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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORKING CONDITIONS:  
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATIC AND  
IMPROVING SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY

A Dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Educational Leadership Doctoral Program  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education

by  
Amy Bryant Allen

May 2014

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORKING CONDITIONS:  
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATIC AND  
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Date Recommended \_\_\_\_\_



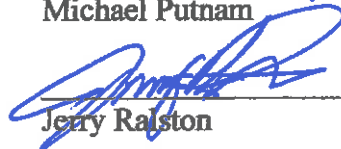
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

To

My sons,

Luke and Sam.

To the Moon and Back.

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORKING CONDITIONS:  
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATIC AND  
IMPROVING SCHOOLS IN KENTUCKY

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Directed by: Ric Keaster, Gary Houchens, Mike Putnam, and Jerry Ralston

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The primary purpose of this study was to identify the changes concerning teachers' perceptions of working conditions within Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools. The District 180 Priority Schools comprises of 41 secondary schools that ranked in the bottom fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Report Card. Schools were divided into two categories, *static* or *improving*, based upon student achievement changes from 2009 until 2013. The study utilized results from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey to determine whether changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions were statistically significant from 2011 to 2013 in the areas of *instructional time, availability of facilities and resources, community support and involvement, student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support*.

This quantitative study used a one-way ANOVA to identify changes over time within groups and between groups. Results indicate that teachers' perceptions in static schools did not change significantly; however, changes in teachers' perceptions in improving schools were statistically significant.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

In his seminal writing on leadership, Burns (1978) asserted that effective leaders respond to followers' needs before negative perceptions develop. Baumeister and Leary (1995) further remarked on the importance of appealing to a moral calling to satisfy intrinsic needs within their followers. Conger and Kanungo (1998) described the effective leader as one who establishes a vision, builds efficacy of subordinates, and institutes change within the organization. Hallinger and Heck (1999) identified effective leadership practices such as defining purpose, engaging people, and cultivating systems, while Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) added setting directions, developing individuals, and redesigning the organization to that list of practices. Additionally, Bennis and Nanus (2003) distinguished the differences between management (doing things right) and leadership (doing the right things). Cultivating people (Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2008) promotes professional and emotional development (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008), along with increasing stamina to achieve organizational goals. Thus, this body of literature makes clear that leaders are aware of these affective dimensions of leadership. Moreover, effective leaders understand that these affective qualities shape employee perceptions of the workplace environment.

Because of historical and current educational reforms, school leaders find themselves compelled to reflect on the essential qualities of effective leadership. Principals must guide their schools to higher levels in student achievement, often raising stress levels of teachers; and increases in stress and workload negatively affect on teacher retention and increase teacher turnover (Albert & Levine, 1988). Perceptions of

workplace conditions are positively related to teacher satisfaction and workplace conditions have stronger effects on teacher satisfaction than gender or years of experience (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Job satisfaction influences the decision to remain in the teaching profession (Bogler, 2001), and an experienced teaching workforce is important for reaching the goals of any reform. Teachers' assessments of working conditions affect job satisfaction as well as retention. Teacher attrition is associated with leadership style (Bogler, 2001; New Teacher Center, 2011a), community involvement, and management of student behavior.

With an increasing focus on data, curriculum revision, and student achievement, school administrators need to recruit and retain effective teachers. According to the New Teacher Center (NTC), working conditions are linked to teacher retention and academic success (New Teacher Center, 2011a). Underperforming schools with lower student achievement tend to have teachers with poorer perceptions of working conditions and decreased teacher satisfaction (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). In light of this linkage between teacher perceptions and school improvement, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) gauged teachers' perceptions of working conditions through the use of the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research study identified trends in teachers' perceptions of working conditions for District 180 Priority Schools in Kentucky. District 180 Priority Schools (also known as *priority* designation) refers to Kentucky schools that scored at or below the fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Report Card between 2009 and 2012 (New Teacher Center, 2013a). The study explored whether teachers' perceptions of working



conditions changed over the first two administrations of the survey (New Teacher Center, 2013a), specifically, changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions subsequent to the implementation of state interventions (KDE, 2012).

Additionally, the study examined trends in teachers' perceptions in priority schools (KDE, 2012). The research clarified whether teachers' perceptions of working conditions from the findings of the 2011 TELL Survey were different than the 2013 TELL Survey (KDE, 2012) and are associated with changes in student achievement. According to Nui et al. (2013), more research is needed on the efficacy of the TELL Survey on teachers' perceptions of their working conditions for prediction of student achievement. Nui et al. suggested conducting future longitudinal studies to compare change in perceptions over time.

This study sought to fill a gap in the research concerning teachers' perceptions of working conditions within Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools and will utilize results from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Kentucky Surveys to clarify whether their perceptions changed from 2011 to 2013. The TELL Kentucky Survey was originally given in 2011 and then repeated in 2013, hence, the use of only two years of results. The research is non-experimental, as the researcher sought to recognize differences in teacher perceptions in schools identified as *persistently low-achieving* that are *static* (not improving) and schools that are *improving*. For this study, *static* schools are those that did not score above the lowest fifth percentile subsequent to inclusion in District 180, thus retaining priority status. *Improving* schools are those that ranked above the lowest fifth percentile in academic accountability between 2011 and 2013 (more information

provided in Definition of Terms section). Academic achievement scores were retrieved from the KDE.

Considerable controversy exists within the literature concerning the variables that influence student achievement, as well as how student achievement influences teachers' perceptions of working conditions. However, most research recognizes the need for future studies on specific school administrator influence on working conditions that are linked to increased student performance (Bandura, 1977; Barker, 2007; Barth, 2002; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson, Clair, & Rowe, 2008). The general research question of the current study was the following: Are teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low-performing schools changing over time?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Organizations go through a change process when striving for improvements. The success of leaders in implementing these changes may depend upon their ability to utilize strategies commensurate with change processes developed from prominent change theory. Organizational change theory has been used by business and industry to improve production, efficiency, and competitiveness. Lewin's (1947) Change Management Model is a prominent organizational change theory utilized by companies to implement and sustain change. Lewin used a force field analysis to describe a three-step process for organizational change, involving group members for greatest fidelity; others also have incorporated this feature in their conclusions about change (Burnes, 2004; Coghlan & Jacob, 2005; Kippenberger, 1998).

The Change Management Model consists of three steps. *Unfreezing* is focused on

the groups' behaviors, attitudes, and cultures that impede progress. Unfreezing dismantles the established equilibrium between current actions and future results (Burnes, 2004). Leaders seek input from members to gain unity for change (Lewin, 1947) and acquire behaviors that will accomplish new goals. The second step, *change*, accumulates innovative knowledge, values, and standards to move from unproductive behaviors to more gratifying results. Utilizing group dynamics will pressure individuals to conform to fresh standards (Kippenberger, 1998). As a whole, the organization develops ways of thinking and behaving that meet new objectives (Coghlan & Jacob, 2005). *Freezing*, the last step in the Change Management Model, stabilizes the organization by incorporating new behaviors into the group's culture. Pressure to remain part of the group motivates adherence to change, making the improvements part of the organization's culture (Kippenberger, 1998). Equilibrium is re-established through organizational practices, job descriptions, evaluation measures, and culture (Burnes, 2004).

School administrators may use Lewin's Change Management Model to improve workplace conditions and student achievement. School principals could utilize the results from surveys, such as the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey, to gain teacher perceptions of working conditions and unfreeze ineffective behaviors, policies, or values within their schools. School leaders then may change workplace conditions to be similar to the workplace trends associated with high-performing schools that experienced increases in student achievement. Last, school administrators may freeze the changes in workplace conditions through policy changes, decision-making procedures, use of instructional and non-instructional time, and evaluation measures.

## **Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to determine whether student achievement affects teachers' perceptions of working conditions. Measurements across two statewide assessments, schools that are static versus those that are improving were examined based on the premise that, if statistically significant differences exist, this would highlight the changes in perceptions in relation to increases in student achievement. If low-performing schools make significant improvements in student achievement, and thus improve the perceptions of teachers' working conditions, this will enlighten other educational leaders seeking to produce similar results in their schools.

## **Research Questions**

The general research question was: Are teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low-performing schools changing over time? More specifically, this study is guided by the following research questions:

From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions

- (a) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for static schools?
- (b) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for improving schools?
- (c) between static schools and improving schools on the 2011 TELL survey?
- (d) between static schools and improving schools on the 2013 TELL survey?

## **General Methodology**

This research is a quantitative study designed to discover whether teachers' perceptions of working conditions change after state intervention aimed to improve student achievement. *Improving* school is defined as one that experienced successful

growth in student achievement between the years 2011 and 2013 included in the Next-Generation Learners (NxGL) categories, as reported by the Kentucky School Report Card. Schools that improved exhibited considerable increases in the school's NxGL categories of overall score, achievement score, college and career readiness score, gap score, growth score, and graduation rate. Additionally, improved schools subsequently ranked above the lowest fifth percentile of Kentucky schools.

The researcher examined statistical data from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Surveys for District 180 Priority Schools in Kentucky. The TELL Survey has been given only twice in Kentucky, hence, utilizing only two years of results. Data on teachers' perceptions of time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, management of student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support was compared between groups of improving schools and static schools. Furthermore, data was compared within groups over time.

The group selected, Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools, is a cohort of schools identified as persistently low-achieving, or the bottom fifth percentile of all Kentucky schools in 2009-2010 (Cohort 1), 2010-2011 (Cohort 2), and 2011-2012 (Cohort 3). Cohort 1 results were reported in 2011, and Cohort 3 results were reported in 2013. District 180 Priority Schools received assistance services from the Kentucky Department of Education as part of the School Improvement Grant (SIG) allowance awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to analyze the data. The longitudinal design was selected to measure the change over time of teachers' perceptions

of working conditions. The ANOVA examined the influence of the multiple independent variables of the TELL Survey on teachers' perceptions of working conditions. The 41 schools included in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools were separated based upon change in student achievement scores and percentiles from 2011 to 2013, as documented by KDE. The study is non-experimental, as differences in teacher perceptions between improving schools and static schools previously identified as persistently low-achieving were examined.

Quantitative research gathers data from subjects to determine whether statistically significant relationships exist among the data. Moreover, the ANOVA determines the influence of each independent variable (IV) on the dependent variable (DV) and detects significant relationships between each independent variable and dependent variable (Slavin, 2007). In this study, the IVs were categories of student achievement, static or improving, and the DVs were teachers' perceptions of working conditions.

Survey data from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Surveys obtained perceptions of teachers in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools regarding working conditions. Slavin (2007) concluded that surveys are an inexpensive way to gather data from groups of people. Although surveys result in potentially low response rates, the respondents were not influenced by the researcher, thus gathering truer data. According to TELL Kentucky (2011), more than 80% of Kentucky's teachers participated in the 2011 survey. In 2013, responses increased to almost 90% (New Teacher Center, 2013b). From a statewide population of 42,025 completed surveys, the 2011 TELL Kentucky Survey included 1,878 educators in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools (New Teacher

Center, 2013b). The number of District 180 educators who completed the TELL Survey in 2013 increased to 2,033 (New Teacher Center, 2013b).

### **Definitions**

*District 180 Priority Schools:* A Kentucky school scoring in the fifth percentile or lower of all Kentucky schools and subsequently receiving assistance services from the Kentucky Department of Education (New Teacher Center, 2013b).

*Improving School:* A Kentucky school that rose above the lowest fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Report Card in the latter assessment (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013a).

*Kentucky Accountability Report Card:* Annual report of each Kentucky school stating academic achievement divided into overall score, achievement score, college and career readiness, gap score, growth score, and graduation rate (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013).

*Static School:* A Kentucky school that made no improvements, or at least too insignificant to lift it out of the lowest fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Report Card (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013a).

*TELL Survey:* Questionnaire developed by the New Teacher Center given to Kentucky educators in 2011 and 2013 seeking teachers' perceptions of working conditions (time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, management of student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support) (New Teacher Center, 2011a).

### **Assumptions**

The assumption is being made that teachers who participated in the TELL Kentucky surveys in 2011 and 2013 are representative of all Kentucky teachers and that they answered the survey questions honestly and without pressure from other teachers or principals. The researcher also assumes that all questions were clear and concise, increasing respondents' understanding and accurate answers. An additional assumption is being made that an appropriate amount of time to complete the surveys was provided and that computer literacy (or lack of) did not influence the reliability of survey responses.

### **Limitations**

As with any study, this research provides a glimpse into the larger, more complex concept of teachers' perceptions of working conditions. The study was conducted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctoral degree and not in conjunction with other researchers or institutions. One limitation is the sole source of information, an anonymous survey linking responses to schools. Although surveys are efficient and cost effective, they report a moment in time that can be influenced by feelings, health, or state of mind of the individuals responding. Also, validity of data could be hindered by loss of, or change in, survey participants due to attrition or maturation from 2011 to 2013. Additionally, poor wording or misunderstanding of questions may restrict true attitudes.

The research is further weakened by limited generalizability of the study. District 180 Priority Schools face unique challenges and opportunities in teacher recruitment and retention, student achievement, and community support. Therefore, the results may not be applicable to all schools seeking to improve perceptions of working conditions.



Another issue is the use of the Kentucky School Report Card. Questions have arisen on the reliability and validity of Next Generation of Learners categories, such as how graduation rates are calculated and how college and career readiness designations are determined.

The data reflect teacher perceptions across two assessments conducted two years apart. Because the research is limited to the years of 2011 and 2013, perceptions may have been different prior to 2011 or changed after 2013. Additionally, the only questions related to working conditions are those included in the TELL Survey that data was examined; other generally assessed working conditions may exist. Also, staff turnover could have occurred between 2011 and 2013, thus limiting the accessibility of the research to the same participation sample. Finally, the narrow selection setting of District 180 Priority Schools limits the study's generalizability to other types/levels of schools.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study sought to fill a gap in the research concerning teachers' perceptions of working conditions within Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools. The study utilized results from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Kentucky Surveys to determine whether changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions were statistically significant from 2011 to 2013 in the areas of (a) *instructional time*, (b) *availability of facilities and resources*, (c) *community support and involvement*, (d) *student conduct*, (e) *teacher leadership*, (f) *school leadership*, (g) *professional development*, and (h) *instructional practices and support* (TELL Kentucky, 2011).

KRS 160.346 identifies schools that (a) were in the lowest 5% in any school improvement category under the No Child Left Behind Act and failed to make Adequate

Yearly Progress for three consecutive years, (b) had graduation rates of 60% or less for three consecutive years, and (c) scored in the lowest 5% of the new state accountability system (Analysis of the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System, 2005). These schools were divided into two categories, static and improving, based upon student achievement scores between the years 2011 and 2013. The study compared teacher perceptions as reported by the Tell Kentucky Surveys in 2011 to 2013 to determine whether the difference in perceptions were statistically significant to changes in student achievement. Comparisons were made between the static schools and the improving schools, as well as comparisons within each group.

This study adds to the needed research on teacher perceptions of working conditions in low-performing schools to suggest whether perceptions changed after schools received state interventions to increase student achievement (Applewhite, 2009; Barker, 2007; Leithwood & Levin, 2005; Leithwood & Poplin, 1992; Robinson et al., 2008). A study by Vause (2012) of North Carolina teachers suggested an additional longitudinal study of teacher perceptions of working conditions. Hueber (2008) recommended future research on the working conditions for schools not meeting AYP objectives, as well as the influence of parental involvement on teachers' perceptions of working conditions. Through the use of Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools' results from the 2011 TELL Kentucky Survey (TELL Kentucky, 2011) and the 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey (New Teacher Center, 2013b), this study examined the perceptions of teachers in persistently low-achieving schools that have the potential to improve areas of accountability, such as student achievement, college and career readiness, and graduation rates (Robinson et al., 2008).

Most school intervention literature focuses on administrative techniques of improving instruction; however, those studies lacked generalizability to other settings (Marzano, 2003; Hallinger, 2005) and did not examine teacher perceptions of working conditions. Robinson et al. (2008) encouraged additional empirical research comparing specific tasks completed by school administrators and their effects on student achievement, particularly through teacher insight. The goal of the researcher was to determine whether a statistical significance exists in differences between teacher perceptions of working conditions in static schools and improving schools in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools, as reported by the TELL Kentucky Surveys. This study contributes to the knowledge of the change in teachers' perceptions of working conditions over time as correlated with student achievement.

According to the New Teacher Center (2012), connections can be made between positive teaching conditions, student achievement, and teacher retention. This study provides insight to school administrators into the perceptions of teachers in low-performing schools as they strive for improved student achievement. In addition, KDE worked with the NTC to create Teaching Condition Standards, only the second state to do so (New Teacher Center, 2012). This project identified whether perceptions of teachers in Kentucky's District 180 Schools have changed since the development of such standards.

### **Summary**

The goal of this chapter was to introduce the study which seeks to highlight the extent of changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions as they compare to increases in student achievement in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools. Insights

have been provided relative to the motivation for a study on teachers' perceptions of working conditions for school leaders of low-achieving schools with goals of dramatic improvement in student achievement. Included in this chapter were a theoretical framework and research questions for the study, the methodology for data collection and analysis, key definitions, assumptions, limitations, and the significance of the study. Chapter II will analyze valuable research literature that provides a framework for the study of teachers' perceptions of working conditions as they change over time.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature links school reform efforts to teachers' perceptions of working conditions, as reported by the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Kentucky Survey. The review is divided into five sections: Change Management Model, School Reform, Secondary School Reform, Kentucky Reform Efforts, and Teachers' Working Conditions. The review begins with Lewin's Change Management Model as the conceptual framework for this study and catalogs the various historical school reform efforts. Finally, secondary school reform efforts and surrounding research are presented that led to these reforms or tested their outcomes. Each research report is examined from the perspective of its relationship with teachers' working conditions, which is the focus of the current study.

#### Change Management Model

Change is difficult within organizations. The literature on organizational change is replete with information about change, reasons for changing, and strategies to overcome individual and group resistance to change within the workplace (Bandura, 1977; Barth, 2002; Bennis & Nanus, 2003; Burns, 1978; Fullan, 2001; Gist, 1987; Hallinger, 2005; Lewin, 1944). A widely appreciated reality within the study of organizations is that, for *something* to change, *someone* has to change (Hall & Hord, 2011). Organizational change on the surface seems to be a very structural, even clinical action; however, it possesses some very personal consequences. Organizations consist of individuals, who do the work of the organization; therefore, when one talks about organizational change, one is talking about changing people and what they do.

Organizational participants will need to move from where they are, change what they do or how they do it, and institutionalize that change into a way of life, if the change is to last.

Lewin (1947) described organizational change in three phases: unfreezing, changing, and freezing. Considered to be as influential as Freud in psychology (Burnes, 2004), Lewin's Change Management Model included two prominent concepts regarding organizational change. The first, *force field analysis*, described organizational culture as opposing forces that create a state of equilibrium (Lewin, 1944). *Driving forces*, such as goals, needs, and fears, compete with *restraining forces* that prohibit organizations from meeting objectives. Individuals and organizations strive for equilibrium between driving forces and restraining forces; in order to change an organization's culture, leaders must strengthen driving forces or reduce restraining forces (Lewin, 1944). Lewin warned leaders against the increase of driving forces through mandatory requirements or monetary incentives to produce organizational change; rather, he suggested the reduction of restraining forces such as ineffective behaviors and thought processes that prohibit goal attainment.

Lewin's second concept is the Change Management Model itself, and uses the force field analysis to initiate organizational change involving group members for greatest fidelity (Lewin, 1947). By engaging others in the group decision-making process, a heightened sense of urgency for change is achieved. Lewin used the term "reeducation" when asking subordinates for suggestions concerning organizational improvement (Lewin, as cited by Coghlan & Jacob, 2005). Lewin stated that individuals are motivated to change organizational behaviors when they understand the potential for

professional and personal progress. Lewin encouraged the reeducation of the workforce to move individuals away from deep-rooted behaviors and beliefs toward new, fresh initiatives (Coghlan & Jacob, 2005; Lewin, 1947). Hence, asking employees their perceptions of workplace conditions and behaviors will result in greater support for changes and will improve the achievement of organizational goals. Unless individuals understand the *necessity* for change, support will not be in evidence and change will not be achieved.

Lewin's first step of the Change Management Model is *unfreezing*, which forces the group to question the behaviors, thoughts, and cultures that might impede progress and organizational improvement (Lewin, 1947). Lewin emphasized the need for team members to understand the necessity of change and the reasons current behaviors limit the organization's growth. When this is accomplished, the established equilibrium between actions and results is dismantled. Challenging established beliefs and behaviors creates stress within the organization; yet, the absence of equilibrium motivates group members to find stability through new activities. Because unfreezing is unique to each organization, Lewin encouraged leaders to seek input from members to gain unity for change by questioning or surveying (Coghlan & Jacob, 2005) in an attempt to detect the organization's core beliefs. This motivates the consideration and adoption of behaviors that will accomplish these new objectives.

The second step, *change*, is a conglomeration of new knowledge, values, and standards as a result of deep inquiry from disequilibrium (Lewin, 1947). As the group moves from unproductive behaviors to more gratifying actions, ample time is encouraged for members to understand the change and how adjustments to existing behaviors will

benefit each team member. Because of the fear of altering present behaviors, particularly leaving the comfort of the status quo, subordinates need time to adjust and need effective communication that describes how adjustments will positively alter workplace procedures (Lewin, 1947). Lewin (1947) underscored effective communication as a vital component for subordinates to feel a part of the decision-making process in creating the organization's new vision. Organizational change is more successful when leaders utilize the group decision-making process, as opposed to a top-down, hierarchical approach (Lewin, 1947). Group dynamics create a group bond and pressure reluctant individuals to conform to newly established norms (Kippenberger, 1998). As a whole, the organization develops new ways of thinking and behaving that meet new organizational objectives (Lewin, 1947).

