kids are

used to being related to, possibly with their parents, but in a more professional manner.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

That I actually strongly agree with because we think that part of the reason that the scores of this building have been so low was the student's use of vocabulary and comprehension. We actually implemented last year *The Elements of Reading Vocabulary* by Isabel Beck in to all of our reading classrooms, and we have seen a significant improvement in vocabulary test scores. For example, with our first and second graders and our kindergarten students using more and larger vocabulary words than what they used on a regular basis because of that program.

What's involved in that program?

It's about 25 minutes each day. The teacher has a selection that she will read to the students and then they have words on a word chart. They have pictures that go with the words. They talk about what the words mean. They have a little workbook that goes with it where they actually look at some pictures and pick which picture is describing the word that's on the chart. I don't know if you're familiar with Isabel Beck at all but she's done a lot of research on vocabulary and reading and has written quite a few books on that. That's where this program has come from.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations from their students?

I think that was true from the previous administration in this building. When my assistant principal, who is African-American, when we came in together, we both sat down and made sure that we had the same philosophy on expectations and we have the same expectations for all students. I think the expectations were a little lower because of the community that the kids came from, because of what happened at home before they came to school. The expectations were a lot lower but we let the teachers know that the expectations are the same for all kids, across the State of Maryland, regardless of your circumstances and we're going to meet those expectations.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the class to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

Like I said before, we really don't point out which kids are kids that are in poverty and which kids aren't, so whatever feedback I give to a teacher, I give for a whole group of students. Because we're constantly looking at the data and what kids are doing, how the kids are doing and which kids need intervention, regardless of what their status is. They still go into that intervention if they need to.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you know they would say?

I think they would feel very strongly about a vocabulary program that helps the students develop their vocabulary skills. I think that they would say making sure that you're meeting the needs of the students very early on. If you see a student who is not picking up reading, what can we do in the early grades to help get them up to par, so we're not sending them to the middle school not reading.

Question 3.1 I'm going to turn to your professional preparation as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

No.

Question 3.1b Since you didn't, what kind of things would you like to see the district do, or even at the graduate or undergraduate level, that would be helpful to you as a principal?

I think that what needs to be done is to stop looking at them as kids that are in poverty and look at them like you look at every other student because we have been a true testimonial to what you've been able to do. Our free and reduced meal population is 80% in this building, so we do have the majority of our kids that live in poverty. It's not something that is addressed. What is addressed is what kids need intervention, what kids need help on learning compound words, learning to blend their words. We're focusing on their academic needs not the fact that they're living in poverty. Obviously that means if the child comes in upset because there have been problems at home, or, we have the breakfast in the classroom program, so we know that every child is getting fed. If they're not getting fed at home, they're getting fed here. We don't control what happens when they go home for dinner, but we just feel like we have things in

place that so it's not an issue. Their economics is not an issue for them here.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty that you can think of, or recall?

Ruby Payne's *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. I think that's the only one.

Question 3.3 Have you been able to use any of that with your teachers?

No, I haven't used it with the teachers. We just did that as a professional development opportunity before I was even at this school.

Question 3.3b Do you have any plans to share that information with your teachers?

No.

Question 3.4 How you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Look at the data. Look at the student data and see the progress.

Question 4.1 Turning to your teachers, and this is obviously to the best of your knowledge as the principal, have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deal with the needs of students from poverty?

I don't know but I'm saying that probably the time that we did the Ruby Payne book. The principal that was here probably brought a lot of information from that book back to the staff.

Question 4.1b Are there things that you would like to see the district do to be helpful for teachers in this area?

No, not at this time.

Question 4.2 To your knowledge, have your staff members read any other books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

Not that I'm aware of.

Question 4.4 Are there any other additional courses or professional development opportunities you would like to see offered to teachers?

No, but like I said before I think some people have the mind-set that the kids aren't learning because they live in poverty. We've been a true testimonial that that is not true. If you look at our MSA (Maryland State Assessment) scores from 2006, which was the last year that the former principal was here, and look at our scores now, in 2008, it works. If you look at what's going on with each individual student academically, why aren't they learning? Is there some background knowledge that they missed somewhere along the way? Then I think that all students have the same opportunity academically and are able to pick up anything that you give them and be successful.

Principal #11

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

I just completed my first year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

19.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Middle class.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I don't know. I went to school in a pretty high poverty area, but we didn't really, I never really thought about it as being a high poverty area, so, I don't know if the economic situation had an impact or not. I would say, maybe it did, because I lived in a rural area, very similar to where I am now.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

I don't know. I don't even know if these are my childhood experiences or just my experiences in general. I can be a redneck with the best of them. I don't mean to be derogatory but those are the type of people that I grew up around. I grew up around cruising in town on the weekend. That's what you did. You had a 57 Chevy and it was jacked up so I can relate in this particular setting to the group that is affectionately called the boot boys, the farm boys and stuff. So I guess, if anything, that's what helped me.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

It means that, given any situation, we need to be explicit with students and with our expectations. We need to be explicit with what we want them to do, but we also need to be explicit with why they need to do it in a particular way. We also need to model for kids what we want them to do especially when I was an elementary principal. This came through loud and clearly when we would talk to students about, let's say, playground rules and expectations. We had to model for them why you don't walk up a slide when someone is sliding down the other direction. That seemed like a real basic thing for a lot of the teachers, but at the same time, if we didn't do it, then there would be some kid that would try to walk up the slide. So again, we just have to show them how school runs.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the class. What do you see teachers doing?

I don't see as much of it as I should see of it. I don't see the real life connections for kids that I want to see. The few places that I see it demonstrated, the teachers practice something like this is how we walk in the room quietly. This is what I mean when I say you pass your papers to the front or pass them to the back. This is why we do it this way. I see a few teachers who do that and that is very explicit and they model it and the practice it.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships. What does that mean to you?

I went to workshop last week and every presenter talked about establishing relationships. When you think about establishing a positive relationship, it's a relationship where the teacher is a guide, a coach, but doesn't make excuses for the student and doesn't accept less than their best because you're a poor kid, or because your mom is a drunk. I'm not going to expect as much of you. That's garbage because that child is better than that. That child can achieve but we have to, again, model it and have that expectation. But it's just really funny that you ask this question because last week my administrative team and I were away at workshop and we spent a lot of time, the three of us, talking about that very piece, because James Comer has his wonderful quote that I wrote down. It's something about there is no significant learning without significant relationships, and, again, this is one of the things that we have not done a very good job with in this building.



