

# ***Engaging and Purposeful Growth Educator Perceptions of Progress toward Successful School Improvement***

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# **Engaging and Purposeful Growth**

## **Educator Perceptions of Progress toward Successful School Improvement**

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## Terminology

**The following list is comprised of commonly used terms which emerged in conversations with participants in these studies.**

**21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills:** Within the context of core knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today's world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration. ([http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/1.\\_\\_p21\\_framework\\_2-pager.pdf](http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/1.__p21_framework_2-pager.pdf))

**AdvancED:** “AdvancED brings together more than 100 years of experience and the expertise of three US-based accreditation agencies — the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), Northwest Accreditation Commission (NWAC), and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI). The AdvancED Accreditation Process is a clear and comprehensive program of evaluation and external review, supported by research-based standards, and dedicated to helping schools, districts and education providers continuously improve.” (<http://www.advanc-ed.org/company-overview>)

**Acuity:** “A K-12 Benchmark Assessment solution that measures the deepest levels of student learning aligned to the Common Core.” (<http://www.ctb.com/control/productFamilyViewAction?productFamilyId=444&p=products>)

**Adaptive Schools:** “The work of the Center for Adaptive Schools is to develop the resources and capacities of the organization and of individuals to cohesively respond to the changing needs of students and the changing needs of society.” (<http://www.adaptiveschools.com>)

**Aimsweb:** “A benchmark and progress monitoring system based on direct, frequent and continuous student assessment. The results are reported to students, parents, teachers and administrators via a web-based data management and reporting system to determine response to intervention.” ([www.aimsweb.com](http://www.aimsweb.com))

**Assessment and LEarning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS):** “A web-based, artificially intelligent assessment and learning system. ALEKS uses adaptive questioning to quickly and accurately determine exactly what a student knows and doesn't know in a course. ALEKS then instructs the student on the topics she is most ready to learn. As a student works through a course, ALEKS periodically reassesses the student to ensure that topics learned are also retained.” ([http://www.aleks.com/about\\_aleks](http://www.aleks.com/about_aleks))

**Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST):** “The BIST model utilizes four steps so educators have the ability to know when and how to intervene with students. These steps create a consistent, supervised, safe environment in order to teach and protect students.” ([www.bist.org](http://www.bist.org))

**Classroom Instruction that Works:** “The book that revolutionized teaching by linking classroom strategies to evidence of increased student learning has been reenergized and reorganized for today's classroom with new evidence-based insights and a refined framework

that strengthens instructional planning.” (<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/classroom-instruction-that-works.aspx?gclid=COqTyLOq2rgCFelAMgodYlsA0A>)

**Community Learning Center (CLC):** “CLC’s provide academic enrichment opportunities during non-school hours for children, particularly students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. The program helps students meet state and local student standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math; offers students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and offers literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.” (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stccclc>)

**Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT):** “A test that provides a basis for determining a candidate's level of knowledge and skills in relation to a well-defined domain of content. Often one or more performance standards are set on the test score scale to aid in test score interpretation. What all of these tests have in common is that they attempt to determine a candidate's level of performance in relation to a well-defined domain of content.” (<http://www.education.com/reference/article/criterion-referenced-tests1/>)

**The Daily 5™:** “is a structure that helps students develop the daily habits of reading, writing, and working independently that will lead to a lifetime of literacy independence.” (<http://www.thedailycafe.com/public/department104.cfm>)

**Diana Browning Wright:** A well-known Licensed Educational Psychologist, “Diana has an extensive 35 years of experience in classroom teaching, assessment and consultation services for a wide range of students, with and without disabilities, at all grade levels. She has assessment training and experience in: play-based early childhood; developmental Piagetian; neurodevelopmental and curriculum based assessment.” ([www.dianabrowningwright.com](http://www.dianabrowningwright.com))

**Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS):** “is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills.” (<https://dibels.uoregon.edu/training/measures/dibelsinfo.php>)

**DIBELS Daze:** “is the standardized DIBELS version of maze procedures for measuring reading comprehension. Specifically, Daze assesses the student’s ability to construct meaning from text using word recognition skills, background information and prior knowledge, familiarity with linguistic properties such as syntax and morphology, and reasoning skills.” (<https://www.mclasshome.com>)