*Freezing*, the last step in the Change Management Model, stabilizes the organization by incorporating new behaviors into the group's culture (Lewin, 1947). Pressure to remain part of the group motivates individuals to change, making "transformation" (i.e., improvement) part of the organization's new language, expectations, and philosophy (Kippenberger, 1998). If this is accomplished, the organization is less likely to regress to previous, less effective behaviors and practices (Burnes, 2004). Refreezing increases the workforce's confidence to accomplish goals and capacity to be effective (Lewin, 1947). New procedures, standards, and attitudes are now embedded within the workplace (Burnes, 2004). Refreezing the organization's equilibrium is established through organization practices, job descriptions, evaluation measures, and culture adaptation (Lewin, 1947)).



Another term used for *change* is *reform*. When one re-forms something, it changes into something different. The field of education uses the term *reform* when discussing the change process, particularly change on a large scale. Elementary and secondary education has, in recent decades, undergone several waves of educational reform (Borko & Elliott, 1998; Bush, 2001; Gardner & Larsen, 1983; Hoyt, 1999; Hunter, 1999; Kemple & Snipes, 2000; Kuo, 2010; Levine, 2010; Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002; Ongaga, 2010; Reeves, 2003; Richardson, Flanigan & Blackburn, 1991; Thomas & Brady, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 1983) with the national government asserting more and more influence over what goes on in America's classrooms that which influences America's classrooms affects the work and the working conditions of America's teachers. When new reform initiatives are put into place, the most immediate and significant impact is felt in the classroom. Educators, particularly teachers, are those who unfreeze, change, and freeze again every time a new reform initiative is enacted. This study uses Lewin's Change Management Model as a foundation for explaining how educational reform impacts classroom teachers' work, their perceptions of their working conditions, and how these impacts affect outcomes within these schools.

## **Historical Perspective**

### **Elementary and Secondary Education Act**

This section of the literature review will provide an overview of the reform background of education, rather than the more traditional review of research studies. A review of related research studies is presented later in this chapter.

Lewin's model was based on research in business and industry. However, organizational change is not limited to business and industry. The modern era of school reform (i.e., change) originated in 1965 with the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (Kuo, 2010; Thomas & Brady, 2005) and continues today. The topic of educational reform and its history involves a variety of waves and is complex. For this overview of reform, the focus will be on only factors within these reforms that pertain to teacher working conditions.

The Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) awarded schools money for addressing the needs of underrepresented and underperforming minority students, such as English language learners, first-generation college students, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Thomas & Brady, 2005), with the belief that "under-achieving children are entitled to above-average educational expenditures" (Halperin, 1975, p. 7). No longer were children expected to fit the school; rather, schools were expected to fit the diverse needs of the children. ESEA required teachers to assess the needs of students and individualize instruction and educational supports to educationally disadvantaged students such as migrant children, juvenile delinquents, and children with disabilities (Halperin, 1975).

Increased attention was given to early childhood education programs, such as Head Start and Follow Through, to prepare disadvantaged children for kindergarten as well as to increase funding for school breakfast and lunch programs to enhance the nutritional needs of students (Halperin, 1975). In order to meet the needs of a diverse student population, teachers received extended professional development in instructional strategies to reduce the achievement gap in underserved populations compared to the

majority of the student population (Kuo, 2010; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Additionally, ESEA provided funding for instructional materials and supplies, while subsidizing efforts to increase parental and community involvement (Thomas & Brady, 2005).

In addition to meeting the needs of educationally disadvantaged students, ESEA changed teachers' working conditions. For example, ESEA encouraged the addition of para-professionals, those who do not hold a teaching credential, to work within the school in non-teaching roles. ESEA viewed parents as clients who should be treated as customers and involved in the decision-making process. ESEA increased parent and community members' involvement by requiring those schools that received federal school improvement money to establish Parent Advisory Councils. Working conditions, such as educational accountability for all students, changed as well. ESEA promoted the evaluation of programs funded by federal taxes and held schools responsible for educational gains of those programs. Last, ESEA was a turning point in the way educators were viewed. With its passing, emphasis was on recruiting quality teachers to educate children. It became a goal for many to teach in the nation's poorest, most rural, or most urban neighborhoods (Halperin, 1975).

ESEA resulted in higher graduation rates because low-achieving students, or educationally disadvantaged students, stayed in school longer. Also, children not formerly tested, such as children with disabilities or English language learners, were held to the same educational standards as others (Halperin, 1975). However, ESEA had its share of shortcomings, such as the misuse of funds. In some cases, qualified children were not being served, in that the federal money was issued for all children. Although ESEA provided billions of dollars in federal aid for education for over 40 years,

achievement gaps continued to exist between white and minority students. A national study found that that 43% of African Americans, 36% of Hispanics, 35% of Native American, and 25% of Asian Americans reading below competency level, compared to 17% of whites (Thomas & Brady, 2005). Hence, the goals of ESEA were not fully realized. Overall, ESEA brought attention to, and funding for, educationally disadvantaged children; yet, the original goal of providing an equitable educational opportunity for minority students was not reached.

### **A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform**

Nearly two decades after the passage of ESEA, a 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, suggested American students were behind their international counterparts in math, science, and technology. As a result of the outcry generated by this report, American schools altered instructional practices to increase the number of math, science, and technology courses required for high school graduation; increased instructional time for students (length of day and number of days per year); and instituted more rigorous teacher preparation programs (Gardner & Larsen, 1983; U.S. Department of Education, 1983).

*A Nation at Risk* changed the education of the country's youth by increasing the expectations at all levels. Schools were expected to raise their standards and requirements for student accountability, such as number of courses to graduation, standardized testing scores, and preparation for work in a global economy (Borek, 2008; Thomas & Brady, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 1983). School personnel stressed the importance of taking additional math and science classes, while taking foreign language classes, in order to be globally competitive. To accomplish this, school

days and school years were extended (Thomas & Brady, 2005; U.S. Department of Education, 1983). Teachers were expected to instill a love of learning in students and to be life-long learners themselves (Borek, 2008).

*A Nation at Risk* affected teachers' working conditions by increasing the rigor of academic standards for all children to increase the nation's academic competitiveness. Thus, teachers were required to ensure that all students made progress and achieved national standards or fear federal sanctions. Additionally, teacher preparation programs required graduates to pass a standardized test before becoming certified for employment; thus making it more difficult to become certified teachers, while increasing the workload and stress level of educators (Borek, 2008; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Overall, *A Nation at Risk* pointed out that education concerns that were addressed in ESEA had yet to be fully rectified.

### **Kentucky Education Reform Act**

Because national efforts at school improvement were hampered by the federalized nature of education in America, the focus and implementation responsibility of school reform shifted to the state level. Subsequent to the Kentucky Supreme Court ruling that Kentucky schools were inequitable and inefficient, the Kentucky Department of Education passed the most rigorous and thorough reform act in the country. The 1990 Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA, 2013) restructured schools in the areas of curriculum, governance, and finance (Hoyt, 1999; Richardson et al., 1991). KERA equalized funding for districts and improved teacher salaries from 38<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> nationally and provided monetary awards to districts succeeding on accountability tests (Hoyt, 1999). Moreover, KERA recommended the implementation of school-based decision

making councils in schools to increase teacher leadership and parental involvement in decision-making (Hoyt, 1999; Richardson et al., 1991). KERA established the Partnership for Kentucky Schools, a collaboration with UPS, Ashland Oil, and Humana (Hunter, 1999). The accountability and assessment portion of KERA, the Kentucky Instructional Results Information System (KIRIS, 1991), intensified emphasis on student assessments in math, reading, science, social studies, writing, arts and humanities, practical living, and vocational studies, forcing teachers to change instructional practices by increasing the amount of time spent on test preparation (Hoyt, 1999).

The KIRIS assessment system was used by the Kentucky Department of Education from 1992 until 1998; however, due to psychometric concerns and lack of political support, KIRIS was replaced by the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS). The CATS accountability system differed from its predecessor, in that it used nationally normed-referenced tests (Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills) in addition to the Kentucky Core Content Tests (KCCT) to evaluate student achievement, while eliminating math portfolios and frustrating teachers with the change, once again, in instructional focus and practices. Based upon assessments and nonacademic measures such as attendance and graduation rates, schools received ratings of *In Need of Assistance*, *Progressing*, or *Meeting Goals* (Borko & Elliott, 1998; Reeves, 2003), thus adding pressure to teachers and administrators to meet state standards or face sanctions. Furthermore, teachers received professional development in response to the demands of standards-based evaluation (Reeves, 2003). As with KIRIS, CATS garnered more community support from business and industry than within the educational community (Reeves, 2003).

KERA affected teachers' working conditions in numerous ways. First, teachers were required to meet state academic goals or face sanctions such as reduced educational funding or state takeover (Richardson et al., 1991; Rothman, 1997). Therefore, teachers' stress levels rose with the mounting testing requirements and achievement goals that limited their autonomy in curriculum decisions. Teachers also had fewer choices in professional development, as much of their training focused on increasing state test scores and analyzing data rather than pedagogy. Primary school teachers were forced to deviate from their training of graded primaries and change to classrooms with multiple grade levels with the state-mandated ungraded primary initiative (Rothman, 1997). Although teachers lost some autonomy in the classroom, KERA increased teachers' decision-making capabilities with the creation of school-based decision making (SBDM) councils. In addition to increasing teachers' voices, the SBDM invited parent involvement in school decision making (Richardson et al., 1991; Rothman, 1997). KERA provided funding for technology improvements in schools, as well as created family resource centers with the goal of removing barriers of the educationally disadvantaged (Rothman, 1997).

### **No Child Left Behind**

A decade after KERA, many reformers at the national level continued to be dissatisfied with the inconsistent rate of school improvement across the various states. With the encouragement of President George W. Bush, the United States passed the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), requiring schools to meet national achievement goals for all students or face repercussions (Bush, 2001; Linn et al., 2002). NCLB maintained the original goal of ESEA by raising academic standards and holding

educators accountable for the educational achievement of disadvantaged students, regardless of racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic background (Thomas & Brady, 2005). Known as *Adequate Yearly Progress* (AYP), schools were rated annually on their progression toward achievement goals set forth by the national government. Local and state agencies were responsible for student achievement by linking federal financial support to student performance, while enforcing sanctions for low student performance. Additionally, parents were given more options for educating their children when schools were deemed low-performing. NCLB allowed parents to move their children from low-performing schools to those that were more academically successful (Thomas & Brady, 2005).

School leadership under NCLB was required to inform stakeholders about the school's performance on state and national assessments, as well as create safer schools for students and stakeholders (Bush, 2001; Linn et al., 2002). Schools failing to meet prescribed goals after five years were labeled *Persistently Low-Achieving Schools* (PLAs) and were required to (a) replace the majority of their staff, including the principal; (b) reopen with an alternative governance option (e.g., charter school); (c) relinquish control of the school to the government; or (d) utilize a transformation model replacing the principal, reforming instructional practices, increasing learning time for students, and expanding community participation (Bush, 2001; Kuo, 2010; Linn et al., 2002; TELL Kentucky, 2011).

NCLB altered working conditions for educators by requiring teachers to be highly qualified by passing a national exam demonstrating proficiency in their content area. Teachers also were required to close the achievement gap for minority students or fear



federal sanctions (e.g., state takeover), thus increasing stress levels and reducing autonomy in curricular decisions. To meet the changing federal demands of NCLB and achieve AYP, teachers attended professional development focused on research-based strategies for instruction, particularly differentiating instructional strategies to ensure educationally disadvantaged students were meeting national standards (Bracey, 2008; Bush, 2001; Linn et al., 2002; Thomas & Brady, 2005). Teachers lost control over curriculum pacing because of strict time lines to teach content for the test and spent considerable amounts of time aligning their curriculum with what was tested rather than what they felt was most important for students to learn. Because of the multiple data sources available, teachers were required to dedicate planning time, as well as out-of-school time, analyzing data, resulting in feelings of being overwhelmed. Teachers felt their time spent analyzing data was lost with student interaction, when individualized instruction was needed for those students not meeting proficiency levels (Bracey, 2008).

### **Secondary Education Reform**

This current study focuses on education at the secondary level. This section of the Literature Review analyzes previous models used to increase achievement of students while in secondary school. Over the past four decades of reform, three models of school transformation have gained popularity, each striving for higher attendance rates, student achievement, and graduation rates. Each model attempted to improve student achievement, specifically by changing teaching and learning conditions. Small Learning Communities (SLCs) transformed a large high school into smaller cohorts of learners and teachers. Career Academies combined core subjects with career courses and work-based learning opportunities. Early College High Schools provided students with the

opportunity to earn an associate's degree, or the equivalent of two years of college credit, while in high school. The first reform model explained is SLCs.

### **Small Learning Communities**

Schools not meeting AYP under NCLB for multiple years often chose to restructure their curriculum and the physical structure of their school in an effort to drastically improve achievement (Kuo, 2010; Levine, 2010). One example of a secondary school reformation model is Small Learning Communities (SLCs) that divide large schools into smaller units of study (Kuo, 2010). SLCs seek the positive outcomes associated with small schools by breaking down the large student population into smaller cohorts of learners. By doing so, SLCs promise improved attendance rates, more personalized relationships between students and teachers, and increased graduation rates. Common planning time for teachers is utilized to address curriculum matters and student needs.

In a literature review of SLCs, Kuo (2010) described various configurations ranging from Career Academies and schools-within-schools, to magnet schools emphasizing particular academic subjects. SLCs benefited low socioeconomic students by equalizing educational opportunities for students of limited income. Additionally, SLCs exhibited lower dropout rates, improved attendance rates, and higher graduation rates, while creating a caring, safe learning atmosphere. Kuo noted that schools *created* with the SLC model tended to be more effective in improving student achievement, attendance, and transition to postsecondary life, as opposed to large schools that *converted* to the SLC model. Moreover, Kuo encouraged SLC administrators to incorporate instructional enhancements in addition to the structural changes, such as

common planning time, school-industry partnerships, and articulation agreements with postsecondary schools of SLC conversion, for greatest impact on student achievement.

Just as in Kuo's (2010) research, Armstead, Bessel, Sembiente, and Plaza (2010) found a mixed bag of results from their study of SLCs. Armstead et al. conducted an SLC program evaluation in one of Florida's largest school districts. The district received more than \$33 million to implement SLCs in 32 schools from 2004-2008. As part of the program evaluation, researchers used focus groups and a data-in-a-day method highlighting students' perceptions of SLCs. The study questioned the effectiveness of SLCs on all students: If students at all levels, from low-performing to high-achieving, experienced the benefits of SLC, what would improve the SLC experience? The sample consisted of 28 schools in one Florida district that had SLC programs. Each had a Freshmen Academy in addition to other SLC opportunities for grades 10-12. Thirteen of the 28 schools were selected to participate in data-in-a-day data collection method to increase the number of students, staff, and administrators participating in the study. The 13 schools were representative of the diversity, student demographics, number of years of experience with SLCs, and school accountability grade of all 28 schools within the district.

Student focus groups, consisting of 34 students selected by the school administration, indicated positive experiences with SLCs within their schools. Focus groups revealed that SLC students had more opportunities for activities, competitions, field trips, and guest speakers than their non-SLC counterparts. Additionally, focus groups stressed better relationships with their teachers and peers, specifying a sense of community, confidence, leadership development, and motivation to accomplish goals.

Moreover, focus groups described SLCs as rigorous, problem-based tasks, with the support of teachers and students sharing similar career interests (Armstead et al., 2010).

In order to gain a wider range of perspectives of the SLC learning experience, a data-in-a-day approach was used. Whereas the focus groups limited responses to 34 students, data-in-a-day increased participation to 170 classroom observations, 154 faculty surveys, and 3,588 student questionnaires. Through that method, researchers discovered that 75% of those questioned knew they were in SLCs. Only 64% felt the SLC experience improved the high school experience. Although the intent of the Freshmen Academy that was implemented in each school was to personalize the freshmen experience by providing supports and skills to enhance high school, the data-in-a-day results indicated that only 64% of freshmen knew they were in an SLC. Moreover, only 53% of freshmen felt their teachers knew them personally (Armstead et al., 2010).

Armstead et al. (2010) described the influence of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) on students and schools receiving the SLC grant. Armstead et al. stressed the influence of the FCAT on student progression to the next grade level, in addition to school funding tied to student scores. Students who failed the FCAT were required to take a remedial reading class in addition to core classes. Students were strongly encouraged to take a remedial math class as well. Because students who failed the FCAT took more core classes to increase the likelihood of a passing score, taking elective classes was nearly impossible (i.e., SLC classes). Only 29.4% of remedial students felt their teachers knew them, yet improved student-teacher relationships is a goal of SLCs. However, 47% of remedial students considered themselves a part of an

SLC, while only 59% of freshmen (all of whom attended a Freshmen Academy) said they were part of an SLC.

The program evaluation by Armstead et al. (2010) revealed that SLC implementation was inconsistent, notably the Freshmen Academy. Although all schools reported an SLC for freshmen, only one out of 13 divided students into smaller teams. Although all 13 schools required freshmen to take an elective freshmen experience course, other characteristics of SLCs were nonexistent. Therefore, the first research question identified uneven implementation of the SLC model. The second research question revealed that not all students benefit from SLCs, particularly remedial students. Armstead et al. discovered that the influence of passing scores on the FCAT limited the opportunity for low-performing students to participate in an SLC. The study revealed remedial students as being disengaged and disinterested, contrary to the intent of SLCs; unfortunately, remedial students were the most removed from the SLC opportunity. Last, the program evaluation identified student perceptions on ways to improve SLCs. Students suggested caring yet challenging teachers; opportunities for problem-based, relevant learning; and focus on career and college preparedness as ways to improve. All are characteristics of effective SLCs.

Levine (2010) conducted a study of 57 schools that utilized the SLC model. Four years of data were gathered through teacher surveys, student surveys, site visits, and standardized achievement scores. Levine's longitudinal study compared SLCs' baseline data during the first year of existence to data after four years of existence. Resulting SLC data were compared to that of similar non-SLC schools with comparable demographics. A hierarchical regression separated variances within each SLC and between comparison

schools. Student and teacher factors such as race, demographics, disability status, and years of teaching experience were controlled.

Levine's 2010 study sought to determine the amount of influence of SLCs on student attendance rates, graduation rates, progression rates (i.e., next grade level), student engagement, student support, and student achievement test data. Levine reported statistically significant improvements in attendance rates and progression rates of SLC students, compared to baseline rates and comparison schools. Statistically significant increases in graduation rates for SLCs also were found.

Student engagement results gathered from surveys produced mixed findings. Middle schools utilizing the SLC model cited significant increases in student engagement; however, high schools showed decreases in student engagement (Levine, 2010). Nevertheless, data from both middle school and high school students attending SLCs yielded statistically significant increases in areas of student support such as personalization, respect, and responsibility. Responses from teacher surveys suggested statistically significant higher levels of support for academic achievement, student-teacher trust, and teacher support (Levine, 2010).

Student achievement test data in math and English/language arts revealed statistically significant differences between SLCs and comparison schools for students scoring in the *below basic* category for math abilities. Additionally, SLC students scoring *proficient* rose by more than 10% from baseline data on math and English/language arts assessments, while students scoring *unsatisfactory* decreased by 10% from baseline figures. Both findings were statistically significant (Levine, 2010).

Levine's 2010 study on the effects of SLCs had a limited scope of generalizability. Each SLC model included in the study was coupled with at least one other school initiative, such as increased professional development, intense student interventions, or heightened student support systems. Levine noted that statistically significant improvements in SLC student achievement were correlated with adult advocacy programs that provided students with school-based mentors. Therefore, any statistical significance cannot be attributed solely to the SLC model. Second, withdrawal and enrollment of students in the SLCs limits the results. Data gathered for baseline comparisons may not include the same group of students for the study's follow-up comparisons. Students who had enrolled in the SLCs after their freshmen year may have had difference experiences than those who attended SLCs throughout their high school tenure. Last, SLCs target low-achieving students for enrollment; therefore, SLC graduation rates may increase, while student achievement scores and attendance rates may remain flat or even decrease (Levine, 2010).

While SLCs showed promising increases in student attendance, graduation rates, progression rates, student support, and achievement test data, SLCs face multiple challenges. According to Levine (2010), SLCs faced great difficulty during the first three years of existence. Much time and attention was required in establishing the SLC as its own entity, and SLC teachers emphasized the need for common planning time to work on curriculum and instructional strategies. Also, teachers reported needing more professional development for working within an SLC and desired more autonomy in curriculum selection. Levine also identified lack of community involvement as a hindrance to the overall effectiveness of SLCs.

The current study of District 180 Priority Schools is similar, yet distinct, to Levine's 2010 research. First, both are longitudinal studies that seek improvements in student achievement. Both studies make comparisons at two different points of time within the same group while making additional comparisons between groups (i.e., SLC to non-SLC and static to improving). Levine's study investigated the effects of breaking larger schools into smaller communities of learning, thus focusing on relationships as an influence on academic achievement. Schools in the present study have not undergone drastic structural changes as with SLCs. Rather, they have maintained their physical structure, while changing other aspects of the learning environment. Second, the SLC study did not include persistently low-achieving schools. Although schools utilizing the SLC model sought improvements in student achievement, the study was not limited to priority schools requiring intervention. The present study's population is restricted to schools receiving state mandates for change, thus receiving interventions.