Question 2.2a. When you observe in the classroom, how do you see teachers who are establishing positive relationships with their students? What do you see them doing?

I see them not giving up on kids, going back to the same student over and over again, I told you twice take your hood off, sit up. You need to do this work. This is going to help you. Trying to make the real world connection for kids to see why they need to know this, how to balance this equation, or whatever. I see some of those teachers actually coming in the cafeteria, talking to students, talking to students about what they're doing outside of school. When they see them outside of school, sharing their successes with them, telling them, look, you did really well on this, let me show you what you did. I had a student in here yesterday who came in to return a book and I told him, I said, do you have a minute and he said "yea". He's going to the high school and I said, "I'm really proud of you. We just got our scores back and I want to show you what you did on math. It's still basic but look at the improvement that you made. This is significant, the improvement you made. I know you worked hard this year." I could tell when he walked out of here, he's like that's really cool because he saw the connection. Those tests that we took, somebody looks at it, somebody cares, and they're going to follow-up.

Question 2.3. The research also suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

We encourage them to use word walls but the active word walls not just stagnate and the teacher puts it up. Again for middle school that's kind of, sometimes they kind of balk at me and they go, this is middle school, but it's not. The one thing that I say to the teachers is to use vocabulary and use higher vocabulary with students. You may need to explain to them what, and rephrase it, but than that is a word that they are going to use. As far as explicit teaching of vocabulary, I'm going to say we still do the drill and kill. It doesn't sink in that we're moving away from that because I have said to people quite a bit, this doesn't not work. Saying here are 10 vocabulary words, copy the definitions and they're in the story or they're in the reading selection. They don't remember that.

Question 2.4. Although the rigor in classrooms should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

They don't. I can tell you that right now. People who walk in this building, and I've had a number of people who came in last year, that was

one of the things that they said right off the bat, just walking in a classroom and looking around. They said these expectations for these students are not where they should be. I think the key with that is explaining to teachers what it means to have high expectations. You have to model for them, just like you model for kids, because I can tell you that every teacher in this building thinks that they have high expectations, but then you see our test scores. If you really had high expectations and you were truly teaching the curriculum the way you should be, we wouldn't have these test scores, because these kids can do it. The excuse model, I think, is like I said, mom's a drunk and I have called mom, and mom and dad won't do anything. Get off that. That's a dead horse. It's been dead. It's been dead for 20 years in this school. I taught in this school. We can't control that. We can control what happens here. Again, those high expectations have to be there. So probably the very, very, very small handful of teachers that I have that demonstrate high expectations work with students. They stay after school with them and they continually use that coaching model as opposed to that I am the keeper of all information.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the class to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to teachers?

Direct. Direct. That's it. Direct and explicit. We try very hard to collect a variety of data when we're in a classroom and in one situation this past year, one of my assistant principals said to a teacher, "Do you realize you had kids in these groups, you never once went to this group of African-Americans and you never went to this group that had males, you went to this group five times, this group 15 times. You never went to those groups, even though students in those groups had their hands raised." So we try to show them the data. We collect the data and walk them through analyzing it. Sometimes it's just as simple as saying, "Do you realize you called on Abby 20 times. Abby knew every answer, but yet Rondel was sitting in front of me and he was asleep not once did you go over and ask Rondel to wake up." Those are the kinds of things that we try to say to teachers. It doesn't go over real well sometimes but sometimes they don't realize it. In one classroom we went in this year, all the African-American boys were sitting on the side of the room. From the teacher's perspective, they were on the left hand side of the room, all in a row by the window. All the girls were kind of scattered out, and then there were a few boys that were up front, but most of them were all in a row and they were all minorities.

Question 2.6 If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you know they would say?

I think that they would say that they need to understand where the kids come from. I think that's the #1 thing that they would say and then they would make excuses. I'm being honest with you. I hope I don't come off as being negative, but this is honest because what they would do is then they would start making excuses. They don't have a computer at home. They don't have this, they don't have their parent. They're out walking the street all night. Ok, but guess what. I'm not going to be walking the street. I can't control that. They do have computers by the way, and they do have Internet access.

Question 3.1 Turning to your professional preparation as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty? If so, can you describe those opportunities?

It's been a while but fads come and go. This was a fad a couple of years ago. I think around in 2001 I went to a two-day workshop at an elementary school, that was put on by the county. It was also part of dealing with our ELL population, but it was someone from Ruby Payne's organization who came down and did a whole two-day thing on poverty and how to deal with that. Probably the key learnings were just Ruby Payne's basic concepts that there are things that people do at each level that we don't understand. Things that middle class people do that people with more money don't do and visa versa. People that are poor don't do. That was all very interesting. It was available. It was a summer workshop that I was really interested in so I went. I also saw Ruby Payne at a NAESP conference some time in 2002 or 2000.

Question 3.1a Did you seek this professional development opportunity out or was it a requirement of your job?

I guess I sought it out. It wasn't a requirement. I just did it because I was interested.

Question 3.1b What kinds of things would you like to see your district do or at the graduate level or undergraduate level, that would be helpful to you as a principal?

I don't know. I think you have to continually keep this in the forefront. You can't let this be one of those issues that as Carol Ann Tomlinson says about differentiated instruction. We do it because we don't do it and I think if you don't keep bringing things up to people, it's real easy for things go by the wayside.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? If so, can you recall any of the titles or authors?

I've read the Ruby Payne books. I do not have them any more because I let somebody borrow them and they didn't give them back. Professional articles probably just because I read stuff. *Educational Leadership* has things pretty frequently about dealing with students with a variety of backgrounds. So, titles and authors, probably not. Jonathan Kozol comes to mind. He is somebody else I've heard. I saw him in IRA a couple of years ago. He was phenomenal. So those are probably the people that I've read.

Question 3.2b In your readings what are some of the things that you've used or will be able to use with your teachers, if you can recall?

Jonathan Kozol is great, because he's so direct. He's just so direct about we have to teach every child. He doesn't pull any punches when he says to people, you say we believe every child can learn, but that's not what you model in the classroom, and that would probably be the one thing that really is critical in forming that relationship with kids. It's just absolutely critical.

Question 3.3 Have you had an opportunity to share this information with your teachers or with other colleagues?

Not really.

Question 3.3a Do you have any plans to?

We are going to start some stuff this year with the whole relationship building and pulling that in, in the hopes that without overwhelming people. Just pull things in over time.

Question 3.4 How to you monitor the use of what you've shared with your teachers or what they've learned through their own professional development?

Classroom walk throughs, talking to people, follow up. We usually have a focus and then we hammer it and hammer it and hammer it and hammer it and hammer it and then that should change. Hopefully it will change student performance, which will then change their beliefs. I know just because I tell them to read something or give it to them, it's not going to change their beliefs and it's not going to change their practice. So, monitoring.

Question 4.1 Looking at your professional staff, have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

Probably not. I'm going to say no. Unless they've gone to any of these workshops prior to my coming here that I don't know about.

Did any of them attend the conferences with you?

No, those were before I got here.

Question 4.1b What kinds of things would like to see the district do that would be more helpful for teachers in this area?

Well, the district brought in after the big thing at an elementary school that was two days. They brought in someone from Ruby Payne's organization and she did an opening address, but that's all we got. It was just this kind of a cursory thing. I think one of the things that I'd really like the district to do is talk to kids. How do kids see what was educators do? How do they perceive what we do? Because I think too often we don't look through the lens of the student. I think for some of my teachers if I was able to say these students. You think you're helping them when you dumb down the assignments but here's what they say. They tell me that they're bored. They tell me that and I hope that they wouldn't tell me that they're bored because the answers from teachers is, well, if they're bored then why aren't they doing their work. They're not doing their work because they don't see the relevance and you didn't make a relationship, therefore they don't see a need to do the work. But I think we need to see things through the eyes of parents. I've had some really interesting conversations with parents where for whatever reason they felt comfortable with me and they would just let it all out, and how they felt, how people have made them feel. Not that I want to make teachers feel that they're not doing a good job, it's far from it because I think teachers do a heck of a job. They work hard. But at the same time, I think we get so wrapped up in this is my world. I had a teacher say to me, well, my children wouldn't behave like that. Well, they're your children. You have raised them. Yes, your children wouldn't behave like that but you cannot then take that mentality about that you have about what makes a good behaved, a well-behaved child and super-impose it on this middle schooler. Your children are five and they aren't in middle school. So wait until they get to middle school, and then we'll come back and talk about what they will and will not do. It's that and I know that that's the air that she presents to kids. Does that make sense? So, again, that's why I would really and that's the air that they sometimes present to parents. The parents feel like I can't talk to that teacher, so they would come to me or they would go to this person or they would go to that person and they would say I tried to talk to this parent and this is what she keeps saying. She's not listening.

They're being judged.

Yes, that exactly what it is

On their parental skills.

And that has nothing to do with it.

Question 4.2 Have your staff members, to your knowledge, read any other books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

No.

Question 4.4 Lastly, what additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers?

I don't even know. How do you make somebody, you can't make somebody do anything, but how do you help teachers become self-reflective enough to stop and think about what they say and how they react and what they do? I don't know just what professional development opportunities they need to understand that the research that's out there now really deals with that whole relationship-building piece. So that's probably where I would go. It's hard to tease all of these out and say, this is the one thing that they need because everything is so interrelated. Some of them who have lived in this community for a while, don't seem to understand the community itself and that to me is a little scary. If you live here, there are certain things, and we joke about being in the middle of a cornfield out here, there are certain things that they should be used to and it's not that you accept them but you understand that they exist and it's part of the community. Does that make sense?

Yes. You make plans to go to circumvent them.

Right

Or intercept them before it becomes an issue.

Exactly, and not wait until it's this huge thing. Sometimes it's just a matter of sitting down and talking to people about the language that we use. I had an interesting conversation a number of years ago and I've never forgotten it, with an African-American staff member over the definition of the word redneck. Her definition and mine are very different, very different. To her, a redneck is a racist. I don't see rednecks as racist. I think of rednecks completely, in a totally different context. I've actually had that conversation with a friend of mine, who is a principal in Arlington, Virginia. She's very urban and so we have conversations about language, because she's a linguist. What a word means to me and my husband and what it means to her and what it means in the main steam

media and I think that's where we get into some difficulties sometimes, where we don't understand. I might use a word and it might mean something different to someone else and if they don't bring it to my attention, then I'm not going to know, oops, I shouldn't have said it like that. So that would probably be it. It's just making people more aware through staff development of what they say, what they do, how their actions, they're body language, how that impacts.

A sensitivity and kind of awareness professional development opportunity

Um huh, and continuous. It has to be. It has to deal with everybody. I think too many times it's seen as oh, this is multi-cultural. No, this is not. This is just dealing with people on a human level. I don't care if they're rich or poor, black or white, whatever, Hispanic.

Right, which are growing populations in this area.

We don't have them down here.

Not yet.

We have a Haitian population down here that we've had for probably about 17 years. The thing that really disturbed me and shocked me the most this year when I came back to this school, was how, after 17 years, like I said, I started here I mean 17 years ago in this building, and I've been gone for 10, in my little administrative jaunt around the county the acclimation of the Haitians into the school here and next door has not happened at all. I still hear kids saying, well you're a Haitian, and it's a derogatory statement when they say it. I don't understand that because some of the first Haitians who came to this community were well-educated and couldn't get certified in their field because they couldn't read technical English to pass the exams and so it's really interesting. I was at the high school, not this past year but the year before for something and it's interesting in a classroom. I was in a science class, a higher-level science class, and the three Haitian students sat in the corner. All the other kids sat over here. That happened in a number of classes that I went in and it blew me away because I said, ok, so we haven't done anything in 17 years to help these students in this community get more integrated, in 17 years. Nothing. And that, to me, was very, very telling, but it was very sad because, again, poverty comes in to that. But also the cultural piece comes in to that where you have the parent come in screaming and hollering, I'm going to send you to Haiti. I'm going to send you back. You're becoming too Americanized. So, it's real interesting.