Levine's 2010 study lacked input from teachers regarding satisfaction with the learning and work environment. Positive correlations have been suggested between teacher satisfaction and increases in student achievement (Allen, Glickman, & Hensley, 1998). The Levine study did not address academic improvement as an influence on teachers' perceptions of working conditions within the SLC. The District 180 Priority Schools study used student achievement as the independent variable related to its influence on the dependent variable, teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low-performing schools. While Levine's research provided insight into the effects of SLCs on student achievement, teachers' perceptions of working conditions were not considered.



Finally, the SLC study revealed that SLC teachers desired more time for collaboration and planning, more professional development in vision and goals of the SLC, and an increase in teacher leadership and autonomy to make decisions regarding curriculum. Each of these constructs - time, professional development, and teacher leadership - are the foundation of the District 180 Priority Schools study. Rather than outcomes revealed at the conclusion of the research, these constructs are the driving force of teachers' perceptions and their relationship with student achievement. Levine's 2010 study did not address the relationship of time, professional development, and teacher leadership to the increase in student achievement. Questions exist as to whether those are related to student improvement. Rather than being indirectly linked, as they were in Levine's study, the District 180 Priority Schools research directly addressed those constructs, thus filling that gap in the research.

### **Career Academies**

In addition to the SLC model, other schools refined and narrowed the focus of SLCs, adding a career focus to school reform. Just as SLCs, Career Academies promise higher graduation rates, improved attendance rates, and better relationships between teachers and students in addition to combining core classes and elective classes, as well as partnering with local businesses to provide students with a career-based, or career-focused, education (Levine, 2010). Parents also are a part of the intimate relationship with the career academy school through more involvement in their students' education. Levine found that students who met with an adult educator or mentor at least once a week demonstrated positive gains in academic achievement, thus making strides toward assisting the school in meeting AYP. Unfortunately, the same study found that career

academy teachers spent a substantial amount of time promoting the academy's autonomy and decision-making ability from the central high school, which increased stress levels.

In a previous analysis, Kemple and Snipes (2000) studied nine Career Academies to identify the extent to which the Academies had on student persistence in high school, completion of core classes and vocation classes, and steps in transitioning to postsecondary or career settings. Kemple and Snipes used a random assignment design to identify students at the beginning of the 9th grade year at a career academy high school and followed them through 12th grade just prior to graduation. A total of 1,764 students were included in the study's sample, 959 were academy students, and 805 were non-academy students. According to the researchers, no differences were noted between academy and non-academy students in demographics, prior attendance at a career academy, or motivation and attitude toward school. At the beginning of the study, all students were divided into three categories based upon potential risk of dropping out of high school. High-risk students scored in the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile on a risk index scale, having the greatest likelihood of dropping out of high school. Low-risk students scored at or below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile on the risk indicator, having the lowest risk of dropping out of school. The medium-risk group scored between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the risk index and was considered not highly engaged in high school, but not particularly likely to drop out. The researchers used school records, student transcripts, and standardized test scores to compare academy to non-academy students. For the nine sites selected, each career academy was a school within a school that integrated core classes with vocational courses. Each site partnered with a local business to provide cooperative or internship experiences for students (Kemple & Snipes, 2000).

Kemple and Snipes (2000) identified three research questions for their study. First, the study questioned the extent to which the career academy altered the high school environment in ways that better supported students academically. The researchers found that Career Academies significantly reduced the percentage of high-risk students who dropped out of high school by 34%, in addition to reducing chronic absenteeism for high-risk students. Next, the study questioned the extent of Career Academies' influence on high-risk students earning credits and requirements toward graduation, including both core classes and career classes. According to Kemple and Snipes, Career Academies exhibited a statistically significant difference on high-risk students earning required courses and career elective courses from non-academy students. Although Career Academies significantly influenced student attendance and graduation rates, academies had little to no effect on standardized assessments in math and reading. While career academy students scored higher on standardized assessments than their non-academy counterparts, the difference was not statistically significant.

Finally, Kemple and Snipes (2000) questioned the extent that Career Academies influenced students to take positive steps toward a successful transition to postsecondary education or careers. The results suggested that the Academies had statistically significant effects on high-risk students' transition to life beyond high school. Kemper and Snipes reported that Career Academies increased the number of high-risk students who completed college applications or job applications. Moreover, the Academies showed statistically significant increases in the number of students who took college entrance exams. The study also suggested that more high-risk Career Academy students expected to graduate from college than high-risk students from non-academy schools.

Although Career Academies showed significant effects on high-risk students, academy students in the medium-risk and low-risk groups saw no statistical differences compared to non-academy students in attendance, graduation rates, credits earned toward graduation, and standardized test scores. However, the researchers found that non-academy, medium-risk students scored slightly higher on standardized reading assessments than career academy students. Overall, the Kemple and Snipes' 2000 study suggested positive benefits for high-risk students by attending a career academy.

The current study of District 180 Priority Schools and the Kemple and Snipes (2000) research are similar in their interests of improving student achievement. Both use graduation rates and standardized test scores as indicators for enhanced learning. However, Kemple and Snipes included student attendance and credits earned while in high school, while the District 180 Priority Schools study limited its scope to categories defined by the Kentucky School Accountability Report Card. Both are longitudinal in design, as they compare changes in student achievement over multiple years. However, the Kemple and Snipes study categorized students based upon potential to drop out of high school, thus ignoring student achievement as a whole school. The District 180 Priority Schools research did not categorize student improvement by potential risk of dropping out. Rather, the study combined all categories of student achievement included in the Next-Generation Learners (NxGL) categories on the Kentucky School Accountability Report Card. The most distinct difference between the two studies is the lack of teacher insight in the career academy data. Kemple and Snipes omitted teachers' perceptions of learning and working conditions in Career Academies and the potential

impact of student improvement on those perceptions. The present study sought to fill that gap in the research.

### **Early College High Schools**

The third type of high school transformation gaining popularity with high school reform is the Early College High School (ECHS) initiative. The goal of the ECHS is to graduate students from high school with either an associate's degree or two years of college credit (Ongaga, 2010). As with the SLC movement, the ECHS model focuses on students from low socio-economic levels, English language learners, and first-generation college students (Berger, Adelman, & Cole, 2010). In order for an ECHS to be effective, it should offer student support services such as tutoring, mentoring, and seminars on college success. The success of an ECHS depends on teachers' desire and ability to change the school's culture and its persistence in dealing with organizational change (Kuo, 2010).

In a qualitative study of one ECHS, Ongaga (2010) conducted individual and focus group interviews using a purposeful sample. Twenty-one students were selected to be representative of the ethnic, academic, socioeconomic status, and first-generation college student makeup of the school. The goal of the ECHS was to complete high school within two years and spend the junior and senior years on a college campus acquiring an associate's degree or its equivalent. Ongaga investigated factors that influenced students to attend an ECHS, what factors students attributed to their success at an ECHS, and what challenges students experienced at an ECHS.

From his research, Ongaga (2010) identified family as the main influence on students' decisions to attend an ECHS. According to the interviews, students' families

encouraged them to take advantage of the opportunity to compress high school curriculum into two years, allowing them to attend college during their junior and senior years of high school at no cost. Students indicated that splitting the cost of college in half was an opportunity and a major factor in the decision to withdraw from their previous high school and enroll in an ECHS. Another influential factor was the promise of a paperless school. According to the students, the ECHS in Ongaga's study provided students with laptop computers to eliminate transporting heavy books and backpacks.

Ongaga's (2010) second research question examined the factors that contributed to students' academic success at the ECHS. Answers were categorized into three groups, with the predominate theme of relationships. Students attributed much of their academic achievement to teacher-student relationships and described having more responsibility, autonomy, and respect from ECHS teachers than teachers in previous schools. Students affirmed that meaningful teacher-student relationships were reciprocated to their teachers. Students also emphasized personal connections and positive interactions between students and teachers with a clear focus on earning college credit while in high school. Students highlighted peer relationships as a factor leading to their academic success. Described as a small cohort of learners, students in Ongaga's study indicated that students knew each other, helped one another with schoolwork, and held each other to high academic expectations. The ECHS was described as a safe learning environment where they felt they belonged. Students reported the increased positive relationships with their parents as a factor in their success. Ongaga described parents of ECHS students in the study as more responsive to students' needs and more appreciative of the dedication to earn college credit while in high school.

In his final research question, Ongaga (2010) explored challenges faced by ECHS students, as the lack of sports teams and extra-curricular activities was considered to be challenging. Others felt ill prepared for the rigor of the ECHS curriculum and quick pace of courses. Some students identified classroom management as an obstacle, noting the lack of minority teachers in a school that aspired to attract minority students. Other challenges included lack of adequate facilities and lack of a social identity as a school or high school student. The students in Ongaga's study noted the dilapidated building in which they were housed, while awaiting the construction of their new building. Students who were enrolled in college courses cited the lack of mandated structure in their daily schedule as a challenge, thus requiring them to be more responsible. These same students had a lower sense of belonging to either the ECHS or to their college.

Overall, Ongaga (2010) suggested that ECHS needed to recruit during the middle school years to prepare students for the rigor, challenges, and opportunities of the ECHS. Ongaga encouraged intervention strategies to help with the transition from middle school to ECHS, and from ECHS to college. Study skills, social skills, and cultural skills were identified as challenges faced by the majority of ECHS students. In addition to the opportunity to earn an associate's degree at no cost while in high school, Ongaga praised ECHS efforts to involve parents, community members, and stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Ongaga (2010) highlighted several academic benefits of attending an ECHS, such as improved relationships, heightened academic rigor, and earning college credit free of charge. However, the qualitative nature of this study limited the generalizability to other

ECHS settings. Additionally, the potential for researcher bias hindered the study, as did the low number of participants.

Ongaga's (2010) study of ECHS differs significantly from the District 180 Priority Schools study in the type of research conducted. Ongaga's qualitative study used focus groups and personal interviews of a small number of students, compared to the tens of thousands of teachers who participated in the TELL Kentucky Survey; however, the qualitative approach provided thorough, personalized responses to the influences to enroll, factors contributing to success, and challenges of an ECHS student. Ongaga provided no data regarding improvements in graduation rates, college and career readiness, or student achievement. Rather, he related the personal stories of success and challenges of students attending an ECHS. Conversely, the District 180 Priority Schools study uses a quantitative approach to interpret figures for achievement scores, college and career readiness scores, gap scores, growth scores, and graduation rates.

Similarities exist between the two studies. Ongaga's (2010) research revealed the importance of family and community support as an influencing factor for students when deciding to attend an ECHS. The District 180 Priority Schools study considered teachers' perceptions of family and community support and identifies relationships that may exist between those perceptions and student achievement. Second, Ongaga's study identified the sense of connectedness and safe school environment as factors attributing to ECHS student success. The District 180 Priority Schools study sought to determine the extent of the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school safety and student achievement. Finally, the ECHS study revealed the challenges of poor facilities, or the impact that lack of facilities had on students. The District 180 Priority Schools study



sought to determine whether teachers' perceptions of facilities change with increases in student achievement. Although sharing similar constructs, the District 180 Priority Schools study fills the gap in the research literature concerning teachers' perceptions of family and community support, safe learning environments, and facilities to improve student achievement.

### **Kentucky's Recent Reform Efforts**

#### **Senate Bill 1: *Unbridled Learning***

In 2009, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) applied for an exemption from the No Child Left Behind Act through the creation of Senate Bill 1, KRS 158.645, known as *Unbridled Learning* (Day, 2013; KDE, 2013a). KDE adopted the Common Core State Standards and added criterion-referenced and nationally normed-referenced examinations as a means of assessing student achievement (Day, 2013). The Next-Generation Learners (NxGL) was one of three components of the most recent Kentucky accountability system. NxGL uses multiple measures of student performance on standardized tests and student accomplishments of graduation rates and readiness for the transition to postsecondary or career settings.

NxGL is divided into five categories. First, an achievement score is calculated using the results from criterion-based tests in the areas of reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and student writing. Second, a gap score is determined by comparing students in specified groups, such as African-American, Hispanic, Native American, students with disabilities, poverty (qualifying for free or reduced lunch), and limited English proficiency, to students not identified by the federal government as minority. Next, the growth score is a statistical percentile that compares an individual student's

growth to peers using two years of test data. The growth score is calculated for reading and math for high school juniors, comparing the increase in an individual's scores from the PLAN taken as a sophomore to the ACT taken as a junior. College and career readiness scores are determined from the number of students who have met ACT benchmarks or other college placement exams and the number of students who have earned industry certifications or other career credentials. Last, graduation rates are figured by calculating the number of students that graduate from high school within four years (KDE, 2013a).

Under *Unbridled Learning*, teachers continue to focus on standards-based instruction, as well as providing differentiation of instruction for all students to improve assessment results, increase graduation rates, and emphasize college and career readiness. Teachers monitor student progress through formative and summative assessments and align curriculum to the Common Core (Lowe, 2013). Under the NxGL, teachers prepare students for proficiency on content areas of reading, math, and science, as well as utilizing data reporting systems to make effective decisions regarding staffing, curricula, and school programs and policies (Day, 2013; KDE, 2013a).

### **District 180 Priority Schools**

With the passage of *Unbridled Learning*, Kentucky's persistently low-achieving schools that failed to meet NCLB, CATS, or SB 1 requirements were clustered together and identified as District 180 Priority Schools. Currently, three cohorts of persistently low-achieving schools exist in Kentucky. Cohort 1 and 2 schools were designated as persistently low-achieving under the old accountability system from 2009 through 2011. Those schools met the following criteria: (a) the lowest 5% or lowest five schools (Title I

and non-Title I schools) for the accountability years of 2010 and 2011 and (b) graduation rates at or below 60%. Cohort 3 schools were designated as persistently low-achieving due to ranking in the lowest 5% of all Kentucky schools for three or more consecutive years under Senate Bill 1 implemented in 2013 (KDE, 2013a).

## **Teachers' Perceptions of Working Conditions**

### **Influence of the Principal**

Because of the requirements to meet educational reform, such as NCLB and *Unbridled Learning*, teachers face changing expectations and workplace conditions. With more focus on school improvement data, restructuring of curriculum, and increasing student achievement, school administrators need to keep their best teachers in their schools. Retaining quality teachers is an important responsibility of school administrators. Because few affect students as classroom leaders, administrators strive to influence student achievement through highly effective teachers. Business and industry have conducted extensive research and attempted to improve work conditions and increase worker satisfaction. P-12 education has followed (Asnell, 2004; Barker, 2007; Barth, 2002; Berger et al., 2010; Deal & Peterson, 2003; Duke, 2004; Fullan, 2002; Hess & Gift, 2009; Kuo, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003; Nor & Roslan, 2009).

According to Shin and Reyes (1995), school administrators must meet the needs of their teachers, or negative perceptions of working conditions will develop. Moreover, principals play a major role in developing a school's culture and influencing student achievement (Fullan, 2001; Rosberg, McGee, & Burgett, 2003). In a later study, Deal and Peterson (2003) researched hundreds of schools and identified the principal as

responsible for maintaining positive culture. The same study linked principals who monitored their school’s culture with an increase in student achievement.

In a meta-analysis of 69 studies including 2,802 schools, 1.4 million students, and 14,000 teachers, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) found significant correlations between school leadership’s influence on school culture and school achievement. Most of the studies included in the meta-analysis were quantitative in design and used survey instruments to gauge teachers’ perceptions of their principal’s leadership characteristics. The results indicated a .25 positive correlation between school leadership behavior and student achievement. Specifically, the research identified a direct link between leadership behavior and its influence on student achievement. Additionally, the meta-analysis pinpointed specific leadership behaviors and their influence on student achievement, thus quantifying and ranking the characteristics with the greatest impact on learning. Table 1 lists the 21 categories, referred to as responsibilities, if demonstrated, that positively influence student achievement. The 21 responsibilities are listed according to strength of correlation with student achievement.

Table 1

*21 Responsibilities of School Leaders*

Correlation with Student Achievement	Responsibility
.33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situational Awareness (Cognizant of the undercurrents of the school and uses that information to address current and future problems)</li> </ul>
.28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility (Ability to adapt leadership behavior to current situation and is comfortable with differences in opinion)</li> </ul>
.27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discipline (Protects instructional time)</li> <li>• Outreach (Advocates for the school)</li> <li>• Monitoring/Evaluating (Monitors the effectiveness of school initiatives on student achievement)</li> </ul>

.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture (Encourages a sense of community and shared beliefs among stakeholders)</li> <li>• Order (Establishes procedures and routines)</li> <li>• Resources (Provides necessary materials and professional development to enhance student learning)</li> <li>• Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (Knowledgeable about current instructional practices and curriculum)</li> <li>• Input (Seeks teachers' advice in the decision-making process)</li> <li>• Change Agent (Challenges the status quo)</li> </ul>
.24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus (Develops and communicates organizational goals)</li> <li>• Contingent Rewards (Celebrates individual milestones)</li> <li>• Intellectual Stimulation (Knowledgeable of current educational practices and incorporates them into the school's practices)</li> </ul>
.23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication (Effective communicator with stakeholders)</li> </ul>
.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideals/Beliefs (Communicates a strong sense of philosophy about importance of education)</li> </ul>
.20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement with Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (Directly involved in curriculum and instructional practices)</li> <li>• Visibility (Routinely interacts with stakeholders)</li> <li>• Optimizer (Encourages others to build upon their strengths)</li> </ul>
.19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirmation (Celebrates accomplishments and recognizes failures)</li> </ul>
.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships (Establishes bonds with stakeholders)</li> </ul>

\*Reproduced from Marzano et al. (2005)

Marzano et al. (2005) insisted that, by increasing the principal's leadership behaviors from the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile to the 84<sup>th</sup> percentile, schools could expect an increase in student achievement from the 50<sup>th</sup> to the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile. An increase in school leadership behavior from the 50<sup>th</sup> to the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile was predicted to improve student achievement from the 50<sup>th</sup> to the 72<sup>nd</sup> percentile. This data demonstrated that the 21 responsibilities of a school leader have a dramatic impact on student learning.

Not only can principals influence student achievement through displaying certain characteristics, they also can influence retention and attrition rates of beginning teachers.

Colley (2002) reported that the U.S. Department of Education estimated that 2 million teachers would be needed within the next decade; however, 20-50% of new educators quit within the first five years of teaching. Colley attributed high rates of attrition to low pay, assignment to the most difficult classes, feeling isolated and unsupported, being required to supervise or sponsor extra-curricular activities, and feelings of low professional status. New teachers want principals to give them feedback, highlighting the principal's expectations for instruction, grading, and student achievement. New teachers also want to know about the school's culture, history, traditions, and legends. Last, new teachers desire a mentor to provide additional instructional support, model continuous professional learning, and provide hope and optimism about the future of education. In order to create a positive workplace environment, principals grant teachers accessibility to instructional materials, provide frequent feedback on job performance, are visible in the classroom, and offer opportunities for professional development (Colley, 2002).

In a similar study, Benham-Tye and O'Brien (2002) surveyed 900 teachers credentialed from a California university to discover whether they were still teaching. The researchers questioned what factors contributed to their decision to leave the profession or that influenced their decision to remain. For those educators who left the profession, the number one reason reported was the increase in student accountability from educational reforms. Former teachers described high stakes testing, test preparations, and the stress of meeting national and state standards as highly influential in the decision to quit. Those who left teaching cited increased paperwork as the second reason for changing occupations. Changing student characteristics, such as lack of motivation, behavior problems, and apathy, ranked as the third reason former teachers

had left the profession. Lack of support from parents and community ranked fourth overall in the factors influencing decisions to leave (Benham-Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

In the same survey, Benham-Tye and O'Brien (2002) asked current educators to rank factors that would be influential in their decision to leave education for a different profession. Those still teaching reported the number one reason would be a higher paying job. Trivial paperwork ranked second in factors influencing decisions to leave the field, and student accountability ranked third. According to this study, districts dealt with teacher shortages and budget cuts by increasing the number of students per classroom. Not only did the study find that class sizes increased, but also the amount of paperwork required and number of hours necessary to complete paperwork increased. Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the increases in expectations from administrators. According to this study, teachers desired more autonomy to make decisions regarding curriculum and school structure. Although school-based decision making councils promised to increase teachers' participation in the decision-making process, the actual amount of teacher input was less than ideal. Teachers reported feeling frustrated from the promise of increased input that did not materialize following the creation of SBDMs. Moreover, teachers felt trapped from the lack of a professional ladder. Other than moving into administration, teachers had little choice in career aspirations.

Other areas of concern identified from the Benham-Tye and O'Brien (2002) study was frustration with student behavior. Teachers described students as unmotivated, apathetic, and undisciplined. Teachers also felt unsupported by parents and administrators who were quick to criticize teachers' decisions. They described being taunted and threatened by parents, who, although small in number, seemed to gain the

attention of the administration that was quick to side with parents. Finally, educators felt as though the public did not consider teaching as an important, worthwhile occupation. Teachers described the perceived low status as a factor that would influence their decision to leave education (Benham-Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

### **Job Satisfaction**

According to Blase and Kirby (2009) noted that positive links exist between teachers' job satisfaction and increases in student achievement. However, the National Education Association reported that 25% of teachers were dissatisfied with their careers (Sweeney, as cited in Mertler, 2002). In a later study, Turner (as cited in Mertler, 2002) stated that 34% of teachers would choose another profession if given the opportunity. Questions have arisen as to whether teachers continue to be dissatisfied, or whether recent educational reforms have increased job satisfaction. In an attempt to identify the satisfaction levels of secondary teachers, Mertler (2002) surveyed 710 teachers to determine job satisfaction and motivation. Specifically, Mertler sought to discover the overall level of satisfaction of teachers, whether teachers would again choose the same profession, whether colleagues were perceived as motivated, and the number of colleagues who were perceived as unmotivated.

Mertler (2002) concluded that, from the sample of 710 teachers, 77% were satisfied with their career choice. Neither gender nor ethnicity made a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction, nor did school setting (urban, suburban, or rural). However, teachers' age made a statistically significant difference. Ninety percent of teachers in the age range of 26-30 described themselves as satisfied with teaching, while 83% of teachers age 36-40 reported being satisfied. The lowest satisfaction rate, at



55%, was teachers ranging from 31-35. Additionally, years of teaching experience made a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction. Eighty percent of beginning teachers with 1-5 years of experience classified themselves as satisfied. Teachers with 21-25 years of experience and 31-35 years of experience reported high levels of satisfaction, at 86% and 93%, respectively. Again, mid-career teachers with 6-10 years of experience had the lowest levels of job satisfaction, at 65%.

Although 77% of teachers considered themselves satisfied with their career, 36% said that they would not again choose teaching as a profession. Neither gender, ethnicity, age, years of teaching experience, nor school setting made a statistically significant difference in teachers' decisions to choose a different profession the second time. Moreover, 74% believed that teachers in general are motivated. Again, neither gender, ethnicity, age, years of teaching experience, nor school setting made a statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions of levels of colleague motivation.

Mertler (2002) cited that teachers knew five to six unmotivated colleagues. Twenty-four percent said they knew or worked with 10 or more unmotivated teachers. Although ethnicity made no statistically significant difference, male teachers and suburban teachers reported knowing more unmotivated teachers. In his study, Mertler questioned the implications that unmotivated teachers had on student achievement. The study encouraged school leaders to improve teacher satisfaction through incentives such as improving school leadership, school climate, school infrastructure, professional development, and school recognition awards. Each of these incentives is similar to the constructs measured in the TELL Kentucky Survey used in the District 180 Priority Schools study. Although Mertler's study did not link job satisfaction directly to student

achievement, suggestions for improving teacher satisfaction included the same workplace categories as the TELL Kentucky Survey.

In a study of elementary school teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction, Ma and MacMillan (1999) found that perceptions of workplace conditions positively related to teacher satisfaction. The survey of 2,202 teachers questioned perceptions in the components of teacher and student relations, school discipline, academic and social environment, parent involvement, job satisfaction, and teacher autonomy. Ma and MacMillan measured workplace conditions through the variables of administration control, teaching competence, and organizational culture. Administration control is the perception of teachers' relationships with the school administrative team, to include teachers' perceptions of autonomy in decision making, amount of required paperwork, and value of teachers as expressed by administrators. Teaching competence was described as one's knowledge and skill in effectively teaching subjects such as math, English, science, and social studies. Organizational culture was described as the school environment, culture, and traditions, as well as collaboration and collegiality among teachers.

Research questions addressed in the Ma and MacMillan (1999) study included the following: (a) Are there differences in the levels of satisfaction among male and female teachers; (b) What influence do years of experience have on satisfaction; (c) Do teachers with differing employment status show different levels of satisfaction; (d) Is there one or a combination of categories that is more important to teacher satisfaction; (e) Does this pattern of relationship change in the presence of demographic characteristics; and (f) How does each category interact with demographic factors to affect the levels of teacher

satisfaction? The study reported that female teachers were significantly more satisfied with their professional roles than male teachers. Additionally, years of teaching experience showed significant, yet negative, effects on teacher satisfaction, i.e., the longer they had been teaching, the less satisfied they were with their career. Part-time temporary teachers reported being more satisfied than part-time permanent teachers, indicating that workplace conditions showed stronger effects on teacher satisfaction than background variables such as gender, years of teaching experience, or employment status.

Ma and MacMillan's (1999) study found that all three workplace conditions included in their survey (administration control, teaching competence, and organizational culture) were statistically significant in job satisfaction. Administration control was the most important workplace condition in influencing job satisfaction. Teaching competence and organizational culture, both significant, ranked second and third. Furthermore, the study insisted that the role of the school administration was significant in gauging job satisfaction. Teachers' perceptions of relationships with administrators reduced the satisfaction gap among teachers with different teaching experiences. Administrators promoted satisfaction of experienced teachers by encouraging continuous professional development that is challenging and creative. Also, administrators influenced job satisfaction of new teachers by providing an orientation program, mentor, and reduction in caseload and extra-curricular activities.

The study of workplace conditions on teachers' job satisfaction helps fill the gap in research concerning the role of the school leader in teacher satisfaction; however, it is limited in its implications. The Ma and MacMillan (1999) study was limited in its quasi-experimental design, which hindered the control of background characteristics of teachers

in the sample. Second, the quantitative design limited the study's ability to capture complexity of teachers' perceptions of workplace conditions. The inclusion of a qualitative design would have expressed teachers' opinions with a thorough, rich explanation of answers.

Ma and MacMillan's (1999) study is similar to the District 180 Priority Schools study by questioning teachers' perceptions of working conditions. Both sought insight into student discipline and managing student conduct, parent and community involvement, teacher autonomy and leadership, and academic environment and instructional practices. Yet, the research did not question the significance of student achievement on the perception of working conditions. While Ma and MacMillan's study reported that workplace conditions, as those measured in the TELL Kentucky Survey, have stronger effects on teacher satisfaction than other variables, such as gender or years of experience, the study lacked a pivotal link between teachers' perceptions of working conditions and how those perceptions related to student achievement. The District 180 Priority Schools study addressed that issue.

Bogler (2001) examined the influence of leadership style on teacher satisfaction. Using a sample of 745 Israeli teachers, Bogler's questioned the extent of principal leadership style, principal decision-making strategy, and teachers' perceptions of their occupation on teachers' job satisfaction. Bogler defined transformational leadership as demonstrating charisma, intellectually stimulating teachers, establishing a clear vision, and serving as a moral change agent. Conversely, Bogler described transactional leadership as rewarding subordinates for task completion and responding only when things went wrong. Bogler distinguished between autocratic decision makers, leaders

who make decisions without input from others, and participatory decision makers, or those who consult others in the decision-making process. Perception of occupation was defined as the way teachers feel about their work, autonomy to make decisions, professional prestige, professional development, self-esteem, physical aspects of their classroom or school, and working conditions.

Bogler (2001) analyzed the results of the survey using a varimax rotation to determine which factors explained the greatest variance in the total findings in each dimension of transformational and transactional leadership, occupational perception, and job satisfaction. Five factor loadings for the dimension of transformational and transactional leadership explained 61% of the total variance in responses. The five factors included transformational leadership, transactional leadership, decision-making style, teachers' occupational perception, and teachers' satisfaction. Bogler, from these findings, concluded that teachers prefer to work with principals who demonstrate transformational leadership qualities. Additionally, transformational leaders tended to allow for more teacher autonomy in the classroom with curriculum and instructional strategies.

Six factors were identified for teachers' occupational perceptions. Those six factors explained 59% of the total variance in responses. Occupational prestige, self-esteem, autonomy in class, professional development, degree of consideration in the opinions of teachers, and professional autonomy were identified as factors influencing teachers' occupation and prestige. Moreover, a positive link was found between teachers' perceptions of teaching as a profession and job satisfaction, i.e., the more teachers considered their occupation a profession, the greater the job satisfaction. Thus,

principals desiring to increase levels of job satisfaction for teachers should seek ways to validate their professional identity.

Three factors explained 62% of the total variance in teachers' perceptions of job satisfaction: self-fulfillment conditions, internal motivation of the job, and physical conditions of the workplace. Overall, Bogler (2001) concluded that occupational perceptions (i.e., prestige, consideration of colleagues, and importance of their profession) were most highly correlated with teachers' job satisfaction. Transformational leadership, decision-making style, and transactional leadership style ranked second, third, and fourth, respectively.

Bogler's (2001) study sheds light on teachers' perceptions of leadership style and their influence on job satisfaction. However, the study was limited to teachers in Israel, thus lacking generalizability to other nations. The definitions of transformational and transactional leadership could have been confusing or lost in the translation of the survey into Hebrew or Israeli contexts. Some factor loadings included in the survey were weak, thus reducing the reliability of the instruction. Nevertheless, the study provided information on job satisfaction using perceptions of teachers much like the current District 180 Priority Schools study. While the Bogler study sought insight into job satisfaction through teachers' perceptions, it did not examine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of working conditions and student achievement. The District 180 Priority Schools study examined this relationship.

According to the New Teacher Center (2011a), teachers perceived large classes as a hindrance to meeting the needs of students, which, in turn, negatively effects job satisfaction. In addition, perceptions of insufficient supplies and lack of materials lend to

low teacher satisfaction (Veenman, 1984). A decrease in teacher satisfaction is related to poor perceptions of available facilities, parental support, and student behavior (Albert & Levine, 1988). A survey conducted by the National Educational Association reported insufficient planning time, ambiguity in expectations from the school leadership, lack of supplies and equipment (Albert & Levine, 1988; Bogler, 2001) and massive amounts of paperwork (Albert & Levine, 1988; New Teacher Center, 2011a) decrease job satisfaction. Teachers associated lack of training in establishing relationships with parents and lack of parental support with lower levels of job satisfaction (Veenman, 1984).

Perceptions relating to high job satisfaction include leadership that focuses on quality standards, effective teacher evaluations, and participatory decision making (New Teacher Center, 2011a). Teachers who perceived high levels of collegiality among fellow colleagues were more satisfied than those who perceived a lack of professional collaboration (Bogler, 2001; Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Bogler (2001) indicated higher levels of contentment in teachers who felt a part of the decision making. Leaders who demonstrated effective communication by sharing information, being accessible, and delegating authority had teachers who were happier. Teachers with perceptions of effective strategies to deal with individualization, motivation, and assessment indicated contentment with teaching (Ma & MacMillan, 1999; Veeman, 1984). School leaders who valued teacher input, protected teachers from wasteful paperwork, and had positive interactions with faculty had teachers with high levels of job satisfaction (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Last, teachers who perceived themselves as credentialed

professionals, as opposed to skilled workers, and continued to develop their teaching skills expressed greater fulfillment (Bogler, 2001).

### **Teacher Retention**

Teacher perceptions of working conditions affect job satisfaction as well as job retention. Job satisfaction is directly related to teachers' decisions to remain in the profession (Bogler, 2001). Moreover, teacher retention is associated with leadership style (Bogler, 2001; New Teacher Center, 2011a); community involvement; and management of student behavior (New Teacher Center, 2011a). A 2003 study from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future revealed that between 40% and 50% of teachers leave the profession within their first five years. According to the Commission, over 330,000 teachers have left the profession. Changes in staffing disrupt school culture and progression toward goals, in addition to costing school districts thousands of dollars.

Watlington, Shockley, Guglielmino, and Felsher (2010) conducted a study to determine the cost of teacher attrition using two fiscal instruments, the School Turnover Analysis and the Teacher Turnover Cost Calculator. Watlington et al. suggested that teacher shortage and attrition were more commonly experienced in at-risk schools serving minority, low performing, or disproportionately rural or urban students. The highly qualified requirements of NCLB in all classrooms increased the pressure to find teachers credentialed and willing to fill these vacancies. Moreover, teacher attrition tends to be correlated with low student achievement, i.e., student achievement declines even more in low-performing schools when teachers leave (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, as cited in Watlington et al., 2010).



In addition to experiencing student decline, teacher attrition results in financial losses as well. Watlington et al. (2010) cited separation expenses such as exit interviews; sick leave, and vacation pay for the departing teacher, as well as the cost of human resource staff committed to the paperwork involved with a vacancy. In addition to these expenses, the cost for recruitment, hiring, induction, and professional development of the new hire add to the impending expenditure of losing a teacher. The costs of teacher attrition and of hiring a replacement are estimated between \$10,000 to \$26,502 per individual (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007).

In an attempt to combat teacher attrition, Watlington et al. (2010) suggested data collection systems to make informed decisions on the reasons that teachers leave the profession and the cost of teacher turnover. In addition, districts were encouraged to use teacher turnover assessment tools to raise awareness of the costs, financially and intellectually, of high attrition rates. Watlington et al. promoted schools to concentrate on teachers serving at-risk populations to provide additional support. Establishing a non-punitive accountability system may increase teacher morale and improve negative organizational climate that impedes low-performing schools. Watlington et al. advocated that school leaders examine low-performing schools that experienced increases in student achievement to identify best practices for implementation. The study identified the financial and academic costs of teacher retention. Previous studies indicated a link between low student performance and teacher attrition. Watlington et al., added that more research is needed to identify the cost of decreased student achievement from high teacher attrition rates. Additional research could identify the elements that are associated with teacher retention and improved student learning. The District 180 Priority Schools

study addressed this gap, as teachers' perceptions of working conditions were used to identify whether perceptions changed over time in relation to increases in student achievement.

Williams (2003) interviewed a focus group of 12 North Carolina teachers identified by their principals as outstanding educators to determine the elements that enhance teacher retention. All grade levels, course subjects, and school settings were included in the group that averaged 15 years of teaching experience. Three research questions guided the interviews: (a) Why do some teachers endure, and even thrive, in the same setting that drives other teachers to opt out or burn out, (b) What are the sources of inner strength that sustain teachers through difficult times, and (c) What are the workplace dynamics that contribute to professional and personal fulfillment and long-lasting success in the classroom?

The focus group embraced challenges and expressed creativity in the classroom. Teachers described themselves as life-long learners who enjoyed taking graduate classes and attending professional development. Creating personal bonds with students and colleagues, as well as having a sense of community within the school, were considered imperative to teacher retention. Moreover, Williams' 2003 study discussed the importance of teacher autonomy in making decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, stressing the role of the principal in viewing teachers as experts in pedagogy. Interestingly, all teachers within the focus group considered leaving education at some point. Eight of the 12 left the field. Student discipline and classroom management were the reasons given for their consideration and eventual departure from the classroom. Yet, all of those who quit eventually, returned to the classroom.

The study of teacher retention provided in-depth, valuable insight into the perceptions of effective teachers and the reasons why they have remained in education. Williams' 2003 study highlighted several of the constructs measured by the TELL Kentucky Survey included in the District 180 Priority Schools study. The focus group identified the importance of managing student conduct, participatory decision making by the school leadership, opportunity to develop teacher leadership, availability of professional development, and the creativity and challenge of effective instructional practices as factors to remain in the profession. All are constructs included in the TELL Kentucky Survey. However, Williams' study did not investigate how student achievement influences the perceptions of working conditions. The District 180 Study did so by identifying the extent to which each of these construct influences teachers' perceptions of working conditions.

Pyhalto, Pietarinen, and Salmela-Aro (2011) examined teacher burnout and attrition in Finland as part of a larger national study of Finish educational reform. A sample of 68 teachers from nine schools who were representative of teachers in the national study were selected for interviews. Burnout was defined as the consequences of work-related stress (Freudenberger, as cited in Pyhalto et al.) associated with cynicism, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of inadequacy (Golembiewsk as cited by Pyhalto et al.). Three research questions asked teachers the types of episodes considered as burdening in their work; the kinds of situations that lead to feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, or inadequacy; and teachers' perceptions of the fit between themselves and their work environment.

From the Pyhalto et al. (2011) study, teachers cited student-teacher, parental, and collegial relationships as the main causes of teacher burnout. More specifically, classroom discipline problems and students who demanded additional support and attention were listed as episodes leading to teacher burnout. Teachers reported feelings of inadequacy and exhaustion when dealing with students. The same study described the lack of a professional community and alienation from colleagues as sources of inadequacy and cynicism. Additionally, teachers reported unreasonable requirements of working conditions, i.e., lack of resources, high demands, and increased intensity within the work environment, as additional sources of burnout, cynicism, and feelings of inadequacy. Pyhalto et al. encouraged future studies to identify events and factors that contribute to teacher burnout. The District 180 Priority Schools study helps satisfy this suggestion.

Veenman (1984) stated in prior research that teachers who experience behavior problems in the classroom were less likely to be in the profession in five years than those who did not experience discipline problems. A MetLife Survey of teachers reported higher rates of attrition in those who had high levels of stress, poor working conditions, excessive paperwork, and no autonomy (Albert & Levine, 1988). In a later study by Ma and McMillan (1999), cultures of isolation or departmentalization were identified as factors associated with teacher attrition. Additionally, Colley (2002) associated teacher attrition with workload, low pay, lack of administrative support, and ineffective communication from school leadership.

Albert and Levine (1988) emphasized participation in professional activities, hobbies, and maintaining good health as a means of combating teacher attrition. School administrators can promote positive relationships and professional opportunities for

faculty (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Administrators also can support new teachers by providing induction trainings, mentorships, and reduction in class load (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Limiting interruptions to instructional time and allocating more time for collaboration are linked to longer teacher tenure (Albert & Levine, 1988). A key factor in retaining teachers is providing teachers with opportunities to be involved in goal setting and governance of the school (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). The New Teacher Center (2011a) added the creation of an atmosphere of trust and respect between administrators and faculty as a factor in teacher retention.

### **TELL Kentucky**

To gather data for school improvement, such as working conditions, Kentucky selected the New Teacher Center's Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey. The New Teacher Center (NTC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving student achievement by enhancing teacher effectiveness. One goal of NTC is to capture teachers' perceptions of working conditions to identify environmental factors that prohibit student success. According to the NTC, working conditions are linked to academic success (TELL Kentucky, 2011), which affirmed Sweeney's (1996) research stating that improved teacher perceptions increased student achievement. Freiberg (1998) encouraged the measurement of school climate for school improvement. In a later study, DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) noted that perceptions of working conditions affect student achievement. In a study of North Carolina teachers' working conditions, Applewhite (2009) found that perceptions of working conditions were significantly related to student achievement on AYP. The NTC assures that its resources create a stabilized teaching force by supporting new teachers, reducing faculty turnover

rates, and detecting differences in teacher and administrator perceptions in working conditions (New Teacher Center, 2013a).

The New Teacher Center's TELL Survey was given to all Kentucky educators in the spring of 2011 to collect teachers' perceptions of working conditions (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013a). More than 80% of Kentucky teachers (42,025) responded to the anonymous online survey (TELL Kentucky, 2011). In addition, 174 of 177 school districts participated, with almost all public schools (1,285 of 1,395) meeting the state's threshold goal of a 50% response rate within each school (TELL Kentucky, 2011). In 2013, results increased to almost 90% (New Teacher Center, 2013b). From a statewide population of 42,025 completed surveys, the 2011 TELL Kentucky survey included 1,878 educators in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools (TELL, 2013). From the statewide response, data were aggregated from Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools to distinguish potential challenges and opportunities for the state's lowest performing schools. The number of District 180 educators who completed the TELL Survey in 2013 increased from 1,878 to 2,033 (TELL, 2013).

The initial TELL Kentucky Survey was open to all Kentucky teachers in the spring of 2011 and administered for the second time in the spring of 2013. Teachers were given an anonymous access code to link responses to their respective schools and to ensure each access code was used only once. The survey measured eight constructs of teachers' perceptions of (a) *instructional time*, (b) *facilities and resources*, (c) *community support and involvement*, (d) *managing student conduct*, (e) *teacher leadership*, (f) *school leadership*, (g) *professional development*, and (h) *instructional practices and support* (TELL Kentucky Survey, 2011). The 2011 and 2013 surveys included an

additional *overall* score that questioned teachers' perceptions of their working conditions as a whole. However, the overall question was deemed uninformative for this study, as the other constructs were the most descriptive of teachers' perceptions of working conditions.

According to the New Teacher Center (2013a), time was defined as available time to plan, collaborate, and teach with as little instructional interruption as possible. From the *What Works in Schools* survey of over 2,000 schools, teachers reported inadequate time to meet instructional demands. In addition, teachers believed that protecting instructional time was key to increasing student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). DuFour et al. (2006) added that time for teacher collaboration improved student achievement. Kentucky teachers voiced the same concern for increasing instructional time (New Teacher Center, 2011a). Fullan (2006) concluded that teachers were the greatest factor in student achievement. To maximize learning, effective school leaders improve student success by protecting instructional time. Previously, Hallinger (2005) affirmed that effective school leaders created a culture that protected against loss of time in the classroom. In a later study, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Hopkins, and Harris (2006) endorsed the importance of instructional focus in the classroom by safeguarding teachers from meaningless paperwork, student misbehavior, parent complaints, and frivolous demands from supervisors.

The second construct measured by the TELL Survey was facilities and resources, defined by the NTC as the accessibility of teachers to technology, instructional, office, and communication resources (New Teacher Center, 2013a). In a study of rural Virginia high schools, Hines (1996) reported higher student achievement scores in schools with

better facilities such as fresh paint, heating and cooling units, up-to-date classroom furniture, sufficient locker availability, and lack of graffiti. Later, Black (2001) added that poor teacher workspace was associated with low teacher morale. Insufficient classroom availability, such as using non-instructional areas for classrooms, was considered a hindrance to effective teaching (Schneider, 2003). Hueber (2008) studied teachers' perceptions in North Carolina and found that facilities and resources, in addition to teacher empowerment, had the greatest impact on student achievement.

Questions regarding community support and involvement sought teachers' perceptions of stakeholder influence in the school decision-making process (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Fullan (2006) noted parental engagement as a pivotal factor for increasing student achievement. In earlier research, Fullan (2002) advocated knowledge sharing, such as school information, with stakeholders to expound academic accomplishment. Leithwood et al. (2006) included relationships with families and community through media and technology to boost student success. Fullan (2006) cited positive relationships and high occurrences of parental and community involvement as a means of increasing achievement levels of students. Hargreaves (2003) noted that increasing parent and community involvement was an effective strategy for improving low-performing schools. Building relationships with families and communities through shared decision making was suggested as part of the redesign process for schools (Leithwood et al., 2006).