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

2 years.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

16 or 15, somewhere in that ballpark.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Middle class.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I think my family's economic situation afforded me many different opportunities to experience different things. I guess that would be an indirectly, it would affect how I deal with students, am prepared to deal with students of poverty. So I think there is an indirect affect to that.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

That's a difficult question. I grew up in a different area on the other side of the bridge in the suburban setting and it was easier to have more accessibility to Washington, D.C., to large monuments, to large areas and something like that. Not that we were there all the time but you knew where they were. Looking at students in this area that can be a world away for them. Just over that bridge is two different things, so I don't think I answered your question.

Were you aware of students who were from different backgrounds when you were growing up like students from poverty, or was your area pretty much all middle class?

No, no we had friends, we had poor friends and we had rich friends. I guess as a kid you don't really realize that until you sit back and look at who they were and what their parents did. So, it didn't really ring true to who did what, you just kind of knew them for who they were and what their family did. I guess, in reflecting upon it now you kind of know who was rich and who wasn't, and who was poor, but at that point in time it really didn't make a difference.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?



Structure. Day to day structure. What are the expectations of a classroom? What are the expectations of school? Getting them into a routine and why they're here and what the outcome should be.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom? What kind of things do you see teachers doing?

You see teachers who establish routines, who build that rapport and earn that respect, who have a set schedule and don't vary from it, who change it very little, due to the circumstances. You want those kids in that same routine. We don't want to surprise them with stuff. Education is not a guessing game. They need to know what's coming and when it's coming.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students? What does that mean to you?

The reason that we all got into this business is for kids. We have to take the time, go that extra mile to know our students. We all leave our homes on a daily basis and there are certain things that are on our minds that we need to put aside in order to come to do our business. Where children are coming to is from many different backgrounds, many different experiences what happened the night before, what happened the next morning, so we need to help them to deal with those situations and learn how to deal with those situations and then focus on the task at hand.

Question 2.2a. When you observe in the classroom, how do you see your teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

You have eye contact, physical contact, respectful banter, so it's a respectful give and take. Wait time is awesome because you're giving that student an opportunity that's not tortuous but giving them the opportunity to process the thoughts and get an answer out. Even when it's an incorrect answer, still giving them that positive feed-back and keeping some door open, and giving them the dignity to keep their self-esteem amongst their peers.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

What we have really seen, and what we have looked in to recently, in our students are English Language Learner students and the techniques that our English Language Learner teachers are teaching is that direct instruction, back to the old Catholic school teaching of nouns and

pronouns and the parts of speech. That's what we are looking at going back to doing for an intense short period of time is getting that stuff to our students who are missing a whole boat load of literacy experience and literacy exposure from an early age.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in classroom should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

Every student is looked at, hopefully, as an individual and, although it is very easy to feel sorry for some of these students, our expectations. We talk to teachers about expectations from students, of where we are the beginning of the year, where we need to be by this point in the year, and where should we be by this point in the year. So, we spend a lot of time communicating and looking at individual students' scores and progress and lack of progress and then we come back and look at why there is that lack of progress and try and redirect, so a lot of talk about expectations.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the class to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

We sit down and we talk. We talk about rigor. We talk about why it is that we are doing what we're doing, and what the projected or the hoped outcome is for that lesson or issue or whatever they were working through. I want know what the teacher's thought process was that lead up to that and why they cut it short, or why they didn't take this lesson to the full extent, or why they weren't expecting Billy or Sally's or whoever's best work so I get an insight of what they were thinking. Then I redirect the teacher back to this is the major goal and this is what we're shooting for. We fell short of this and we need to keep moving towards that.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

Relationships. I think that they would say, I hope that they would say, building those relationships in conjunction with solid teaching practices, which I think most of our teachers have. I think the harder part for some of our folks is making those connections because whatever student may have this issue or that issue and it's often times fighting through that tough outer shell of some of our students who come from poverty to really get to know who they are.

Question 3.1 Turning to your professional preparation as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals specifically with the needs of students from poverty? If so, can you describe those opportunities?

Coursework, no, but professional opportunities in an assistant principal role and then in the principal role. We got to see Ruby Payne over in Baltimore. Talking to different people, going to different conference and those types of scenarios.

Question 3.1a How long was your Ruby Payne? Do you remember how long your training was with her?

It was a three-day thing right at the Convention Center in Baltimore.

Question 3.1a What were some of the key learnings that you took out of that training?

That was the first time we talked about the different frameworks for poverty and the cycle which children are caught in so to speak, and that there is not much beyond their frame of reference. The expectations for them within their culture or within their family aren't really there so they're caught in that cycle just trying to keep their heads above water. So giving them the opportunity or to want to get to know them, to expose them to other things beyond where they are and how that building relationships and giving them exposure to different things makes a big difference.

Question 3.1a Did you seek that professional opportunity out or was it a requirement of your job?

No, I wanted to go see her.

Question 3.1b What kinds of things would you like to see either the school system do, or even at the graduate or under-graduate level, that would better prepare you as a principal, to help you deal with students of poverty, or help anybody who wanted to be a principal?

In terms of dealing with families of children of poverty, there seems to be a huge barrier between the parents of children of poverty who, 90% of the time have had bad educational experiences themselves, and the teachers and leaders in the building. There seems to be a wall whether it is feeling intimidated or whatever the case may be. I would like to see some form of training for aspiring administrators in what you do to reach beyond the school walls out into the community. What are ways to effectively communicate with Spanish culture, African-American culture, our Gujarati population. To learn those types of things that are culturally

correct or acceptable and not being intimidated to walk out into the community. Every situation is different, every area is different but some framework to be able to do that and step beyond the school walls to greet those cultures and to get into those scenarios.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? If so, can you recall any of the titles or authors?

The book I just gave our counselor to read is *Inspired to Learn* and it was from a guy, I can't think of his name right now, an African-American administrator who worked his way up and he is out of Wicomico County area and he was targeting the achievement gap, primarily African-American males in dealing with gentlemen's clubs and making those relationships and how do you make real connections with kids and meaningful connections with kids. So that is something that I want to share with the staff, at least administrative staff this year, and begin to head down that road.

Question 3.2b What are some of the things that you got from that book?

In an earlier experience of mine as an assistant principal with the high African-American population in a neighboring county, we had done a gentlemen's club for some of our more "at risk" students and it was pretty successful. So in reading this book again, there was some real value to that so in terms of targeting our students and then wanting to close that achievement gap. It's much more than just the academics push too, it's really a relationship in the sense of belonging as well.