The fourth construct measured by the TELL Kentucky Survey, managing student conduct, questioned the safety of the school environment as well as school leadership practices to address student misbehavior (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Effective



principals protect instructional time from disruption and assist teachers in developing classroom management procedures. In addition, effective principals support teachers in student discipline concerns (Blase & Kirby, 1992). The National Center for Education Statistics (1997) supports prior research, by suggesting a positive correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and supportive administration, improved student behavior, and safer schools. Later research indicated that student misbehavior affects, not only the student misbehaving, but the rest of the class as well when the teacher stops instruction. Read and Lampron (2012) found that much instructional time is lost when students misbehave, due to the disciplinary process (stopping instruction, office referral, discipline consequence).

Teacher leadership, as explained by NTC, is the opportunity for teachers to make decisions regarding classroom and school procedures (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Marks and Louis (1997) reported that teacher decision making is positively related to increases in student achievement. Marzano et al. (2005) encouraged teacher involvement in decision and policy making to increase collegiality and professionalism, which affirmed Hargreaves' (2003) former recommendation to build teacher capacity beyond the classroom to enhance student achievement. Asnell (2004) advocated a leadership team, including teachers, to establish school goals. Providing teachers with opportunities to build leadership skills motivates performance (Leithwood et al., 2006) and promotes self-actualization (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Bennis and Nanus (2003) encouraged leaders to empower others to make decisions and act upon their ideas to improve the organization. Shared decision making increases trust between leadership and the organization and builds leadership capacity within members of the organization. Marks

and Printy (2003) endorsed collaboration between teachers and school leaders to utilize teachers' expertise for instructional strategies and classroom practices. In addition, principals who distributed decision-making responsibilities were less likely to burn out as quickly, while increasing levels of commitment from teachers.

In addition to questioning teachers about their perceptions of teacher leadership within the school context, the TELL Kentucky Survey gathered data regarding perceptions of school leadership. For this purpose, school leadership was described as trust between school leadership and teachers to provide a caring, supportive workplace that dealt with teacher anxieties and fears (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Burns (1978) described the effective leader as one who looks for, and addresses the needs of their followers. According to Bennis and Nanus (2003), trust, which is hard to gain and easy to lose, is essential in the workplace. Leithwood et al. (2006) insisted that demonstrating care and concern for subordinates was vital to growing organizational capacity. Fullan (2006) warned that effective teachers left low-performing schools because of poor leadership and workplace conditions.

Professional development, as questioned by the TELL Kentucky Survey, included statements regarding opportunities for teachers to continue in their professional pursuit of knowledge (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Smylie and Hart (1999) identified a positive relationship between professional development of teachers and student achievement. Building teachers' professional capacity by ongoing professional opportunities increased teacher motivation as well as school turnaround (Leithwood & Levin, 2005). Marks and Printy (2003) encouraged leaders to allow teachers to share their expertise on student pedagogy. Lowden (2005) stressed the incorporation of new instructional practices from

professional development into classrooms to improve student learning. Allowing teachers to observe highly effective peers is key to improving scholastic performance (Fullan, 2006). Providing opportunities for teachers to develop professionally, question their assumptions, and learn new skills was linked to increased student performance and school achievement (Leithwood et al., 2006). The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2005) found that teacher quality had a greater effect on student achievement than class size, school funding, or facilities.

The final construct measured by the TELL Kentucky Survey was the availability and use of data to influence instructional practices (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Low-performing schools tend to less effectively use data than high-performing schools. Barth (2002) insisted that leaders question every aspect of the organization's culture to determine that which impedes or improves learning. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) and Hallinger (2003) agreed that the use of data significantly increases student achievement, yet it is often overlooked by school leadership.

### **Summary**

Educational reform efforts put pressure on schools, seeking increased student achievement. Pressure to improve, and meeting established criteria, raise stress levels of teachers. Because of these pressures, schools experience a state of flux, which changes existing behaviors, attitudes, and work conditions. Increases in stress, lack of administrative support, and heavy workloads negatively affect teacher job satisfaction and increase teacher attrition (Colley, 2002). Additionally, underperforming schools tend to have poorer perceptions of working conditions and decreased teacher satisfaction (Ma & MacMillan, 1999).

In this study, the data used to initiate change, as suggested by Lewin's theoretical framework, were the results of the 2011 and 2013 Kentucky Accountability Report Cards. Additionally, the TELL Kentucky Survey is an example of team member inquiry proposed by Lewin for a thorough understanding of the organization's ineffective behaviors. By using both data sources, comparisons of organizational behaviors were made between schools that remained static and schools that improved in student achievement. The results of this study provide school administrators with insight into the change process, utilizing perceptions of teachers in low-performing schools as they strive for improved student achievement.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study sought to determine whether a relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of working conditions in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools and changes in student achievement. District 180 (also known as *priority* designation) refers to Kentucky schools that scored at or below the fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Accountability Report Card. For this study, *static* schools were those that did not score above the bottom fifth percentile between 2011 and 2013 after receiving state interventions, thus retaining priority status. *Improving* schools are those that made improvements in academic accountability between 2011 and 2013 after receiving state interventions, thus ranking above the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools. The general research question was: Are teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low-performing schools changing over time?

The methodology is organized according to the following topics: (a) statement of purpose, (b) hypotheses, (c) research design, (d) description of the data source, (e) data collection process, (f) measurement and description of study variables, (g) data analysis techniques, and (h) limitations.

#### **Statement of Purpose**

Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools are required to incorporate major changes in how they conduct schooling and have been provided various measures of support for improvement. This study provides an examination of one school feature that may have an influence on improving student achievement: teacher perceptions of working conditions. The TELL Survey collects data on this aspect of P-12 education and

this study adds to the literature regarding teachers' perceptions of working conditions and how they relate to student achievement. Although previous research exists concerning the role of teachers' perceptions of working conditions on student achievement, job satisfaction, and teacher retention, research is limited on the extent of change in perception between static schools and improving schools. Additionally, little research exists that compares the extent of change in perceptions within schools that are static or schools that experience increases in student achievement. This study was guided by the following research questions and hypotheses:

From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions

- (a) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for static schools?
- (b) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for improving schools?
- (c) between static schools and improving schools on the 2011 TELL survey?
- (d) between static schools and improving schools on the 2013 TELL survey?

### **Hypotheses**

H<sub>1</sub>: Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in static schools will not improve over time.

H<sub>2</sub>: Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in improving schools will improve over time.

H<sub>3</sub>: Working conditions, as perceived by teachers, will be better in improving schools than in static schools.

## **Variables**

Dependent Variable: working conditions measured by the TELL Kentucky Survey including (a) time, (b) facilities and resources, (c) community support and involvement, (d) managing student conduct, (e) teacher leadership, (f) school leadership, (g) professional development, and (h) instructional practices and support

Independent Variable: school's accountability score consisting of an overall score, achievement score, college and career readiness score, gap score, growth score, and graduation rate, as reported by the Kentucky Department of Education

## **Research Design**

For this study, a quantitative analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical method was employed (Slavin, 2007). Quantitative studies test specific hypotheses by collecting numerical data from a sample of participants. The measurement obtained from quantitative research identifies unbiased cause-and-effect relationships that can be projected to a larger population. The ANOVA longitudinal design was selected due to of its ability to measure change over time. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) conducted the TELL Kentucky Survey in 2011 and in 2013 in an effort to gather and analyze teachers' perceptions of working conditions. KDE pledged to use the results of the TELL Kentucky Survey to influence policies and practices that would improve teaching and learning environments for educators and students (TELL Kentucky, 2011). The databases for the 2011 and 2013 TELL Kentucky Surveys were obtained from KDE.

Use of the ANOVA method with the TELL Kentucky Survey enables the measurement of teachers' perceptions as they change over time. The two-way repeated

measure ANOVA determines the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable and detects significant relationships between each independent variable and the dependent variable (Slavin, 2007). In this study, the independent variables were the categories of schools, static or improving; and the dependent variables were teachers' perceptions of working conditions.

Schools included in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools were separated based upon change in student achievement scores and percentiles from 2011 to 2013, as documented by KDE. The study was non-experimental, as the researcher questioned differences in teacher perceptions between improving schools and static schools previously identified as *persistently low-achieving*. For this study, static schools did not experience growth in student achievement between 2011 and 2013 in percentile rankings, thus remaining in the bottom fifth percentile of all Kentucky schools. Conversely, improving schools experienced growth in student achievement between the years 2011 and 2013. Subsequently, improving schools ranked above the lowest fifth percentile of Kentucky schools.

### **Description of the Data Source**

This research utilized the New Teacher Center's Teaching Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey originally given to all Kentucky teachers in Spring 2011 and again in Spring 2013. The TELL Survey was not administered in 2012. For this database, more than 80% of Kentucky teachers (42,025) responded to the anonymous online survey (TELL Kentucky, 2011) during the initial analysis. In addition, 174 school districts (of a possible 177) participated, with almost all public schools (1,285 of 1,395) meeting the state's goal of a 50% response rate within each (TELL Kentucky, 2011). In



2013, more than 43,700 Kentucky educators participated in the second TELL Kentucky Survey, with 90% of the state's schools meeting the 50% response rate threshold (New Teacher Center, 2013b). For the District 180 Priority Schools study, 540 teachers from static schools responded to the TELL Survey in 2011. The number of teachers from static schools increased to 541 in 2013. A total of 1,745 teachers from improving schools were included in the 2011 TELL Survey, while 1,744 teachers from improving schools responded to the 2013 TELL Survey.

The TELL Survey measured eight constructs of teachers' perceptions of (a) time, (b) facilities and resources, (c) community support and involvement, (d) managing student conduct, (e) teacher leadership, (f) school leadership, (g) professional development, and (h) instructional practices and support (TELL Kentucky Survey, 2011). Unless otherwise noted, teachers responded to statements within each construct using a 5-point Likert scale with the descriptors of *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, *strongly agree*, and *don't know*. TELL Kentucky was based on the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (New Teacher Center, 2011b) but was customized by the TELL Kentucky Coalition of Partners to meet the needs of Kentucky's educators (New Teacher Center, 2011b).

### **Validity and Reliability of the Data Source**

The constructs utilized in the Kentucky TELL Survey were based on a similar instrument used in North Carolina to evaluate teachers' perceptions of working conditions (New Teacher Center, 2011b). Acting with the TELL Kentucky Coalition of Partners, KDE altered concepts and items to meet the distinct needs of Kentucky educators. *Validity* refers to the extent to which an instrument measures what it intends

to measure (Field, 2009; Fowler, 2009; Slavin, 2007). Content validity assesses the degree to which an instrument measures all facets of a given concept (Field, 2009; Slavin, 2007). In this study, content validity refers to working conditions related to teaching, leading, and learning (New Teacher Center, 2011b).

The New Teacher Center conducted the first statewide survey of teachers' perceptions of working conditions with North Carolina teachers in 2002. After adding more questions to the original survey, a sample of educators in 2004 ranked the survey's 72 questions in order of importance. Those responses were compared to a factor analysis that resulted in most of the core questions found in the TELL Kentucky (New Teacher Center, 2011b). Questions were added in 2006 to address the needs of novice teachers entering the profession. The 2011 TELL Kentucky Survey included conditions related to managing student conduct, community support and involvement, and instructional practices (New Teacher Center, 2011b).

In order to increase the original TELL Survey's validity, Swanlund (2011) analyzed it with the Rasch Rating Scale model for factor analysis. Several constructs were identified from his analysis to function in more than one construct. Swanlund's analysis suggested high levels of technical validity for the TELL Survey; TELL can be used as a valid instrument to compare individual perceptions and school-wide perceptions, and the use of a Likert scale adds to the criterion validity. Conversely, Swanlund warned of differing meanings of terminology among schools and districts, thus limiting the ability to compare across groups of teachers in different districts and states.

Confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses were conducted to determine whether all items fit into one of the eight constructs (New Teacher Center, 2011b). A

principle component analysis and varimax rotation identified a 10-factor model that accounted for 67% of the instrument's total variance. Although the varimax rotation suggested 10 distinct constructs, the confirmatory factor analysis identified 8 factors accounting for 63% of the variance (New Teacher Center, 2011b). Because the original TELL Survey included eight constructs, TELL Kentucky used the same original eight constructs for reporting in subsequent versions (New Teacher Center, 2011b).

*Reliability* refers to the consistency of measurement across administrations of an instrument (Field, 2009; Fowler, 2009; Slavin, 2007). Internal consistency attempts to determine the consistency of an individual's answers on a given instrument (Slavin, 2007). The more consistent the answers, the higher the internal consistency (Slavin, 2007). A coefficient alpha (measured using Cronbach's alpha) ranges from zero to one, with 0.7 considered *good* (Field, 2009; Slavin, 2007). Analyses were conducted to identify the reliability of the TELL Kentucky Survey. According to the New Teacher Center (2011b), all eight constructs of the instrument reported reliable alpha values above 0.85.

### **Data Collection Process**

During the state's data collection phase, posters, fliers, and personal letters were sent to all Kentucky educators from KDE encouraging participation in the TELL Kentucky Survey. Kentucky Education Association (KEA) representatives held faculty meetings at each school to discuss key points of the TELL Kentucky document and garner support (Holliday, 2013). KEA representatives distributed letters to each educator, with an anonymous code to link individuals to their schools. Teachers were encouraged to exchange letters to increase teacher confidence in anonymity. KEA

representatives met with teachers who were not present during the faculty meetings when letters containing access codes were distributed (Holliday, 2013).

According to the Kentucky Department of Education, nine schools remained in the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools, as reported on the Kentucky School Report Card in 2013. Those schools included: Robert Frost Middle School, Knight Middle School, Myers Middle School, Olmstead Academy North Middle School, Stuart Middle School, Thomas Jefferson Middle School, The Academy at Shawnee High School, Iroquois High School, and Valley High School. All nine are located in a large, urban school district within the state. Additionally, it should be noted that these results do not indicate other factors that could have prohibited these schools from rising out of the bottom fifth percentile. Of these nine schools, six remained in the same percentile after state interventions were put into place (Robert Frost Middle School, The Academy at Shawnee High School, Iroquois High School, Knight Middle School, Olmstead Academy North Middle School, and Thomas Jefferson Middle School). Two static schools made slight improvements in student achievement, but too insignificant to score out of the lowest fifth percentile (Valley High School and Stuart Middle School). One static school, Myers Middle School, decreased in student achievement subsequent to state interventions in 2013. Each school replaced the principal and a majority of the teachers as part of their school improvement plan (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013b).

Thirty-two schools have risen above the bottom fifth percentile in school rankings, thus categorized as improving schools. These include: Caverna High School, Fern Creek High School, Lawrence County High School, Leslie County High School, Metcalfe County High School, Western Middle School, Western High School, East

Carter High School, Christian County High School, Doss High School, Fairdale High School, Greenup County High School, Sheldon Clark High School, Newport High School, Seneca High School, Southern High School, Waggener High School, Dayton High School, Dayton Middle School, Fleming County High School, Franklin-Simpson High School, Hopkins County Central High School, Knox County Central High School, Lee County High School, Lincoln County High School, Livingston County High School, Monticello High School, Perry County Central High School, Pulaski County High School, Trimble County High School, Westport Middle School, and Bryan Station High School.

In order to avoid conveying a perception that the district is not improving student achievement as a whole, it is important to note that some of the improving schools are a part of the previously mentioned school district (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013b). The number of teachers from improving schools was almost three times the number of those representing static schools. The responses for the 2011 and 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey were obtained from the New Teacher Center, the organization administering the questionnaire (New Teacher Center, 2013a).

### **Measurement and Description of Study Variables**

#### **Time**

According to the New Teacher Center (NTC), *time* was defined as available time to plan, collaborate, and teach with as little instructional interruption as possible (New Teacher Center, 2013a). From the *What Works in Schools* survey of over 2,000 schools, teachers reported inadequate time to meet instructional demands. In addition, teachers believed that protecting instructional time was key to increasing student achievement

(Marzano et al., 2005). TELL Kentucky sought answers to three questions concerning time: use of time in school, time devoted to various activities during the school day, and hours spent on school-related activities outside of the school day. Seven statements measured teachers' perceptions of use of time in school. A sample item for measuring the use of time in school was, "Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students." Eleven statements measured time devoted to activities within the school day. A sample item was "Individual planning time," to which teachers responded using a Likert scale in hourly increments. Hours spent on school-related activities outside of the school day was measured by six varying intervals of time. A response was *Less than or equal to 1 hour*. Teachers selected one response ranging from *none* to *more than 10 hours*.

### **Facilities and Resources**

NTC defined *facilities and resources* as the accessibility teachers have to technology, instructional, office, and communication resources (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Insufficient classroom availability, such as using non-instructional areas for classrooms, was considered a hindrance to effective teaching (Schneider, 2003). One question captured teachers' perceptions of school facilities and resources. Nine statements measured the extent to which teachers agreed or disagreed regarding school facilities and resources. A sample item was "Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials."

### **Community Support and Involvement**

One question regarding community support and involvement sought teachers' perceptions of the amount of parental or other stakeholder influence in the school

decision-making process (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Fullan (2006) cited positive relationships and high occurrences of parental and community involvement to increase student achievement levels. Hargreaves (2008) added that increasing parent and community involvement was an effective strategy for improving low-performing schools. One question with eight statements captured teachers' perceptions of community support and involvement. A sample item included, "Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school."

### **Managing Student Conduct**

The fourth construct measured by TELL Kentucky, managing student conduct, questioned teachers about the safety of their school environment, as well as school leadership practices to address student misbehavior (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Read and Lampron (2012) reported that student misbehavior affects, not only the student misbehaving, but also the rest of the class when the teacher stops instruction. Moreover, much instructional time is lost when students misbehave due to the disciplinary process. TELL Kentucky utilized one question to measure the extent to which teachers felt student conduct was managed in their school. Teachers responded to seven statements in this construct. A sample item included, "Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct."

### **Teacher Leadership**

Teacher leadership, as explained by NTC, is the opportunity for teachers to make decisions regarding classroom and school procedures (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Marks and Louis (1997) reported that teacher decision making is positively related to increased student achievement. Marzano et al. (2005) encouraged teacher involvement in

decision and policy making to increase collegiality and professionalism. Three questions measured teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership within their school on overall teacher leadership, teachers' roles in school, and level of teacher influence on decision making. The first question utilized seven statements to measure perceptions of teachers' overall leadership within the school. A sample item included, "Teachers are recognized as educational experts." To measure teachers' perceptions of the role they play within the school, TELL Kentucky listed eight statements. A sample item included, "Selecting instructional materials and resources." The third perception measured within teacher leadership was the level of influence of teachers on decision making. This was captured with one statement: "Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school."

### **School Leadership**

In the Kentucky TELL Survey, *school leadership* was described as trust between school leadership and teachers to provide a caring, supportive workplace that dealt with teacher anxieties and fears (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Burns (1978) described the effective leader as one who looks for and addressed the needs of followers. Fullan (2006) warned that effective teachers left low-performing schools because of poor leadership and workplace conditions. Three questions captured teachers' perceptions of school leadership on overall school leadership, addressing teacher concerns, and the school council. A sample statement was, "The faculty and leadership have a shared vision." Teachers responded to nine constructs of school leadership and identified to what degree they perceived the school leadership to function. A sample item was, "Leadership



issues.” A sample item related to perceptions of the school council was, “Teachers on the school council are representative of the faculty (i.e., experience, subject/grade, etc.)”

### **Professional Development**

Professional development, as explored by the TELL Survey, included statements regarding opportunities for teachers to continue in their professional pursuit of knowledge (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Smylie and Hart (1999) identified a positive relationship between professional development of teachers and student achievement. TELL Kentucky measured teachers’ perceptions of professional development using three questions on overall professional development, areas of professional need, and professional development received. Thirteen statements captured teachers’ overall perceptions of professional development. A sample item was, “Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school.” To measure professional development needs, teachers responded to 11 categories by answering *yes* or *no*. A sample item was, “Special education (students with disabilities).” To gauge the area of professional development received within the past two years, teachers responded to 11 categories with *yes* or *no*. A sample item was, “Special education (students with disabilities).”

### **Instructional Practices and Support**

The perception of availability and use of data to influence instructional practices was measured by the TELL Kentucky Survey (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Low-performing schools tend to use data less effectively than high-performing schools (Barth, 2002). Hallinger (2003) agreed that the use of data significantly increases student achievement, yet school leadership is often overlooked by school leadership. TELL

Kentucky used one question to assess teachers' perceptions of instructional practices and support within their school. Teachers responded to eight statements. A sample item was, "State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices."

### **Overall**

TELL Kentucky assessed the general perspectives of teachers by asking questions related to immediate professional plans, conditions supporting teacher retention, conditions promoting student learning, and the overall working conditions of the school. All teachers responded to the one statement, "Continue teaching in my current school," with responses ranging from remaining at their current school to leaving education entirely. The TELL Kentucky assessed teachers' perceptions of items that affect their willingness to continue teaching at their current school with eight constructs. The eight responses from which teachers selected were all constructs of the TELL Kentucky Survey (time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support). Teachers were limited to selecting the most influencing aspect. A sample included, "Time during the work day." To evaluate teachers' perceptions of the most important construct in promoting student learning, respondents selected from the same eight constructs of the TELL Kentucky Survey but were limited to one. A sample was, "Time during the work day."