So you mentioned sharing that with the administrative staff. Have you formalized those plans yet on how you want to do that?

Well, we have three guys projecting down the road with the three guidance Counselors. I would like to have Counselor A working with our fifth graders and Counselors B and C targeting either third or fourth, depending on how that washes out and then talking with the volunteer coordinator who worked well with the young ladies club also picking up the other side of the gender and doing that as well.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Through the observation and evaluation process, but we have also built in to our schedule regular meetings. Those are Thursday mornings and then our bi-weekly or monthly staff, or grade level team meetings where we do, we make it a point to get together and talk. It's a big staff but we need to

communicate. There is never enough communication between staff this large but by having those Thursday mornings blocked out for one type of meeting or another and then our grade level team meetings. We need to continue to share our knowledge and share our progress, or lack thereof and then reroute.

Question 4.1 Turning to your preparation of your professional staff, to the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

Just the county diversity course that I'm aware of. Other than that, every university is a little bit different. I think that's a regular 15-week course for three credits, I believe. The diversity course, I believe.

Question 4.1a Did they seek that professional development opportunity out or was it a requirement of their job?

I think it's a benefit of working for the school system.

Question 4.1b. What kinds of things would you like the district to do that would be more helpful to teachers, specifically, in working with students in poverty?

In my experience here, from our leadership from our superintendent and senior staff has recognized the achievement gap and the difference between cultures. I feel comfortable in the direction that the county is headed under her leadership as well as everybody else that realizes where we're going. The advent of the NO GAP group allowed us to reach out to the community to the churches and the NAACP. I was really impressed with the avenues that they have taken in order to hopefully work towards solving this achievement gap. I feel comfortable in the direction that we are heading. It's definitely not quick enough for any of us but Rome wasn't built in a day. So, I feel comfortable in the direction that we are heading. The communication between senior staff on down is very efficient and effective and we're going to continue doing what we're doing on a building level and talking about reading and working with the diversity what the needs are of different cultures and different types of students.

Question 4.2 To the best of your knowledge, have your staff members read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

Yes. We did a book study last year. The first part of our book study was a book entitled *Closing the Achievement Gap*. It's around here some place. It lasted probably about two to three months. Our second book was *Literacy with ELL Learners* and we finished out the year with Carol Ann

Tomlinson's *Differentiated Instruction*. We will be picking up with on her follow-up book to that the start of this school year.

How do your book study groups work. What's the structure of that?

We mix up folks. We don't want people in their comfortable groups where you're more inclined to jabber jaw and just talk about other things so the groups are heterogeneously mixed. They are given certain chunks to read depending on the length of the book and then there are some guideline questions or some guide questions that they are to discuss when they get together and meet on Thursday mornings. There is a recorder in the group and we get feedback from that. Depending on the length of the book, we'll even meet in the middle as a whole group and discuss our process, questions, concerns, likes and dislikes, or at the end of the book, if it's a shorter book, and do a wrap up and a summary and next steps. We read the book, what did we get out of the book and how does this apply to us.

Question 4.4 Lastly, are there any additional courses or professional development opportunities you would like to see offered to teachers in this area?

I'll tell you what. I'm real excited about the use of PD360, and that fits real big into our staff development plans for next year. We're asking teachers to differentiate their instruction, so I think it's really imperative that we differentiate our professional development for our staff because we've got people who have been teaching 35 years and people just walking fresh out of the classroom so the needs are vast and I think through that technology we'll be able to hit every type of learner and every type of teacher.

Principal #13

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

I've been in my current assignment for 10 years.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator?

I've been an educator for 29 years.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

I would describe it as middle class, solidly middle class.

Question 1.4a Did your family's socioeconomic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

No, I've thought about this one for a while. I really don't think the economic situation had an impact on my preparation, but I think that the way that I was raised had an impact on it. I'm not so sure that it had to do with the economic status that I was raised in, it was just that we were raised to be very mindful of other people, and what we had in relationship to other people, and to try to always help people that were less fortunate than we were through our churches, through Girl Scouts. I remember doing Meals-On-Wheels with my mother, so the opportunities and the experiences that I had made me a little more sensitive to the needs of others.

Question 1.4b So you kind of touched on it, but how do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

I think, again, just being a little more sensitive to what they brought or didn't bring to the school house door and to be more mindful that they're needs may be very much different than children who came from more affluent families and to try to help bridge that gap whenever I could.

Question 2.1 Turning to what happens in the school, the research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

The term I have for it is learning to do school because I think sometimes, especially with elementary school children, it's their first experience and so they have to learn how to navigate the system. What it means to become part of a bigger group, how to use resources, how to get resources, some of those things that if their parents, for whatever reason didn't have the opportunity to expose them to. It's our job as educators to help children learn that.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom?

I see them taking care of physical needs for children of poverty, getting clothes sometimes for them, getting them classroom supplies that their parents may not be able to get for them so that they kind of level the playing field a little bit in terms of appearance and resources to get the job done. Then I see them being a little more sensitive to the fact that children of poverty haven't had some of the prior experiences as other children and to make sure that they do some pre-teaching with them either a small group or a day ahead, so that they have the advantage of the knowledge that the other kids have gotten through their family.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships. What does that mean to you?

What does establish positive relationships mean to me? It means that you care truly and genuinely about the people that you are working with whether they are the adults or the students. You listen more than you talk to find out what it is they're trying to tell you in terms of what their needs might be. You're there as a support for them depending upon what their needs might be so that there is that comfort level back and forth so that they know that you can be trusted.

Question 2.2a. When you observe in the classroom, how do you see your teachers establishing positive relationships with their students from poverty?

I think just through the things that I've already said; being a good listener, being very mindful that they're unique circumstances might put them at an awkward disadvantage and trying to head that off proactively.

Question 2.3 The research also suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development and vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

In the early grades, the primary grades, I see a lot of language emersion and by that I mean teachers are very mindful to constantly provide a language-rich environment, whether it's in a spoken word or the written word, lots of reading resources for the children to get their hands on. I think it is singing songs in the early grades, learning poetry. It's just that full language emersion to help shore up some of those skills that we know children of poverty often don't have because they don't have the resources or the prior knowledge. In the upper grades, elementary school and intermediate I see the teachers, and I look for, the teachers to be doing high quality, rigorous instruction in terms of what the children are reading and how that reading instruction is being delivered, the quality and the standard of writing that is acceptable that the children turn in to the teacher, and the kind of feedback. As an observer I was always very careful to make sure that the teachers were giving the students meaningful feedback for their written work.

Question 2.4 Although the rigor in classrooms should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

We had a shared understanding that we would have the same accountability for all children because that was part of the school culture



and climate took 10 years to develop. They knew that I was also going to be checking the student's work. For example, the teachers turned in monthly BCR's to me, first through fifth grade so every month I read at least one example of each child's writing. I was doing that not only to double check what the children were turning in, but to see what kind of written feedback the teachers were putting on their papers so that I could do some staff development with the teachers in making more meaningful feedback available.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the class to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to the teachers?

I was fortunate that I do have a good relationship, with my teachers and we could speak very comfortably, informally and have a dialog about a child of poverty. I also was in their classroom informally a lot, not to see what they were doing but to help them do what it was I was asking them to do and I do think that they appreciated that.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you think they would say?

My teachers? They would say that students in poverty need a higher degree of support from them than some of the children that come from more privileged background. That higher level of support would look like some of things I already mentioned, providing them with resources, doing some pre teaching, doing the follow up, maybe helping kids with homework because the parents might be working two jobs and they are a latchkey child, connecting them with outside agencies to bring about some of the things that their families might need, for whatever reason that they can't provide them themselves.

Question 3.1 Turning to your professional preparation as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty and, if so, can you describe those opportunities?

I really thought back. I was like, I must have had some staff development, but honestly, I could not think of one that was very purposeful, and that direct. I couldn't think of one in 29 years.

Question 3.1b So what things would you like to see either a school system do, or even at the graduate or undergraduate level do to prepare you as a principal to deal with impoverished students in the classroom?

I think at a district level I would like to see a course similar to the one that we were all required to take for minority differences and sensitivity. I think we need to have that same kind of training for sensitivity for students of a lower socioeconomic status. At a graduate level, I think we need to have some courses that deal with strategies and best practices for teachers and an understanding of how to work the system within our community to help our families who are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Question 3.2 Have you read any books, research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? If so, can you recall any of the titles or authors?

Again, it wasn't specific to poverty because the book was called *Annual Growth for all Students and Catch up Growth for Those Who are Behind* but a lot of the research that the book was based on had to do with families and children of poverty. My staff and I did that as a book study last year and really it was very good.

Question 3.2b What are some of the things that you used, or will be able to use, did you take from that reading?

A part of our book study was we read a certain number of chapters and then we had discussions and during those discussions we identified what we found were the key findings from the text. Then during our annual review for our school improvement plan in June, we took those key findings and we tried, we didn't have all of our data, because we just got our MSA (Maryland School Assessment) data back but we tried to align some of those key findings with what the data was telling us for our children, to plug in some action stats for next year's plan. I'm trying to think of an example of one that, an actual step or two that came out of that reading. For example, there was a suggestion of putting strategies in our school newsletter for parents to use with their children for skill-specific practice. There was an action step in there in working with putting some of the skills and processes that children had to have prior to entering kindergarten in pediatrician's offices and disseminating those same kind of things out to local daycare providers. Those were a couple of the examples of some things that we put in our action plan.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with your teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

Again, just through dialog, talking with them and then following that up with formal and informal observations, to see if the things that we put in an action plan are actually actions and not just words on a piece of paper. So it goes back to that shared understanding that we're all going to be held accountable for moving all children and I think we have been successful.

Question 4.1 Now, this is to the best of your knowledge, looking at your teachers, to the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any preparation, such as course work that deals with the needs of students from poverty?

From the best of my knowledge, the book study that we did, and I have to assume, or at least I'm hoping, because some of them are currently in their Master's Degree program and some of them are recent undergrad students that they have had some preparation in dealing with students of poverty, but I can't say for sure with 100% certainty.

Question 4.1b What kinds of things would you like to see the school system do for the teachers, maybe different from what principals need to do, or not?

Well, just like all the employees of the school system are required to take the sensitivity diversity class. I think all teachers should, if there was one developed, have to take a class that makes us more sensitive to the needs of students from poverty. I really would like to see all schools include some action steps in their plans, specific to addressing the needs of students of poverty depending upon, of course, their data.

Question 4.2 You mentioned the one book you did as a book study, are you aware of all other books, research or professional articles that your staff members may have read that dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

I think several of the teachers who transferred in from another school did some work with Ruby Payne because they had a greater need. They had done that based on the data of their students but I wasn't a part of that

Question 4.3 Do you know if they've shared that information with any of their colleagues?

Probably in an informal way. They may not necessarily say I read in the Ruby Payne book, but they will share the key understandings and learnings that they took from that, either in practice or in dialog.

Question 4.4 Lastly, what additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers?

I did think about this one for quite some time because I feel very strongly about staff development, in particular, being meaningful and I'm working with a group for the no gap, to try to close the gap between minority and nonminority students. I sometimes think that there are many children who fall into both categories so if we can close one group, maybe we can close the other. I really would like to see staff development on how you create a culture of high expectations for all students in your building and what that looks like when you're out and about, what it sounds like, what to observe

for when you're doing those walk through observations that tell you, whether you're the superintendent, or the assistant superintendent, or curriculum specialist, that when you're in that building, what does it look like, what does it sound like, what evidence do I have that that is the culture in this building. I also think it would be really important to do greater staff development on data analysis, not just by the superficial level, but really drilling down into that data to get to each individual kid and what that kid really does know based on that data and then to take it to the next level. Now that I know this child's strengths and needs, how do I program for him or her so that I move them as far as I can in the short amount of time that I have with them. So, I think the high expectation piece, the climate and culture of the school, coupled with really helping teachers becoming better at diagnosing through data analysis and prescribing programming based on that data to move kids along would be one of the best things we can do for our kids.

Principal #14

Question 1.1 How long have you been in your current assignment?

I just completed my first year.

Question 1.2 How many years have you been an educator altogether?

10 years.

Question 1.4 How would you describe the socioeconomic status of your family during your childhood?