### **New Teacher Support**

New Teacher Center (2013a) reported that novice teachers need distinctive supports other than those for experienced teachers, such as induction programs, mentorships, and positive relationships with administrators. Applewhite (2009) stressed

that new teachers were unclear about school policies, procedures, and processes. Novice teachers need support with instruction, parental relationships, and school expectations. For teachers within their first three years of the profession, TELL Kentucky used seven statements to gauge new teachers' perspectives on types of supports received, time spent with a mentor, mentor's influence on classroom practices, location of mentor, overall support received, impact of support on student learning, and influence of supports to continue teaching within their current school. To measure types of supports received by new teachers, TELL Kentucky asked novice teachers about the presence of 11 constructs; teachers responded using either *yes* or *no*. A sample was, "Formally assigned mentor." To determine the average amount of time spent with one's mentor to complete various activities, teachers responded to nine categories using a 6-point Likert scale answering *never*, *less than once per month*, *once per month*, *several times per month*, *once per week*, or *almost daily*. A sample was, "Developing lesson plans."

To measure the amount of support received from a mentor, new teachers addressed 13 instructional practices with *not at all*, *hardly at all*, *some*, *quite a bit*, or *a great deal*. A sample was, "Instructional strategies." Teachers were asked about the professional similarities of a mentor and given three options: same building, same content area, and same grade level, to which teachers responded *yes* or *no*. One statement gauged new teachers' perceptions of the quality of support received as a new teacher. New teachers also responded to items related to the impact of new teacher support within their school as it influenced student learning and the influence of supports they received in their decision to continue teaching at their current school.

### **Data Analysis Techniques for the Current Study**

An ANOVA statistical method was used in this study to explore the impact of change category (static or improving) on teachers' perceptions of working conditions, as measured by the TELL Kentucky Survey. District 180 Priority Schools were divided into two groups according to student accountability scores, as reported by the Kentucky Accountability Report Card, either static or improving, and a comparison was made on TELL responses. The ANOVA technique was selected due to its ability to measure two or more time points (2011 TELL Kentucky Survey and 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey) when the subjects (District 180 Priority Schools) fall into two or more categories (static or improving). The overarching objective of this statistical analysis was to determine whether the result of the interaction between static and improving schools had an effect on teachers' perceptions of working conditions (Field, 2009; Slavin, 2007).

The results of the study are presented in Chapter IV. A discussion of these results and recommendations for future research and practice are presented in Chapter V. The goal of this study was to determine whether a statistically significant difference exists between teachers' perceptions of working conditions (i.e., instructional time, availability of resources, community support and involvement, student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support) and status or classification by the state (i.e., static or improving). The state's intention was that, after receiving state interventions, these schools would move out of the lowest fifth percentile; some did and some did not. This study sought to determine whether teacher perceptions about working conditions played a part in, or are a result of, that difference.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether change category (static or improving) affects teachers' perceptions of working conditions. The study included persistently low-achieving schools in Kentucky, known as District 180 Schools, that scored in the bottom fifth percentile on the Kentucky School Report Card from 2009 until 2013. The study used results from the 2011 and 2013 Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Kentucky Surveys to compare teachers' perceptions of working conditions between District 180 Schools that made improvements in student achievement (*improving* schools) and District 180 Schools that did not make improvements (*static* schools) in student achievement.

The study examined the following general research question: "Are teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low-performing schools changing over time?" More specifically, this study was guided by the following research questions:

From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions

- (a) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for static schools?
- (b) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for improving schools?
- (c) between static schools and improving schools on the 2011 TELL survey?
- (d) between static schools and improving schools on the 2013 TELL survey?

#### Hypotheses

H<sub>1</sub>: Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in static schools will not improve over time.

H<sub>2</sub>: Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in improving schools will improve over time.

H<sub>3</sub>: Working conditions, as perceived by teachers, will be better in improving schools than in static schools.

This chapter reports the results obtained from an analysis of the data from the TELL Kentucky Survey. The study sought to recognize differences in teachers' perceptions in schools identified as *persistently low-achieving* in those that are static (not improving) and those that are improving. For this study, static schools are those that did not rise above the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools based upon the Kentucky School Report Card, thus retaining priority status. Improving schools are those that made improvements in academic accountability between 2011 and 2013 and moved out of the lowest fifth percentile in the state. Schools in this study were categorized by percentile ranks, rather than changes in NxGL scores. District 180 Priority Schools, as defined by KRS 160.346, are those that rank in the bottom fifth percentile of all Kentucky schools regardless of NxGL scores. This designation of priority school status based upon percentile scores has been a concern of Kentucky educators, as schools can increase in achievement scores, college and career readiness scores, growth scores, gap scores, and graduation rates, yet they are still considered to be a low-achieving school.

In the current analysis, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized for the Research Questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. The longitudinal design was selected to measure the significance, if any, of change over time of teachers' perceptions of working conditions. The one-way ANOVA identified the significance, if any, between results of the 2011 TELL Survey and the 2013 TELL Survey for each construct for static schools

and improving schools. Additionally, the ANOVA compared static and improving schools in 2011, and again in 2013, to examine the influence of the independent variables on teachers' perceptions of working conditions, as reported from the TELL Surveys given in 2011 and 2013.

A scale score was created by adding the number of possible responses and multiplying by five for each construct included on the TELL Survey. Scores ranged from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest). An average score, standard deviation, *F* ratios, and *p* values for each construct were calculated to determine whether a statistically significant change occurred.

### **Research Question 1**

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for static schools?*

For all constructs, an increase in mean scores from 2011 to 2013 indicates improved teachers' perceptions of that construct. The first construct of the TELL Survey measured teachers' perceptions of *time*. According to the New Teacher Center (NTC), *time* was defined as available time to plan, collaborate, and teach with as little instructional interruption as possible (New Teacher Center, 2013a). TELL Kentucky sought answers to three questions concerning the following aspects of *time*: use of time in school, time devoted to various activities during the school day, and hours spent on school-related activities outside of the school day. Seven statements measured teachers' perceptions of use of *time* in school. A one-way within subject ANOVA was conducted to compare the change in teachers' perceptions of working conditions from the 2011

TELL Survey to the 2013 TELL Survey for construct one, time. Results indicated no statistically significant difference in teacher perceptions of *time* in static schools between 2011 and 2013 at the  $\alpha < .05$  level for the conditions,  $F(1, 1068) = 0.00, p = .96$ .

Descriptive statistics indicated that the change category was unrelated to teachers' perceptions of time in static schools between the 2011 administration of the TELL Survey ( $M = 2.64, SD = 0.63$ ) and the 2013 administration ( $M = 2.64, SD = 0.62$ ).

The second construct measured by the TELL Survey was *facilities and resources*. The New Teacher Center defined *facilities and resources* as the accessibility of teachers to technology, instructional, office, and communication resources (New Teacher Center, 2013a). One question captured teachers' perceptions of school facilities and resources. Nine statements measured the extent to which teachers agreed or disagreed regarding school *facilities and resources*. Teachers' perceptions of *facilities and resources* revealed no statistically significant change over time at the  $\alpha < .05$  level,  $F(1, 1067) = 0.57, p = .45$ . Descriptive and inferential statistics indicated teachers' perceptions of facilities and resources in static schools did not change significantly between 2011 ( $M = 3.04, SD = 0.53$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 3.07, SD = 0.53$ ).

The third construct measured by the TELL Survey was *community support and involvement*. This construct sought teachers' perceptions of the amount of parental or other stakeholder influence in the school decision-making process (New Teacher Center, 2013a). One question with eight statements captured teachers' perceptions of *community support and involvement*. The one-way ANOVA indicated no significant change in teachers' perceptions of *community support and involvement* at the  $\alpha < .05$  level between the 2011 TELL Survey and the 2013 TELL Survey,  $F(1, 1068) = 1.09, p = .30$ . The



means and standard deviations of the results revealed no significant difference between the results from 2011 ( $M = 2.70, SD = 0.56$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 2.66, SD = 0.59$ ) for *community support and involvement* for static schools.

*Managing student conduct* was the fourth construct measured by the TELL Survey. Teachers were questioned about the safety of their school environment as well as school leadership practices to address student misbehavior (New Teacher Center, 2013). One question measured the extent to which teachers felt student conduct was managed in their school. Teachers responded to seven statements in this construct. Results indicated no significant difference in change over time in teachers' perceptions of *managing student conduct* at the  $\alpha < .05$  level,  $F(1, 1075) = 0.02, p = 0.90$ . The results suggested no significant change in teachers' perceptions in static schools of *managing student conduct* between 2011 ( $M = 2.72, SD = 0.56$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 2.73, SD = 0.56$ ).

The fifth construct was *teacher leadership* which, as explained by NTC, is the opportunity for teachers to make decisions regarding classroom and school procedures (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Three questions measured teachers' perceptions of *teacher leadership* within their school and are addressed in the following areas: overall teacher leadership, teachers' roles in school, and level of teacher influence on decision making. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions of *teacher leadership* in static schools over time from the 2011 responses ( $M = 3.00, SD = 0.52$ ) to 2013 ( $M = 2.99, SD = 0.60$ ) at the  $\alpha < .05$  level. Therefore, no significant change effect was found on teachers' perceptions of *teacher leadership* in static schools from 2011 to 2013,  $F(1, 1069) = 0.05, p = .83$ .

The Kentucky TELL Survey described *school leadership* as trust between school leadership and teachers to provide a caring, supportive workplace that dealt with teacher anxieties and fears (New Teacher Center, 2013a). Three questions or areas of focus captured teachers' perceptions of school leadership on overall school leadership, addressing teacher concerns, and the school council. No significant change was noted in teachers' perceptions of *school leadership* in static schools at the  $\alpha < .05$  level from 2011 to 2013. The construct of *school leadership* yielded no statistically significant differences over time in schools remaining in the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools,  $F(1, 1079) = 0.71, p = .40$ . The results indicated that teachers' perceptions of *school leadership* in static schools did not improve between 2011 ( $M = 3.05, SD = 0.55$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 3.02, SD = 0.60$ ).

*Professional development*, as explored by the TELL Survey, included statements regarding opportunities for teachers to continue in their professional pursuit of knowledge (New Teacher Center, 2013a). TELL Kentucky measured teachers' perceptions of *professional development* using three areas: overall professional development, areas of professional need, and professional development received. The construct of *professional development* show no statistically significant difference in static schools over time at the  $\alpha < .05$  significance level. Significant changes were not indicated between 2011 ( $M = 3.08, SD = 0.47$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 3.05, SD = 0.52$ ) for the conditions,  $F(1, 1078) = .66, p = .42$ .

The seventh and last construct measured by the TELL Survey was teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support*. This construct measured the perception of availability and use of data to influence instructional practices (New

Teacher Center, 2013a). TELL Kentucky utilized one question to assess teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support* within their school. Teachers responded to eight statements. Results of the one-way ANOVA indicated a significant change in teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support* in static schools from the 2011 TELL Survey ( $M = 2.99, SD = 0.53$ ) to the 2013 TELL Survey ( $M = 3.07, SD = 0.51$ ). A statistically significant improvement was found in teachers' responses regarding *instructional practices and supports* at the levels,  $F(1, 1079) = 5.72, p = .02$ .

The means, standard deviations,  $F$  ratios, and  $p$  values of the TELL Survey for each construct in static schools in 2011 and 2013 are displayed in Table 2. The results support Hypothesis 1: Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in static schools did not improve over time for the constructs of time, community support and involvement, teacher leadership, school leadership, or professional development. Rather, those constructs noted decreases in teachers' perceptions. However, teachers' perceptions of facilities and resources, managing student conduct, and instructional practices and supports improved from 2011 to 2013.

Table 2

*Group Means of Static Schools from 2011 and 2013*

Construct	2011 TELL			2013 TELL			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Time	540	2.64	0.63	529	2.64	0.62	0.00	.96
Facilities and Resources	538	3.04	0.53	530	3.07	0.53	0.57	.45
Community Support and Involvement	538	2.70	0.56	532	2.66	0.59	1.09	.30
Managing Student Conduct	536	2.72	0.56	540	2.73	0.56	0.02	.90
Teacher Leadership	534	3.00	0.52	536	2.99	0.60	0.05	.83
School Leadership	539	3.05	0.55	541	3.02	0.60	0.71	.40
Professional Development	538	3.08	0.47	541	3.05	0.52	0.66	.42
Instructional Practices and Support	539	3.00	0.53	541	3.07	0.51	5.72	.02*

*Note.* \* $p < 0.05$

## Research Question 2

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for improving schools?*

For construct one, the TELL Survey measured the differences in teachers' perceptions in improving schools of effective use of *time*. The results of the one-way ANOVA suggested a statistically significant change in perceptions of *time* at the  $\alpha < .05$  level. A significant increase was found in teachers' perceptions in improving schools of *time* for the conditions,  $F(1, 3488) = 87.07, p = .0001$ . Teachers' responses indicated that they felt that instructional time was protected more in 2013 than in 2011, as well as having more *effective* instructional time in 2013. Results indicated a statistically significant change in perceptions between 2011 ( $M = 2.57, SD = 0.64$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 2.77, SD = 0.61$ ).

The second construct measured by the TELL Survey was teachers' perceptions of *facilities and resources*. According to responses, a significant change was found in perceptions of *facilities and resources* over time in improving schools. Results are found in Table 3. Responses suggested statistically significant improvements from 2011 ( $M = 2.99, SD = 0.57$ ) to 2013 ( $M = 3.03, SD = 0.55$ ) for improving schools. Teachers in improving schools had significantly higher perceptions of facilities and resources in 2013 compared with 2011.

Statistically significant changes were evident for construct three, *community support and involvement*. The results suggested teachers' perceptions in improving schools on this construct increased from 2011 ( $M = 2.66, SD = 0.58$ ) to 2013 ( $M = 2.90,$

$SD = 0.63$ ). The one-way ANOVA indicated statistically significant changes in perceptions in *community support and involvement* for teachers in schools rising out of the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools at the  $\alpha < 0.05$  level for the conditions,  $F(1, 3475) = 137.95, p = .0001$ .

The fourth construct measured by the TELL Survey was *managing student conduct*. Teachers' perceptions of *managing student conduct* yielded statistically significant improvement between 2011 ( $M = 2.66, SD = 0.65$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 2.84, SD = 0.66$ ) at the  $\alpha < 0.05$  level. The results of the ANOVA indicated statistically significant changes in perceptions of *managing student conduct* in schools rising out the bottom fifth percentile in the state,  $F(1, 3457) = 69.97, p = .0001$ .

Perceptions of the fifth construct, *teacher leadership*, improved significantly from 2011 ( $M = 2.76, SD = 0.71$ ) to 2013 ( $M = 3.03, SD = 0.70$ ). Results indicated that teachers' perceptions of *teacher leadership* in improving schools changed at the  $\alpha < .05$  level for the conditions,  $F(1, 3467) = 126.31, p = .0001$ .

Perceptions of *school leadership* in improving schools increased significantly between 2011 and 2013. Responses indicated a statistically significant difference from 2011 ( $M = 2.85, SD = 0.72$ ) to 2013 ( $M = 3.14, SD = 0.62$ ) at the  $\alpha < .05$  level.

Perceptions of *school leadership* in schools rising above the bottom fifth percentile indicated a significant change in teachers' perceptions of *school leadership* at the conditions,  $F(1, 3486) = 156.80, p = .0001$ .

Teachers' perceptions of *professional development* changed significantly in improving schools from 2011 ( $M = 2.77, SD = 0.69$ ) to 2013 ( $M = 2.99, SD = 0.62$ ). The results of the one-way ANOVA indicated a significant increase in teachers' perceptions

of *professional development* in improving schools at the  $\alpha < 0.05$  level for the conditions,  $F(1, 3480) = 98.29, p = .0001$ .

The last construct, *instructional practices and supports*, was measured by the TELL Survey. Results indicated teachers' perceptions in improving schools on *instructional practices and supports* rose significantly between 2011 ( $M = 2.88, SD = 0.65$ ) and 2013 ( $M = 3.18, SD = 0.53$ ). Teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support* in improving schools significantly increased at the  $\alpha < .05$  level. Changes in teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support* increased significantly for the conditions,  $F(1, 3468) = 213.74, p = .0001$ . Overall, teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support* changed significantly in improving schools.

As these data suggest, every construct experienced statistically significant differences in improving schools over the two measures. The means, standard deviations,  $F$  ratios, and  $p$  values of the TELL Survey for each construct in improving schools for 2011 and 2013 are displayed in Table 3. The results found from improving schools support Hypothesis 2: Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in improving schools will improve over time.

Table 3

*Group Means of Improving Schools from 2011 and 2013*

Construct	<i>N</i>	2011 TELL Survey		<i>N</i>	2013 TELL Survey		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Time	1745	2.57	0.64	1744	2.77	0.61	87.07	< .0001*
Facilities and Resources	1745	2.99	0.57	1742	3.03	0.55	5.41	.02*
Community Support and Involvement	1740	2.66	0.58	1736	2.90	0.63	137.95	< .0001*
Managing Student Conduct	1720	2.66	0.65	1738	2.84	0.66	69.97	< .0001*
Teacher Leadership	1735	2.76	0.71	1733	3.03	0.70	126.31	< .0001*
School Leadership	1743	2.85	0.72	1744	3.14	0.62	156.80	< .0001*
Professional Development	1739	2.77	0.69	1742	2.99	0.62	98.29	< .0001*
Instructional Practices and Support	1738	2.88	0.65	1731	3.18	0.53	213.74	< .0001*

Note. \* $p < .05$



### Research Question 3

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions between static schools and improving schools on the 2011 TELL survey?*

An ANOVA method was utilized to measure the change in time and group interaction between static and improving schools on the 2011 TELL Survey. Significance was determined at the 95% ( $p < .05$ ) confidence interval. The first construct measured by the 2011 TELL Survey was *time*. Results suggested a statistically significant difference between teachers' perceptions in static and improving schools,  $F(1, 2283) = 5.73, p < .01$ . Teachers' perceptions in improving schools were significantly higher over time than in static schools. Additionally, a statistically significant difference between static and improving schools,  $F(1, 2281) = 3.91, p < .05$ , was reported for teachers' perceptions of *facilities and resources*. Hence, teachers in improving schools perceived the construct of *facilities and resources* higher than teachers in static schools. No statistically significant difference was found between static and improving schools,  $F(1, 2276) = 1.64, p < .20$ , for teachers' perceptions of *community support and involvement*.

Results indicated a statistically significant difference between teachers' perceptions in static schools and improving schools,  $F(1, 2254) = 4.03, p < .04$ , for TELL's fourth construct, *managing student conduct*. Teachers' perceptions in improving schools were significantly higher over time for *managing student conduct* than in static schools. In addition, a statistically significant difference was found for *teacher leadership*,  $F(1, 2276) = 50.12, p < .0001$ . Moreover, differences in teachers'

perceptions of *school leadership* also were statistically significant,  $F(1, 2280) = 34.20, p < .0001$ .

Statistically significant differences were evident for the final two constructs of the 2011 TELL Survey, *professional development* and *instructional practices and support*. Results revealed that static schools and improving schools showed a statistically significant difference in perceptions of *professional development*,  $F(1, 2275) = 91.67, p < .0001$ , in 2011. A statistically significant difference also existed for *instructional practices and support*,  $F(1, 2275) = 13.38, p < .0003$ .

Overall, static schools reported higher perceptions of working conditions than improving schools for all constructs on the 2011 TELL Survey, suggesting that improving schools began with more negative teacher perceptions in 2011. Moreover, statistically significant differences were found between the responses from static schools and improving schools on each construct except *community support and involvement*. The largest differences in perceptions between static schools and improving schools were the constructs of *professional development*, *teacher leadership*, and *school leadership* respectively. Results for Means and Standard Deviations are displayed in Table 4, as are degrees of frequency,  $F$  ratios, and  $p$  values. Comparisons between results for static schools and improving schools from the 2011 TELL Survey are displayed in Figure 1.

Table 4

*Differences in Static and Improving Schools on the 2011 TELL Survey*

Construct	Static			Improving			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Time	540	2.64	0.63	1745	2.57	0.64	5.73	.02*
Facilities and Resources	538	3.04	0.53	1745	2.99	0.57	3.91	.05*
Community Support and Involvement	538	2.70	0.56	1740	2.66	0.58	1.64	.20
Managing Student Conduct	536	2.72	0.56	1720	2.66	0.65	4.03	.04*
Teacher Leadership	534	3.00	0.52	1735	2.76	0.71	50.12	< .0001*
School Leadership	539	3.05	0.55	1743	2.85	0.72	34.20	< .0001*
Professional Development	538	3.08	0.47	1739	2.77	0.69	91.67	< .0001*
Instructional Practices and Support	539	2.99	0.53	1738	2.88	0.65	13.38	.0003*

*Note.* \* $p < .05$

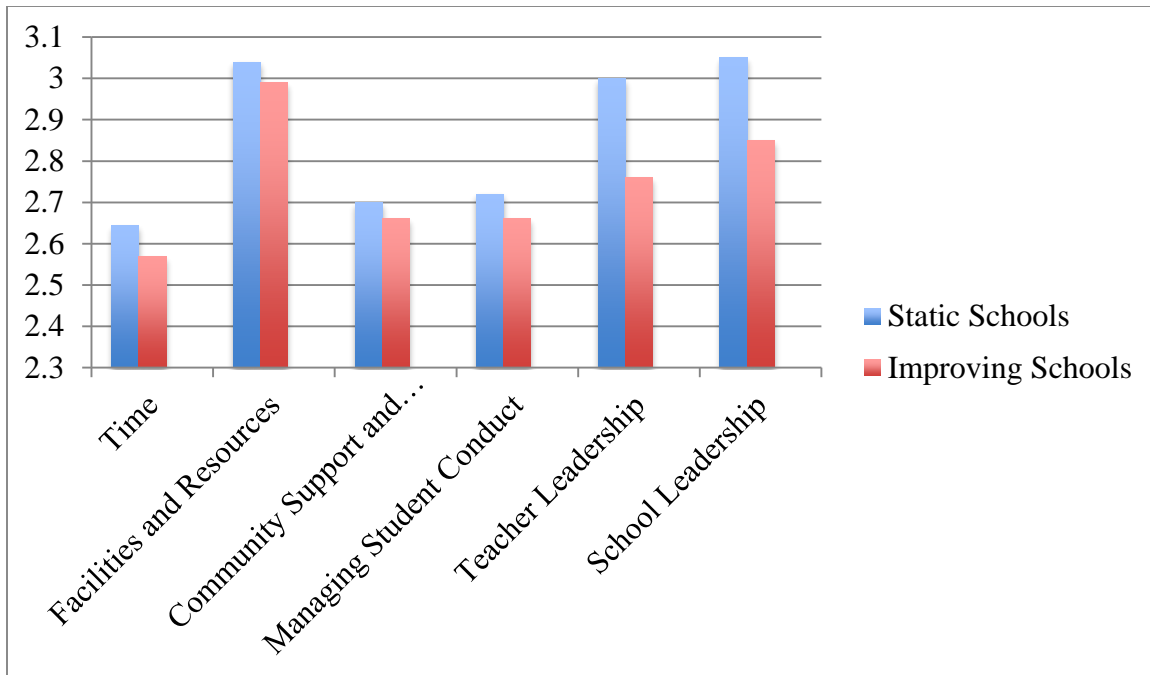


Figure 1. Comparisons between Static and Improving Schools on 2011 TELL Survey.