Probably lower middle class. My father was Navy and my mom was a stay at home mom.

Question 1.4a Did your family's economic situation have any impact on your preparation to deal with students in poverty?

I don't think I really considered that. My parents kept our economics away from us. It wasn't until I was older that I realized we wore hand-me-down clothes and we didn't do some of the things that other families did in the school that I attended. I don't know that I really considered that question before.

You probably had a more transient lifestyle.

We did. We moved 10 times in my school career

So from that aspect you certainly can understand students who have to move because of economics.

Absolutely.

Question 1.4b How do your childhood experiences impact your ability to relate to your students from impoverished backgrounds?

Well, obviously the settling into new schools and the moving from place to place. But more so because it was a lower middle class and not truly impoverished state, that kind of middle ground of wanting to attain something higher and being able to do it. It was hard seeing kids with the designer or “in” things and not being able to have that and realizing that we have students in that situation now. The spectrum of poverty is really larger than those students who qualify and are counted in our free and reduced meals that we consider. You have those kids who are just kind of borderline who have some of those issues as well.

Question 2.1 The research shows that students from poverty do better when teachers instruct them in the business of school. What does that mean to you?

Business of school, I call it “doing school”, is figuring out the expectations of when you come in to school, not knowing that you are required to do a certain thing, or that you need to have certain materials with you to be successful, it puts you behind others. I think, sometimes though, there is also my fear that we worry too much about teaching students how to do school that we forget the content and the rigor. We say, “Well, they don’t really get it, or they don’t know how”, so we focus on that aspect of it, and then they miss out on that higher level of the instruction that we would like them to have. There needs to be some type of balance between the two.

Question 2.1a How do you see that demonstrated in the classroom? How do you see teachers going about helping kids adjust to the business of school or “doing school”?

Since we are 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup>, I see it more at my middle school level where they are still focused on the whole child, more so than the content itself as they get older. I see teachers who give up their planning time and their lunch time to be with students and to give them that additional support during that time outside of classroom. I see structures they put in place for all kids but that really helps those that don’t have the prerequisites in terms of that. For example, even in our instructional process, that whole concept of the bell-ringer, reviewing what you have done before. Spending some time with students on just how do you set up a

notebook in the classroom. A lot of our teachers even get those materials for kids so that they have them.

Question 2.2 The research also shows that students from poverty do better when teachers establish positive relationships with these students. What does that mean to you?

Well, that's the key to reaching them in any fashion. I think that's going beyond just teaching your content and actually teaching kids. Getting to know them as individuals and their strengths and weaknesses whether they come to their classroom looking like they're prepared to learn. Finding out what it is that motivates them and what they're good at. Designing instruction for that student that really hits on those strengths so that you can then begin to move them towards building on where they are having some deficiencies in their learning or skills that they need to work on. You know as soon as you walk into a classroom whether a teacher has that ability to reach kids in that fashion and whether or not they are willing to commit the extra effort to that. Because it does take a lot more work than just planning to teach the content. But you see it in their interactions with kids. You see it in students engaged in their class in every aspect. It's either there or not. It's probably the hardest thing to try to help teachers grow in that capacity if they don't have it.

Question 2.2a. You kind of touched on it, but when you observe in the classroom, what are some specific things that you see teachers doing to establish positive relationships with their students from poverty?

I have one teacher who is very good at using proximity; not getting in to personal space but when she wants to engage students or redirect them, just that physical presence around them. Clearly, she has established a good enough rapport with them. There are even things that she just signals that I see her giving students; the tone of voice that she uses to engage them in their learning, something as simple as being visible to them when they come in the room, welcoming them by name.

Question 2.3 The research suggests that students from impoverished backgrounds often lack language development and vocabulary. When you observe, what kind of language development strategies or vocabulary development strategies do you see teachers employing?

At the high school level, it is more directed; vocabulary textbooks to build language, or SAT preparation, or content-specific things. Again, I see it integrated more effectively at the middle school level where they are reading in context. They are reinforcing it by encouraging students to find it anywhere they can, if it is in music or if it's in the newspaper advertisement, just to show them that it is a used word and not just

something that we're learning for that particular moment. Language-rich classrooms, ones that have all kinds of texts around them. We instituted a sustained silent reading program that has been wonderful for our middle school students, especially when the teachers take the time to find texts that are high interest. So that if they find a student who is interested in basketball, hooking them up with the Walter D. Myers text where the characters are basketball players so that those students start to interact with new vocabulary through a text that is somehow accessible to them.

Question 2.4 Although rigor in classrooms should be for all students, the research shows that teachers' expectations are often low for students from poverty. How do teachers in your school demonstrate high expectations for their impoverished students?

Well again, I think it goes back to making sure that they are looking at the individual student and identifying where they are and how they are going to move that child to get closer to mastering the course objectives. It is differentiating in the classroom. It may be that in your language arts classroom, you have two or three texts going that students are going to be working on the same objectives but the text may be at different levels, but that you begin to progress them forward. You don't keep them stuck in one place.

Question 2.5 If you perceive a weakness in what must occur in the class to meet the needs of students from poverty, what kind of feedback do you provide to your teachers?

There is a continuous feedback. Just through walk through observations have been the most helpful. Sometimes when you go in to do a formal observation, you're just getting that moment snapshot that particular day, but when you are in there on almost a daily basis and you're looking at the interactions that happen over time, those are helpful for forming a true understanding of what is going on. I talk with teachers. We come in. We look at individual student data so that we are monitoring that every student is progressing. Looking at what strategies are they using to help that student move forward. We also work as a team approach so that if one particular teacher is having success with a student, that teacher kind of serves as a liaison with other teachers who may be struggling more with that student to try to build some relationships there that help the student be successful.

Question 2.6. If you brought your teachers together and asked them what had to occur in the classroom to meet the needs of students from poverty, what do you know they would say?

I think they would identify relationships. I think they would recognize that, with any student, unless you build that rapport with them, you're not going to reach them instructionally. I think they would say that it takes a team approach to reach those students. Time, which is one of the benefits we have here, being a 7<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade school, to build relationships that progress from year to year with the staff in the building so there is a level of trust that's developed.

Question 3.1 Turning to your professional preparation as a principal, have you received any preparation, such as coursework, that deals with the needs of students from poverty? If so, could you describe some of those opportunities?