#### Research Question 4

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions between static schools and improving schools on the 2013 TELL survey?*

An ANOVA was utilized to measure the change in time and group interaction between static and improving schools on the 2013 TELL Survey. Mean scores, standard deviations, number of responses, degrees of frequency,  $F$  ratios, and  $p$  values are displayed in Table 5. Significance was determined at the 95% ( $p < .05$ ) confidence interval.

A statistically significant difference was found on the 2013 TELL Survey between static and improving schools in teachers' perceptions of *time*,  $F(1, 2271) = 16.68, p < .0001$ . Teachers in improving schools had significantly more positive perceptions of time in 2013 than those in static schools. No statistically significant difference was found between teachers in static and improving schools in the area of *facilities and resources*,  $F(1, 2270) = 1.66, p < .20$ . However, a statistically significant difference was indicated on the third construct of *community support and involvement*,  $F(1, 2266) = 61.80, p < .0001$ . Teachers in improving schools rated *community support and involvement* higher than those in static schools. In addition, a significant difference was found in teachers' perceptions of *managing student conduct*,  $F(1, 2276) = 14.35, p < .0002$ . Again, the results indicate that teachers' perceptions of *managing student conduct* in improving schools is higher than in static schools.

Unlike 2011, no statistically significant difference was not found in 2013 between static and improving schools in *teacher leadership*,  $F(1, 2267) = 1.55, p < .21$ .

However, of importance is the result that teachers' perceptions in improving schools made gains in *teacher leadership* as results indicate an increase from  $M = 2.76$  in 2011 to  $M = 3.03$  in 2013. Moreover, static schools experienced decreases in teachers' perceptions of *teacher leadership* from  $M = 3.00$  in 2011 to  $M = 2.99$  in 2013. However, a statistically significant difference was noted between static and improving schools in the construct of *school leadership*,  $F(1, 2283) = 15.00, p < .0001$ .

Similar to the 2011 data, statistically significant differences between teachers' perceptions in static schools and improving schools was indicated on the TELL constructs of *professional development* and *instructional practices and support*. It is important to recognize that mean scores for *professional development* and *instructional practices and support* in static schools were higher in 2011 than those for improving schools. Therefore, the significance was reversed on this construct between 2011 and 2013. In 2013, a significant difference was found between static and improving schools,  $F(1, 2281) = 4.26, p < .04$ , but the significance is reversed. In addition, a statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions in static and improving schools in *instructional practices and support* was reported by the 2013 TELL,  $F(1, 2281) = 16.83, p < .0001$ . Teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support* in improving schools are higher than those in static schools.

While static schools had higher mean scores for all TELL constructs in 2011, static schools had only two constructs with higher mean scores were found in 2013. Those constructs were *facilities and resources* and *professional development*. Although the difference between the perception of teachers in static schools and improving schools for the construct of *professional development* was statistically significant, the difference

in perception for *facilities and resources* was not. However, teachers in improving schools had higher mean scores in 2013 for the constructs of *time, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, and instructional practices and support*. Each of these differences, except *teacher leadership*, was statistically significant. The increases for mean scores from improving schools is noteworthy due to the more negative perceptions reported by improving schools in 2011. Descriptive and inferential statistics between static and improving schools are displayed in Table 5, while Table 6 shows the differences (increases or decreases) between mean scores for static schools and improving schools between 2011 and 2013. Comparisons between static schools and improving schools for the 2013 TELL Survey are displayed in Figure 2.

Table 5

*Differences in Static and Improving Schools on the 2013 TELL Survey*

Construct	Static			Improving			<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Time	529	2.64	0.62	1744	2.77	0.61	16.68	< .0001*
Facilities and Resources	530	3.07	0.53	1742	3.03	0.55	1.66	.20
Community Support and Involvement	532	2.66	0.59	1736	2.90	0.63	61.80	< .0001*
Managing Student Conduct	540	2.73	0.56	1738	2.84	0.66	14.35	.0002*
Teacher Leadership	536	2.99	0.60	1733	3.03	0.70	1.55	.21
School Leadership	541	3.02	0.60	1744	3.14	0.62	15.00	.0001*
Professional Development	541	3.05	0.52	1742	2.99	0.62	4.26	.04*
Instructional Practices and Support	541	3.07	0.51	1731	3.18	0.53	16.83	< .0001*

*Note.* \* $p < .05$



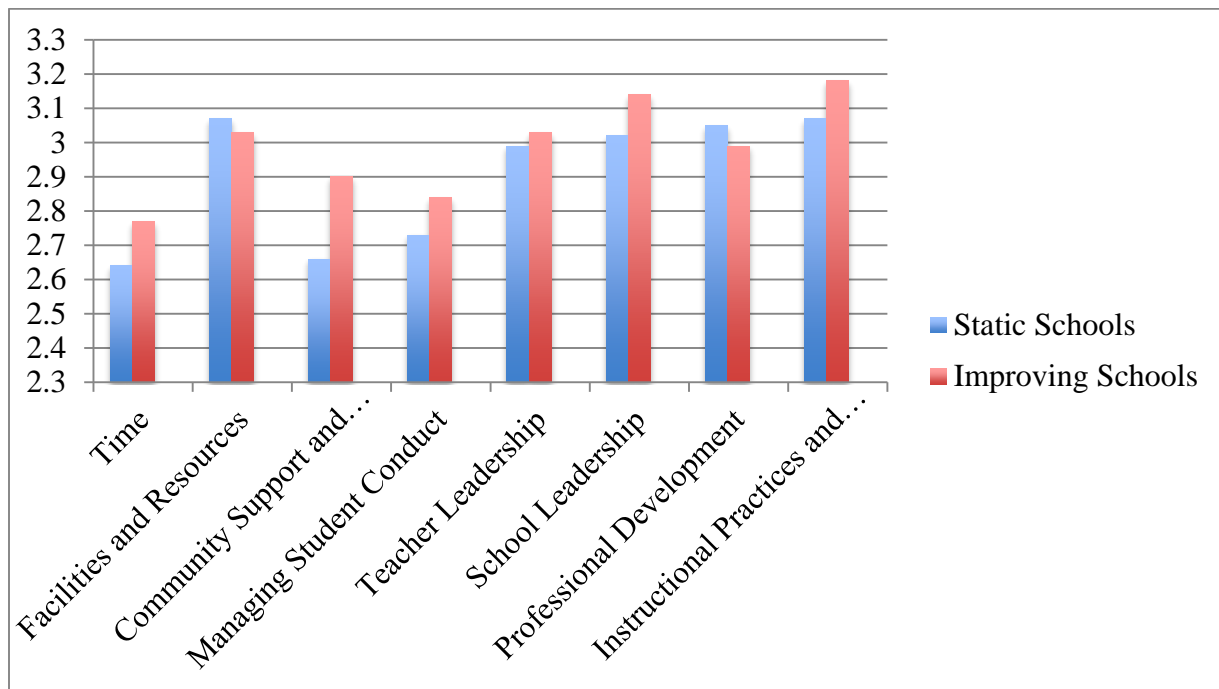


Figure 2. Comparisons between Static and Improving Schools on 2013 TELL Survey.

Table 6.  
*Differences between 2011 TELL Survey and 2013 TELL Survey for Static and Improving Schools*

	Static Schools			Improving Schools		
	2011	2013	Difference	2011	2013	Difference
Time	2.64	2.64	0.00	2.57	2.77	+ .20
Facilities and Resources	3.04	3.07	+ .03	2.99	3.03	+ .04
Community Support and Involvement	2.70	2.66	- .04	2.66	2.90	+ .24
Managing Student Conduct	2.72	2.73	+ .01	2.66	2.84	+ .18
Teacher Leadership	3.00	2.99	- .01	2.76	3.03	+ .27
School Leadership	3.05	3.02	- .03	2.85	3.14	+ .29
Professional Development	3.08	3.05	+ .03	2.77	2.99	+ .22
Instructional Practices and Support	3.00	3.07	+ .07	2.88	3.18	+ .30

*Note. Teachers taking the 2011 TELL Survey may not be the same teachers taking the 2013 TELL Survey.*

## Summary

The results of this study support the first hypothesis that teachers' perceptions of working conditions in static schools will not improve over time. Four of the constructs measured by the TELL Survey in 2011 and again in 2013 reported decreases in teachers' perceptions in static schools despite state interventions. Those constructs were *community support and involvement*, *teacher leadership*, *school leadership*, and *professional development*. However, three constructs indicated improvements in teachers' perceptions of working conditions. Improvements in teachers' perceptions in static schools were reported for *facilities and resources*, *managing student conduct*, and *instructional practices and support*. However, only one of the constructs receiving improved ratings in 2013 that was statistically significant was *instructional practices and support*. Teachers' perceptions of the working conditions of *time* in static schools remained the same between 2011 and 2013.

The second hypothesis, teachers' perceptions of working conditions in improving schools will improve over time, was supported by the results of this study. Every construct measured by the TELL Survey indicated improvements in teachers' perceptions in improving schools in the areas of *time*, *facilities and resources*; *community support and involvement*; *managing student conduct*; *teacher leadership*, *school leadership*, *professional development*, and *instructional practices and support*. Scores for each construct showed statistically significant increases between 2011 and 2013 after state interventions were implemented for low academic performance.

The third hypothesis predicted that teachers' perceptions of working conditions would be better in improving schools than in static schools. With initial administration of

the TELL Survey in 2011, static schools reported higher ratings than improving schools for each construct. In addition, the difference in responses on the 2011 TELL Survey were all statistically different except for the construct of *community support and involvement*. However, the results of this study partially support the final hypothesis that improving schools would have higher perceptions of working conditions. Static schools reported higher scores for the working conditions of *instructional time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support*. Additionally, the perceptions in static schools for each construct were significantly higher than the improving schools' scores in all areas except *community support and involvement*.

The 2013 TELL Survey identified shifts in perceptions, suggesting that improving schools experienced improvements in teachers' views of working conditions. Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in improving schools in 2013 were higher than perceptions in static schools in all constructs except *facilities and resources* and *professional development*. Although static schools' perceptions of *facilities and resources* were higher than that of improving schools, the difference was not significant. However, the better perception of *professional development* in static schools was significantly higher than that of improving schools. Additionally, teachers' perceptions in improving schools were significantly higher than those in static schools in *instructional time, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, school leadership, and instructional practices and support*. The only construct rated

higher by teachers in improving schools, but not significantly higher than in static schools, was *teacher leadership*.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to identify trends in teachers' perceptions of working conditions for District 180 Priority Schools in Kentucky. District 180 includes schools considered consistently low-achieving, according to the Kentucky School Report Card from 2009 until 2013. Specifically, this study explored changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions, as reported by the 2011 and 2013 Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Surveys. Results were analyzed using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine the influence of student achievement on teachers' perceptions of working conditions in the areas of (a) *instructional time*, (b) *availability of facilities and resources*, (c) *community support and involvement*, (d) *student conduct*, (e) *teacher leadership*, (f) *school leadership*, (g) *professional development*, and (h) *instructional practices and support*. The goal of this research was to explore whether statistically significant differences exist between the results of the 2011 and 2013 TELL Surveys in static (non-improving) and improving schools.

Chapter V reviews the research questions for the current study and provides an interpretation of the findings described in Chapter IV. In addition, Chapter V also will discuss the results in light of existing literature reviewed in Chapter II, reveal some important implications of the findings, and provide conclusions based on the research. Last, the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research are provided. The general research question for the study was the following: Are teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low performing schools changing over time? More specifically, this study was guided by the following specific research questions:

From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions

- (a) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for static schools?
- (b) on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for improving schools?
- (c) between static schools and improving schools on the 2011 TELL survey?
- (d) between static schools and improving schools on the 2013 TELL survey?

According to the Kentucky Department of Education, there are nine schools that remained in the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools, as reported on the Kentucky School Report Card. Moreover, each replaced the principal and a majority of the teachers as part of the school improvement plan. Thirty-two schools that have risen above the bottom fifth percentile in school rankings, thus categorized as *improving* schools.

This study is important to the research of school reform, student achievement, and teachers' perceptions of working conditions. Due to historical and current educational reforms, principals are expected to raise student achievement, no matter the circumstances. Because of the additional stress to improve student achievement, expectations and requirements of teachers are in a constant state of change, thus affecting their perceptions of workplace conditions. Workplace perceptions are positively related to teacher satisfaction (Ma & MacMillan, 1999), which correlates to the decision of whether to remain in the profession (Bogler, 2001). Experienced teachers, knowledgeable in pedagogy and curriculum, are needed for continuous academic improvement.

The relationship between student achievement and teachers' perceptions of working conditions is relevant to the improvement of any school. The results of this

study indicate that, as student achievement improves, teachers' perceptions of working conditions also improve. Therefore, principals should note the importance of celebrating any accomplishment of students, teachers, or schools, no matter how small. Faculty are invigorated when commended for their achievements, thus improving perceptions of job conditions. When teachers possess positive perceptions of their working conditions, they remain in the teaching force longer and are happier. Hence, the cycle of improving achievement leads to improved perceptions of working conditions, increases student achievement.

This study provides insight into the willingness of teachers to accept outside advisors to improve academic achievement. A common myth in education is that teachers, particularly secondary teachers, are not receptive to an individual coming to their school to tell them how to be more effective. A misconception is that secondary teachers desire to be isolated in their classrooms without intrusions from strangers. This research indicates that both are false assertions, and implies that the opposite is true. The research speculated that teachers in improving schools were more receptive to suggestions from educational specialists in the District 180 Priority Schools, evident from the movement out of the bottom fifth percentile. As all of the static schools employed Educational Recovery staff members, questions arise as their failure to improve from the bottom fifth percentile after receiving the same interventions as the improving schools.

### **Contributions to Literature**

Many components of the current study are worthy of investigation. First, limited research exists on the relationship between student achievement and teachers' perceptions of working conditions. In addition, little research can be found on the validity of the



TELL Survey to predict perceptions of workplace conditions based on student achievement. Moreover, few longitudinal studies exist on teachers' perceptions of working conditions, particularly in low-performing schools. This research investigated each of these areas and provides quantitative data to support the hypothesis that teachers' perceptions of working conditions are indeed related to student achievement.

Researchers, educators, and educational reformers can be confident in the results of this study because of the strength of responses obtained in the 2011 and 2013 TELL Survey. With response rates ranging between 80% in 2011 and 90% in 2013, practitioners are reassured of the strength of the results. Additionally, this reveals information not shown by other researchers and articles: teachers' perceptions of working conditions improve as student achievement improves.

## **Research Questions**

### **Research Question 1**

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for static schools?*

The results of this study suggest that teachers' perceptions in static schools did not change significantly from 2011 to 2013. Seven of the eight constructs measured on the TELL Survey indicated no change. The only significant change found was in teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support*, which could be due to the additional financial and staffing support provided to District 180 Priority Schools by the Kentucky Department of Education.

Because of their persistently low-achieving status, schools received resources, financial and human, to transform low-performing schools. Cohort 1 schools divided \$15 million over three years in additional funding to implement modifications for increasing student achievement. Cohort 2 schools received \$22 million over three years in supplementary funding. Cohort 3 received \$950,000 in additional finances for one year. With the budget crisis faced by most schools, supplemental funds to promote student achievement is a tremendous benefit to teachers and students. The funds are used to hire academic coaches, purchase technology, provide rewards for student incentives, and support teacher training. Supplementary money for school improvement is a refreshing opportunity to put forth new ideas without financial restrictions.

Each of the District 180 Priority Schools collaborated with a regional university (Western Kentucky University, University of Louisville, or Eastern Kentucky University) and developed partnerships with university faculty, educational agencies, and other regional stakeholders that met the needs of teachers and students in priority schools. These partnerships provided many services. Also, each school was allocated a Math Recovery Specialist and a Literacy Recovery Specialist to serve as instructional coaches. Both of these experts were assigned daily at their designated school to provide teachers with research-based instructional techniques, support, and suggestions to increase student achievement. Although static schools remained in the bottom fifth percentile of the state in academic achievement, teachers believed that they received more instructional strategies and support than prior to state intervention. Moreover, an Educational Recovery Leader mentored the school principal in District 180 Priority Schools relative to effective use of teaching strategies, time, leadership development, and data

interpretation. This also may have influenced teachers' perceptions of *instructional practices and support* in static schools. Although static schools remained at the bottom fifth percentile of the state and retained priority status, they were the beneficiaries of an abundance of support.

Conversely, teachers' perceptions of *time, availability of facilities and resources, community support and involvement, student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, and professional development* indicated no improvement in static schools between 2011 and 2013. Reasons for this may be attributed to the additional time spent with the Educational Recovery staff in analyzing data and student achievement. Due to the intense need to improve student growth on the Kentucky School Report Card, teachers spent additional time on instructional strategies and data analysis in multiple meetings per week, which resulted in less time for other duties. Moreover, District 180 Priority Schools may perceive themselves to have less autonomy in decision making, such as student conduct, professional development, use of resources, teacher leadership, and school leadership, due to the presence of Educational Recovery staff in the school. The study posited that teachers in static schools negatively received and perceived the support; hence, the static schools remained in the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools and retained their priority status. However, results from the Kentucky School Report Card indicated that five of the nine schools categorized as static for this study made improvements in student achievement according to the categories of NxGL. This demonstrates that teachers in some of the static schools were receptive to outside supports, which may have influenced student achievement. For the static schools who retained priority designation and did not experience growth in NxGL, teachers may have

perceived the presence of Educational Recovery staff as a decision-making entity that limited their ability to make decisions for the school.

Of importance is the fact that all of the static schools chose a re-staffing school improvement model that replaced a majority of the teachers and the school principal, which is important for two reasons. First, teachers in the static schools who took the 2011 TELL Survey were not likely to be the same as those who took the 2013 TELL Survey. Therefore, the surveys were not administered to the same group, heightening the lack of change in teachers' perceptions. All of the improving schools chose the transformational model that replaced the school principal and possibly some members of the schools' site-based decision-making councils. Second, because teachers were replaced and forced to move to other schools from the re-staffing school improvement model, faculty may have felt they had little input as to the school to which they were assigned. Those perceptions may have appeared on the 2013 TELL Survey in the constructs of *teacher leadership* and *school leadership*, as well as decision making in general, i.e., those teachers who were present commented on the conditions they were experiencing at that time in that school. The purpose of this study was not to determine whether individual teachers changed their attitudes toward working conditions; rather, the intent was to investigate attitudes in general over time.

Although teachers' perceptions in static schools did not exhibit significant change over time, the results of the current study address previous research recommendations by Nui et al. (2013) that sought additional longitudinal studies of the teachers perceptions over time, particularly via the TELL Survey. This study adds to earlier research conducted on teachers' perceptions of working conditions subsequent to state

interventions. Results contradict Applewhite's research (2009) that suggested teachers' perceptions at schools not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) would improve after receiving state interventions. The results of the District 180 Priority Schools study revealed that teachers' perceptions in static schools did not improve after receiving state intervention; however, results increased for improving schools, that received the same supports as described below. The results of this research also indicate that teachers' perceptions in static schools did not change significantly after state intervention, as suggested by Leithwood and Poplin (1992) for future research. Finally, this study provides statistical evidence expressing the perceptions of teachers' in persistently low-achieving schools, as suggested by Robinson et al. (2008).

## **Research Question 2**

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions on the 2011 and 2013 TELL data for improving schools?*

Results from the one-way ANOVA suggest that each construct measured on the TELL Survey increased significantly in improving schools from 2011 to 2013. The largest differences (i.e., the least chance that the change in teachers' perceptions was due to some other variable) were found in *instructional practices and support, school leadership, community support and involvement, and teacher leadership*, respectively. As each District 180 Priority School received Education Recovery Specialists in literacy, math, and leadership, teachers gained tremendous support in each of these areas. Educational Recovery staff aligned the school's curriculum with state and local standards, provided varied research-based instructional strategies, and trained teachers on

creating rigorous assessments. Each of the endeavors is likely to contribute to overall improvement of student achievement. Teachers in improving schools may have related their experiences with state interventions to student improvement; hence, they rate these constructs higher in 2013. Also, the Educational Recovery staff developed leadership capacity within teachers by identifying strategies to allow more decision-making autonomy for teachers and school councils.