I don't know that there was a true focus on just looking at students from poverty. I'm trying to remember if in our diversity class we hit on that to some extent but that wasn't the primary focus of the course. So I would say probably not as much as we would need to consider.

Question 3.1b So, since you really haven't, what kinds of things would you like to see either the school system do, or even the undergraduate or graduate levels, do that would be helpful to you as a principal?

I'm seeing more of that coursework being offered now that I'm in my Ph.D. program. Even at the undergraduate level, offering courses dealing with poverty, dealing with urban education. I think it's grown as a focus. We did not really consider socioeconomics as a major factor until more recently, with disaggregating our data to look at that specifically. I don't actually know if I answered it.

Question 3.2 Again, this is going back in your memory, have you read any books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty? If so, can you recall any of the titles or authors?

When I was an administrator in another county, we spent a lot of time with the Ruby Payne text and training. We actually went to a three or four day workshop that dealt with working with a framework of poverty, and then from that, we established a community group that linked the school system with agencies in the community that could help work as a coherent unit to help students from poverty. We had representatives from Social Services, Police Department, churches, community centers so that we were alluding the same language and developing strategies together to work with students.

Question 3.2b In those readings and in that training, what are some of the things that you used or might plan to use with your teachers from those experiences?



I think the thing that struck me most from the Ruby Payne training was just the concept of language and the use of language and how it can inform relationships and misconstrue interactions between adults and children from poverty. Also breaking down some stereotypes of children in poverty and the types of families that they come from and the support that they may have. Just raising an awareness and not being so quick to make generalizations about students.

Question 3.3 Have you had the opportunity to share this information with your teachers in this setting?

Not here in my first year in principalship, but as this county has started to move that to the focus and to the forefront, it's one of those things that we have planned as part of our professional development this year is to see how we can start to move our conversations in that direction.

Question 3.4 How do you monitor the use of what you have shared with teachers or what they have learned through their own professional development?

One of the things that we try to do whenever we have professional development opportunities is to, through the walkthrough and the observation process, see if we are seeing teachers use that strategy. We also ask teachers to come back at faculty meetings and report out on how it is informed in their classroom practices, albeit something that deals with relationships with students or conferencing with parents or an actual strategy. So that we are constantly kind of going back to it so it's not a one time and then let it go. We really want to see whether or not we, as a kind of learning community of adults, are implementing it and what impact it's having and how we can refine it.

Question 4.1 Now, going to the preparation of your teachers, and this is going to be to the best of your knowledge, have your teachers received any specific preparation, such as course work that deal with the needs of students from poverty?

I'm not really sure only being here one year as principal and looking at professional development plans and what people are planning on doing. I don't know that I can really comment on that.

So you don't know if any of your people have done the Ruby Payne training or anything like that?

I don't know. They have done the diversity training through the county.

Question 4.1b Since it looks like they probably haven't, what kind of things would you like to see the school system do for teachers in that area?

Again, I think from our superintendent, there is an initiative to being looking at it, but it's not going to be an option that they do it or not. It's actually becoming something that we, as school leaders, make sure that they are being exposed to. One of the things that I appreciate is the fact that it has been approached allowing us, as school leaders, to share what we're doing in our buildings with each other, to determine what would best fit our school, and the students that we serve. It's not a one structure for every single school but we're actually experimenting and sharing ideas of what might work with our staff. As a new principal, I think that I need every idea that people can share with me. I'm also very encouraged that the superintendent has shared with us her work with the community and some of the areas that they're identifying, both for identifying things that need to be improved but also trying to develop some strategies and seeing how we can partner with that.

Question 4.2 Again, to the best of your knowledge, have your staff members read any books or research or professional articles that have dealt with the needs of students from poverty?

Again, I'm not sure. I'm not able to comment on that. But the resources that we have been collecting this past year will be things that the assistant principal and I look at for planning this year's staff development.

Do you recall any of those resources?

As you can see, I'm not going to be able to put my hands on it at this moment.

No. I just thought maybe an author or something came to your mind or you've had experience with before. If not, that's fine.

Well I've got the articles because as soon as we get them we look through them. We marked some of the ones that we think would be most relevant, some of the activities that we would like to try here with staff to raise that awareness. I think, particularly in this area, where we have such physical wealth in our community, sometimes its hard to keep a perspective on where all of our students are coming from and the challenges that they face due to poverty.

Question 4.3b So what kind of things are you planning to do with those kinds of reading? Is it going to be a shared at a whole faculty meeting? Have you thought about that?

We've had a lot of success this year and I think that these are practices that we see used in the classroom with students of identifying different readings that we think are relevant and then allowing staff to select among

those. To work together in study groups and for them to bounce ideas off of each other, and then bring their shared knowledge to the staff rather than either the assistant principal or I just always being the ones to say here. Somehow when they take ownership of it and then report back and start that dialog. We find that staff is more engaged in the conversation, probably more honest sharing rather than thinking that we're looking for the right answer or a specific focus on what they're doing. It also allows them as practitioners in the classroom with those students to really hone in on what they're seeing and how it can change their work.

Question 4.4 What additional courses or professional development opportunities would you like to see offered to teachers?

Again, I don't know that I can answer that specifically just because after one year I'm not sure that I understand what our needs are yet. We clearly see that we have an achievement gap, so we need to begin to look at strategies and means of closing that achievement gap. So there is definitely a need to raise awareness, begin the dialog and start looking for some strategies that will help us move those students forward.

Some of your colleagues have mentioned the PD360 program as a possibility for helping in that, is that something that is falling into your professional development plan?

Yes, absolutely. It's a great resource in the fact that it's using the technology and respecting our adult learners and allowing us to differentiate for them. I think it's going to be really well-received by staff members.

I know they had some programs that deal specifically with the students in poverty, so I imagine that's going to be one of your focuses.

Again, I just want to go back to that whole concept of relationships and how difficult that is, if it's not already present in some capacity in the classroom or if it's not innate. Some teachers have a very much innate ability to relate to students right off the bat, but others don't. If not, it's a skill that they do need to work on. When we look at our individual student data, you can just see the growth being more pronounced in those classrooms where those students feel clear connection with the teacher. It's a direct correlation. There's no getting around it. But it is the most difficult thing to try to help the staff develop.