The increase in teachers' perceptions of working conditions in improving schools supports previous research by the New Teacher Center (2012b) that suggested a positive relationship between working conditions and student achievement. Additionally, the current study reinforces multiple studies that indicated perceptions of working conditions were linked to increases in student achievement (Bandura, 1977; Barker, 2007; Barth, 2002; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008). Overall, this study suggests that working conditions and student achievement positively affect one another - at least in improving schools.

### **Research Question 3**

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions between static schools and improving schools on the 2011 TELL survey?*

The purpose of this research question was to determine whether static schools and improving schools showed statistically significant differences in working conditions during the inaugural administration of the TELL Survey. The results of this study add to the earlier research in Kentucky that linked education reforms to increases in teachers' perceptions of stress levels, decreases in professional development for teachers, and

limited autonomy in curriculum decisions (Borko & Elliot, 1998; Reeves, 2003). The measurement of teachers' perceptions in static schools and improving schools is important in concluding whether those perceptions changed from the initial TELL Survey in 2011 to the second administration in 2013. If these two sets of schools are decidedly different in some important ways, then these may be key to the reasons why some schools changed and some did not, even though the "treatment" was the same. This study adds to the research of the national reform of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) that created persistently low-achieving schools and provided the option to replace the staff and principals at academically low-performing schools (Bush, 2001; Kuo, 2010; Linn et al., 2002; TELL, 2011). Each of the static schools selected the re-staffing option that replaced at least half of the existing staff and the school principal. Conversely, all of the improving schools selected the transformational school improvement model that replaced the school principal and possibly members of the schools' site-based decision making councils.

An ANOVA measured time and group interaction between static and improving schools on the 2011 TELL Survey. The results indicated a statistically significant difference between static and improving schools, with the exception of one construct, *community support and development*. Of particular interest is that, in each construct of the TELL Survey, teachers' perceptions of working conditions in static schools were higher than perceptions in improving schools. One reason for this finding may be that the sample included almost three times as many teachers from improving schools than static schools; therefore, a higher mean score in a group with fewer numbers is subject to misinterpretation. Additionally, teachers in static schools may have lower expectations

for working conditions than their counterparts in improving schools, which may impact their teaching performance and, therefore, student outcomes. At the beginning of the study, improving schools were expected to have better perceptions of working conditions than static schools at each survey administration. However, static schools out-rated improving schools on each construct. The largest differences between static and improving schools were found for *professional development*, *teacher leadership*, and *school leadership*, respectively; thus, teachers in static schools reported significantly higher baseline ratings than improving schools for those constructs.

Interestingly, teachers in static schools rated their perceptions of working conditions higher than those in improving schools. The reasons for this are unclear. One possible explanation is that static schools perceived themselves to be effective at educating students, as well as having an adequate workplace environment. Therefore, the lack of self-criticism found in static schools could negatively impact student achievement, i.e., a “collective ignorance” may be present in static schools. It is possible that teachers in static schools thought they adequately educated students simply because they were unaware of what student achievement looked or felt like. This collective ignorance may have influenced perceptions of working conditions, with teachers admitting no weaknesses in instructional practices or in working conditions. However, improving schools may have teachers who are willing to admit weaknesses or shortfalls. Improving schools also may be more accepting of suggestions for improvement of student achievement from outside sources.

These findings may be the result of teachers in improving schools who have higher expectations for themselves. A possible explanation for this surprising conclusion



may be that improving schools employ teachers who had previously experienced success and were unaware of what it looked and felt like. At the same time, teachers in static schools may have never worked in an excelling school, thus limiting their experiences in schools that were effective. Teachers who experience limited opportunities to work in schools that improved student achievement may prohibit static schools from being afforded diversified opportunities to experience student success. Moreover, teachers in static schools may not have been honest with their responses due to continual scrutiny of the educational community. By taking advantage of a self-reporting instrument, teachers in static schools may have rated their working conditions higher than in actuality to avoid additional critical reviews.

The construct with the highest score on the 2011 TELL Survey was *professional development* in static schools. Teachers were questioned on their perceptions of opportunities to continue in their professional pursuit of knowledge. Moreover, *professional development* exhibited the largest *F* ratio, indicating the greatest variance in scores between static and improving schools, which negates previous findings by the New Teacher Center (2012b) that suggest the existence of a positive relationship between working conditions and student achievement. Rather, teachers in static schools ranked *professional development* higher than those in improving schools. Upon the identification of a school as a persistently low-achieving, those teachers had fewer opportunities for professional development, as the state department mandates the type of professional training needed by teachers. A possible reason for the static schools experiencing higher ratings for professional development may be due to the fact that

improving schools followed more stringent requirements by the state department, which positively improved student achievement.

The construct of *time* received the lowest ranking from teachers in 2011. Again, improving schools reported a lower rating of *time* than static schools. *Time* was defined as available time to plan, collaborate, and teach with as little instructional interruption as possible. Improving schools may have had less time to collaborate and plan lessons due to the mandated meetings, such as Professional Learning Communities, guided planning, and collaborative planning with Educational Recovery staff. Because of the paperwork and required data collection, teachers in improving schools perceived themselves to have less time to plan and work together. This finding supports the previous work of Leithwood et al. (2006) suggesting the importance of maintaining instructional focus in the classroom by safeguarding teachers from meaningless paperwork. The results of this study reveal that teachers in improving schools feel they have less time than their counterparts in static schools. Although static schools and improving schools received the same supports and interventions from KDE, the findings of this study indicate that teachers in static schools responded to those interventions differently.

#### **Research Question 4**

*From the District 180 Priority Schools, does a statistically significant difference exist in perceptions of teacher working conditions between static schools and improving schools on the 2013 TELL survey?*

The results of this study revealed that improving schools, although assessing all TELL constructs lower than static schools in 2011, rated all of the TELL constructs higher than static schools in 2013. The responses to this question were expected to reveal

that teachers' perceptions of working conditions in improving schools were higher than perceptions in static schools. Because static schools and improving schools are forced to implement changes in staffing, curriculum, instruction, and leadership, the expectation is that static teachers, not having experienced increases in student achievement, would have lower perceptions of working conditions than in improving schools. Although receiving the same resources and forced to adhere to the same strict changes in policy, improving schools observed the results of their hard work, whereas static schools did not. Static schools were subjected to the same scrutiny, challenges, and requirements from the Department of Education, yet they were unable to diffuse the stigma of low-performing.

The largest difference in perceptions of working conditions between static schools and improving schools was in *community support and involvement*. Improving schools reported better perceptions of parent and community involvement in school decision making. In addition, improving schools identified parents and community members as vital components of the daily function of the school. These findings support previous work by Fullan (2006) and Hargreaves (2008) that linked parent and community involvement to increases in student achievement and as a strategy to improve low-performing schools. Moreover, these results support the belief that parents and community may negatively influence student performance. A continuing complaint of secondary teachers is the lack of support from parents or guardians in their child's education. Secondary teachers often blame demographics and poverty-stricken communities for hindering student achievement. The results of this study indicate the need for more strategies for teachers in static schools to address the challenges of limited parental and community support.

The construct with the smallest  $p$  values in perceptions between static and improving schools in 2013 was *teacher leadership*. Teachers in static schools and in improving schools receive Educational Recovery staff who may be perceived as the decision makers in the school. Due to time spent analyzing data, constructing formative assessments, and learning new instructional strategies, little time is spent developing leadership capacity in teachers. Moreover, some educators, lawmakers, and reformers believed that the District 180 Priority School designation is indicative of the inability of a school to successfully implement changes to increase student achievement. Although recovery staff are charged with creating practices to increase teachers' roles in decision making, the results of this study reveal no significant difference in how teachers perceive their roles as leaders in static and improving schools. Furthermore, the findings negate the work of Marks and Louis (1997), who earlier suggested positive correlations between student achievement and teachers' roles in decision making.

### **Practical Implications of the Study**

This study offers valuable information to educators and school leaders and shows that changes in teachers' perceptions of working conditions improve as student achievement rises. While state and national reforms inundate schools with demands to improve student achievement, this study suggests that increases in student achievement is strongly correlated with improvements in teachers' perceptions of working conditions. Therefore, school leaders who make academic improvements in student accomplishments can expect teachers' perceptions of workplace conditions to improve as well.

This study can be used simultaneously with Marzano et al.'s (2005) 21 Responsibilities of School Leaders. According to the meta-analysis, a .25 positive

correlation exists between school leadership behavior and student achievement. Therefore, school leaders who demonstrate the 21 Responsibilities can expect to increase student achievement and improve teachers' perceptions of working conditions. In addition, the current relationship between student achievement and teachers' perceptions of working conditions can be used with Colley's (2002) research on teacher attrition and retention. Colley reported that improvements in teachers' perceptions of workplace conditions are directly related to teacher retention. Through increasing student achievement, teachers are more likely stay in the teaching profession (and at their current school) for longer periods of time.

Additionally, this research can be used by the Kentucky Department of Education, as it continues to strive for increases in student achievement and improvements in teachers' workplace conditions. The TELL Survey's perceptions of teachers' working conditions is cutting edge research that has been in use in Kentucky since 2011. Furthermore, this study is the first known research that sought connections between student achievement and changes in teachers' perceptions of workplace conditions. Not only does this research fill a gap in the literature regarding teachers' perceptions of working conditions, it also highlights longitudinal changes in static low-performing schools compared to low-performing schools that made improvements in academic achievement.

Although this study is of great importance to the state's educational system, Kentucky is not alone in its efforts to address student achievement in low-performing schools. While known as District 180 Priority Schools in Kentucky, each state has a consortium of low-performing schools that receive national and state school improvement

funds to increase student achievement. The results from this study may help nationwide efforts seeking relationships between student achievement and teachers' perceptions of working conditions.

Sweeney's (1996) research stated that improved teacher perceptions increase student achievement. In addition, Freiberg (1998) encouraged the measurement of school climate for school improvement. In a later study, DuFour et al. (2006) concluded that perceptions of working conditions affect student achievement. The results of this study suggest that student achievement and school improvement relate strongly to perceptions of working conditions as well. In a study of North Carolina teachers' working conditions, Applewhite (2009) found that perceptions of working conditions were significantly related to student achievement on AYP. The current study concludes that, as student achievement changes, teachers' perceptions of working conditions also changes.

### **Limitations**

As with most research, limitations exist with the current study. First, teachers' working conditions were limited to those constructs assessed in the TELL Survey, which include (a) *instructional time*, (b) *availability of facilities and resources*, (c) *community support and involvement*, (d) *student conduct*, (e) *teacher leadership*, (f) *school leadership*, (g) *professional development*, and (h) *instructional practices and support*. Other constructs of working conditions may exist in the school setting that were not examined by the survey. Second, teacher attrition due to lack of job satisfaction and/or maturation may hinder accuracy of the results. The teachers who participated in the 2011 TELL Survey may not be the same as those who completed the 2013 TELL Survey, or

teachers who took the 2011 TELL Survey may have been placed in a different (but participating) school for 2013. Additionally, this research was limited to teachers' perceptions in low-performing schools. Therefore, generalizability of the results may be limited to low-achieving schools and cannot be generalized to other types of schools statewide.

The 2011 and 2013 TELL Surveys were extremely close in content; however, the 2013 TELL Survey asked additional questions regarding the implementation of the newly adopted Common Core Standards. Therefore, those questions were not included in the analysis. Also, the 2013 TELL Survey database omitted responses for Question 3.1a (*Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials*), therefore, the 2011 responses to that question were not analyzed. It should be noted that, during the time of this research, one of the District 180 Priority Schools merged with another that was not included in District 180, therefore eliminating its priority status. In addition, one middle school did not have a separate score reported for the TELL 2013 Survey; rather, it was combined by KDE with the district's high school that was considered an improving school. From these two instances, a total of 39 schools' results were analyzed from the 2011 and 2013 TELL Surveys.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research is needed in the area of teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low-performing schools. Of most interest to the researcher is the reason that some schools (static) did not improve when they received the same resources and support as schools that were improving. A future study could explore conditions that hinder a school from improving its student achievement scores, despite receiving

significant assistant and changing its teachers and school leaders. The current study did not have the capability to identify methods used by improving schools to increase student achievement, nor was this research able to identify reasons why static schools did not improve. This research was limited to the exploration of teachers' perceptions of working conditions, rather than teachers' perceptions of factors that hindered an increase in student achievement.

Additional longitudinal research is needed to identify the specific needs and challenges faced by low-performing schools. Further exploration could identify the skill sets needed by teachers work effectively in low-performing schools and maintain an adequate level of job satisfaction. Teaching in a low-performing school is different than in a high-performing school. Moreover, moving a low-performing school to high-achieving status requires an incredible amount of work that many educators are not ready to expend. School leaders in low-performing schools need more strategies for meeting the academic needs of students, while meeting the demands of its teachers in order to prevent burnout and decreases in job satisfaction. Teachers and administrators in low-achieving schools need, and desire, to shed the status of persistently low-achieving. Similar to *The Scarlet Letter*, teachers' in priority schools feel as though others perceive them to be poor examples of teachers.

Future research may consist of a regression analysis; this approach would determine the constructs, or sub-constructs, that played the largest role in improving teachers' perception of working conditions. An ANOVA statistical analysis was used in this study to compare change over time, rather than to identify working conditions that were most related to student achievement as perceived by teachers. Educators,



particularly school principals, strive to determine methods to improve student achievement and teachers' satisfaction in working conditions. School administrators have little time to research this, nor do they have time for trial and error. The fear of being named a persistently low-achieving school provides intense motivation to find a solution to both of these issues. A regression analysis could be conducted to determine which statement(s) were the greatest factor in predicting teachers' perceptions of working conditions. Results of the regression analysis could be utilized to determine the constructs that deserve highest priority for attempts at improving working conditions.

Future research also is needed to adequately match unique teacher skills to the needs of low-performing students, who require a different type of teacher than those who are intrinsically motivated or are "teacher pleasers." Struggling students require teachers who are passionate, optimistic, and patient; however, not all teachers possess such qualities. Additional research could be conducted to select teachers who possess qualities that will flourish with low-achieving students. Future research also is needed to determine whether teachers who leave low-performing schools experience higher rates of job satisfaction when they transfer to higher-performing schools. Thus, additional research can match teachers effectively with schools, in order that both the teacher and school will experience positive results. Without this information, school administrators will continue the cycle of hiring and replacing teachers in low-performing schools due to burnout and teacher dissatisfaction. Replacing teachers who are not equipped with the qualities to work with low-performing students requires a tremendous amount of time and the process is costly.

In this study, schools were classified based upon student achievement. Schools were categorized as static or improving, based upon a score calculated from the Next-Generation Learners (NxGL) categories of overall score, achievement score, college and career readiness score, gap score, growth score, and graduation rate. Future studies could broaden the categories of improvement or use one area to determine the status, static or improving, of a school. The researcher encourages more studies on student achievement as defined by Kentucky and questions the validity of the current accountability system. A visit was made to a school that moved into the top 10 percentile of all Kentucky schools, thus receiving the status of “School of Distinction.” Upon visiting this school and speaking to students, inconsistencies in the current accountability system were evident. Students also questioned their ability to obtain a perfect score on one content test, when all the other scores were below the 50th percentile. In an attempt to determine whether schools could increase student achievement according to NxGL scores, yet remain in the bottom fifth percentile, a comparison was made between 2012 and 2013 percentile rankings and NxGL scores. According to the Kentucky School Report Card, five of the nine static schools actually increased student achievement through overall NxGL score; however, these schools still retained the title of persistently low achieving, because of the percentile ranking used by KDE to identify District 180 Priority School status. These results highlight limitations to Kentucky’s newest educational accountability system. Of importance is the issue that all schools included within this study began in the bottom fifth percentile. Some schools increased student achievement in the NxGL scores, yet they remained in the bottom fifth percentile. One school decreased in NxGL score but

remained above the lowest fifth percentile of schools. See Table 6 for changes in percentile rankings and NxGL scores between 2012 and 2013.

Research is needed to identify the differences any differences in the perceptions of the varying Cohorts used in this study. District 180 consists of three Cohorts of persistently low-achieving schools. A future study could compare the differences of perceptions among Cohorts 1, 2, and 3. As stated earlier, each cohort received varying amounts of money, with Cohort 3 receiving a small amount compared to the previous two groups. An additional comparison of perceptions of working conditions could be conducted between schools that replaced only the school principal and those that replaced the school principal and a majority of the teaching staff.

More studies on teachers' perceptions of working conditions are needed for Small Learning Communities (Armstead et al., 2010; Kuo, 2010; Levine, 2010); Career Academies (Levine, 2010; Kemple & Snipes, 2000); and Early College High Schools (Ongaga, 2010). Currently, these are the most popular reform models used in secondary schools. However, the researcher is unaware of any studies that investigated changes in teachers' perceptions subsequent to the schools that were transformed into a Small Learning Community, Career Academy, or Early College High School. Unfortunately, limited studies can be found that demonstrate the effectiveness of these reform models in improving student achievement, particularly graduating students with employable skills. Questions continue to exist as to whether improved perceptions of working conditions are correlated with teacher satisfaction (Mertler, 2002). Future research could explore the financial expenditures of District 180 Priority Schools that replace teachers due to attrition (Watlington et al., 2010). In addition, a future study may examine the

psychological factors that encouraged teachers in District 180 Priority Schools to remain in the profession following the labeling of their school as persistently low-achieving and enduring sanctions during difficult times (Williams, 2003).

Table 7.

*Comparison between 2012 and 2013 Percentile Rankings and NxGL Scores*

	2012 Percentile	2013 Percentile	2012 NxGL	2013 NxGL
Robert Frost MS	1	1	29.3	27.9
Knight MS	3	2	35.9	33.9
Myers MS	3	1	35.5	32.3
Olmstead Academy North MS	2	2	33.8	33.8
Stuart MS	1	4	31.8	36.3
Thomas Jefferson MS	4	4	36.4	37.3
Academy at Shawnee HS	1	1	27.9	32.7
Iroquois HS	1	3	34.4	40.5
Valley HS	1	3	31.0	39.2
Caverna HS	3	35	40.6	51.8
Fern Creek HS	26	60	50.4	56.1
Lawrence County HS	15	78	46.5	60.6
Leslie County HS	32	91	51.1	65.2
Metcalf County HS	78	90	60.6	64.4
Western MS	4	38	37.0	51.1
Western HS	3	19	40.3	48.0
East Carter HS	71	94	58.0	67.3
Christian County HS	32	61	51.1	56.2
Doss HS	2	8	35.8	42.8
Fairdale HS	13	36	46.0	52.0
Greenup County HS	42	71	53.2	58.3
Sheldon Clark HS	27	72	50.6	58.4
Newport HS	19	35	48.1	51.8
Seneca HS	12	42	45.7	53.2
Southern HS	4	20	41.2	48.7
Waggener HS	6	17	41.7	46.3
Dayton MS	19	35	46.5	50.4
Dayton HS	13	61	46.2	56.3
Fleming County HS	71	87	58.3	63.2
Franklin-Simpson HS	45	97	53.7	71.8
Hopkins County Central HS	62	96	56.6	69.1
Knox County Central HS	16	40	46.8	52.6
Lee County HS	57	81	55.4	61.5
Lincoln County HS	67	83	57.6	61.7
Livingston County HS	23	75	49.5	59.3
Monticello HS	32	18	51.5	47.8
Perry County Central HS	5	55	41.3	55.3
Pulaski County HS	82	97	61.6	70.2
Trimble County HS	20	84	48.7	61.9
Westport MS	3	8	35.5	40.0
Bryan Station HS	17	41	47.7	52.9

*Note. Shaded schools increased in NxGL scores but did not rise above bottom fifth percentile.*

## Conclusion

This study helps to answer the question, Are teachers' perceptions of working conditions in low performing schools changing over time? The answer is two-fold. Teachers' perceptions of working conditions are changing in schools that are experiencing increases in student achievement. However, teachers in static schools that continue to rank in the bottom fifth percentile of Kentucky schools are not recognizing any notable changes in their perceptions of working conditions.

The results of this study reveal major implications for practicing and aspiring school leaders. The researcher believes that the school principal, above all others, is responsible for student achievement and perceptions of working conditions of teachers. The results of this study conclude that the two work together simultaneously. Just as teachers' perceptions of workplace conditions have an effect on student achievement, student achievement has significant influence on teachers' perceptions of *instructional time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support.*

As school principals are expected to do more with less (i.e., increase student achievement with restricted budgets, diminishing faculty allocations, and mandated state and national testing requirements), seated and future principals may use the results of this study to narrow their improvement focus. Limited time is available to effectively address the needs of students and teachers. However, this study suggests that principals may increase student achievement and improve workplace conditions concurrently, which would relieve an already exhausted pool of school leaders. Furthermore, school

administrators may use this study to identify areas of their leadership competency that need strengthening.

Teachers' perceptions of working conditions in Kentucky's District 180 Priority Schools are changing for the better — at least in schools where student achievement is improving. With a continual focus on student achievement, teachers' perceptions of workplace conditions are expected to continue to improve. By concentrating on student achievement, which is the ultimate goal of a school principal, teachers will benefit as well by improving their perceptions of *instructional time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support.*

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## **APPENDIX A**

2011 TELL Kentucky Survey (2011). TELL Kentucky

[http://2011.tellkentucky.org/sites/default/files/attachments/KY11\\_TWCSurvey\\_numbered.pdf](http://2011.tellkentucky.org/sites/default/files/attachments/KY11_TWCSurvey_numbered.pdf)

## **APPENDIX B**

2013 TELL Kentucky Survey (2013). TELL Kentucky

[http://www.tellkentucky.org/uploads/File/KY13\\_TELL\\_Main\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.tellkentucky.org/uploads/File/KY13_TELL_Main_Survey.pdf)