**Directed Instruction:** “is a model for teaching that emphasizes well-developed and carefully planned lessons designed around small learning increments and clearly defined and prescribed teaching tasks. It is based on the theory that clear instruction eliminating misinterpretations can greatly improve and accelerate learning.” (<http://www.nifdi.org/aboutdi>)

**Doug Reeves:** a well-known researcher in education. “Dr. Douglas Reeves is the founder of The Leadership and Learning Center. As part of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, a global

educational leader, The Center serves school systems around the world. The author of 30 books and many articles on leadership and organizational effectiveness. . . .” ([www.lecturemanagement.com/speakers/reeves\\_douglas.htm](http://www.lecturemanagement.com/speakers/reeves_douglas.htm))

**Echo Reading:** “allows students (grades K-3) to practice small chunks of text so they can become fluent without the pressure of reading an entire passage. This strategy can be conducted with individuals, small groups, or the entire class.” (<http://www.corwin.com>)

**English Language Learners (ELL):** “An academic program targeting students whose primary language is not English, and who are working to master the language as well as content in various areas in school.” (<http://www.netc.org/focus/challenges/ell.php>)

**Educational Research Institute (ERI):** A privately owned organization which provides professional development services to educators. ([www.educationalresearchinstitute.net](http://www.educationalresearchinstitute.net))

**Google docs:** “is a freeware web-based office suite offered by Google within its Google Drive service. It also was a storage service but has since been replaced by Google Drive. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with other users.” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google\\_Docs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Docs))

**Individualized Education Plan (IEP):** “Kids with delayed skills or other disabilities might be eligible for special services that provide individualized education programs in public schools, free of charge to families. Parents can now work with educators to develop a plan — the individualized education program (IEP) — to help kids succeed in school. The IEP describes the goals the team sets for a child during the school year, as well as any special support needed to help achieve them.” (<http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/iep.html>)

**Infinite Campus:** A student information system with “information technology that leads the market in streamlining administrative processes, improving stakeholder collaboration and individualizing education.” ([www.infinitecampus.com](http://www.infinitecampus.com))

**Jan Richardson:** “a literacy consultant and author who earned her Ph.D. studying struggling readers. She has been a classroom teacher, reading specialist, Reading Recovery® teacher leader, and staff developer. Her most recent book, *The Next Step in Guided Reading*, provides teachers with practical suggestions and lesson plans for increasing the power and impact of guided reading.” (<http://www.janrichardsonguidedreading.com/home>)

**John Hattie:** Author of “Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 Meta-analyses relating to achievement.” The book is “a culmination of more than a decade of research during which he and his team have set out to summarize and synthesize the empirical research on the effects of various educational influences and interventions on student achievement.” (<http://0-link.springer.com.library.unl.edu/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs11159-011-9198-8.pdf>)

**Kagan (Structures):** “simple, step-by-step instructional strategies. Most Kagan Structures are designed to increase student engagement and cooperation.” ([www.kaganonline.com](http://www.kaganonline.com))

**M-Cap:** A piece of aimsweb which refers to Match Concepts and Applications. ([www.aimsweb.com/products](http://www.aimsweb.com/products))

**McREL Power Walkthrough:** Teacher evaluation process based on McREL's *Classroom Instruction That Works, 2nd edition* (CITW) to "help turn your brief classroom walkthroughs into meaningful opportunities for coaching teachers to higher levels of performance and guiding staff development efforts." ([www.mcrel.org/products-and-services/featured-products-and-services/power-walkthrough](http://www.mcrel.org/products-and-services/featured-products-and-services/power-walkthrough))

**Robert J. Marzano, PhD:** "is cofounder and CEO of Marzano Research Laboratory in Colorado. A leading researcher in education, he is a speaker, trainer, and author of more than 30 books and 150 articles on topics such as instruction, assessment, writing and implementing standards, cognition, effective leadership, and school intervention." (<http://www.marzanoresearch.com/robert-j-marzano>)

**Math Talk:** "aligns with the Common Core State Standards by promoting the use of dialogue and conversation to explore mathematical thinking. Math Talk provides students an opportunity for deeper understanding through communication. Individually or in groups, students articulate and defend their ideas and analyze the reasoning of others. Teachers will gain the ability to assess student knowledge through asking "good questions," and align instruction to ensure each student understands how to use math skills through thinking, talking, and doing." (<http://www.mathsolutions.com/mathtalk/about.html>)

**Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory (McRel):** "A nonprofit, nonpartisan education research 'laboratory' where knowledge about what works in education would be turned into practical guidance for educators." ([www.mcrel.org/about](http://www.mcrel.org/about))

**Norm Referenced Test (NRT):** "The major reason for using a norm-referenced test (NRT) is to classify students. NRTs are designed to highlight achievement differences between and among students to produce a dependable rank order of students across a continuum of achievement from high achievers to low achievers (Stiggins, 1994)." (<http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=5&n=2>)

**National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI):** "This is a non-profit organization providing continuous administrative and curricular support to schools and districts as they implement Direct Instruction (DI) programs; as well as conducting, promoting and publicizing high-quality research on the effects of DI implementations." ([www.nifdi.org](http://www.nifdi.org))

**The Nebraska State Accountability (NeSA):** NeSA-R is the reading, NeSA-M is the math, NeSA-S is the science, and NeSA-W is the writing assessment. These are administered throughout the state, are available in Spanish and allow for special accommodations in efforts at a more balanced educational system. ([www.lps.org](http://www.lps.org))

**Next Generation Science Standards for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Workforce:** "Through a collaborative, state-led process managed by Achieve, new K–12 science standards are being developed that will be rich in content and practice, arranged in a coherent manner across disciplines and grades to provide all students an internationally benchmarked science education. The NGSS will be based on the *Framework for K–12 Science Education* developed by the National Research Council." (<http://www.nextgenscience.org/>)

**Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC):** “help implement successful and effective parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that lead to improvements in student academic achievement and that strengthen partnerships among parents, teachers, principals, administrators, and other school personnel in meeting the education needs of children.” Source: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/pirc/index.html>

**Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools (PLAS):** “A rating system that combines reading and mathematics performance and ranks schools to determine the lowest achieving schools. They are identified as Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III based on their scores. These schools are then eligible for federal funding targeted at improving achievement.” ([http://www.education.ne.gov/ARRA/PDF/PLAS\\_TALKING\\_POINTS\\_5\\_10.pdf](http://www.education.ne.gov/ARRA/PDF/PLAS_TALKING_POINTS_5_10.pdf))

**Professional Learning Communities (PLC):** “A PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work *interdependently* to achieve *common goals* linked to the purpose of learning for all. The very essence of a *learning* community is a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student.” ([www.allthingsplc.info](http://www.allthingsplc.info))

**Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):** “It is not a curriculum, intervention, or practice, but IS a decision making framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students.” ([http://www.pbis.org/school/what\\_is\\_swpbs.aspx](http://www.pbis.org/school/what_is_swpbs.aspx))

**Power Standards:** “The term Power Standards was coined by Dr. Doug Reeves and further developed by his colleague, Dr. Larry Ainsworth. Ainsworth defines Power Standards as a prioritized set of State Standards and Expectations that are essential, that is, critical for student success.” ([www.ccsuvt.org/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment/curriculum/power-standards](http://www.ccsuvt.org/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment/curriculum/power-standards))

**Power Walkthrough®:** “software, based on McREL’s *Classroom Instruction That Works, 2nd edition* (CITW), can be loaded on your iPad®/iPhone®/iTouch®, Android™, or Tablet PC.” (<http://www.mcrel.org/products-and-services/featured-products-and-services/power-walkthrough>)

**Reading Mastery:** Research-based reading curriculum “to help students decode and comprehend the meaning of print effortlessly, even students who are seriously at risk of failure.” ([www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/sra/readingmastery.htm](http://www.mcgraw-hill.co.uk/sra/readingmastery.htm))

**Reading Recovery:** “A highly effective short-term intervention of one-to-one tutoring for low-achieving first graders. Reading Recovery serves the lowest-achieving first graders—the students who are not catching on to the complex set of concepts that make reading and writing possible.” (<http://readingrecovery.org>)

**Response to Intervention (RTI):** A “multi-level prevention system includes three levels of intensity or prevention. The primary prevention level includes high quality core instruction. The secondary level includes evidence-based intervention(s) of moderate intensity. The tertiary prevention level includes individualized intervention(s) of increased intensity for

students who show minimal response to secondary prevention.” ([http://www.rti4success.org/categorycontents/multi-level\\_prevention\\_system](http://www.rti4success.org/categorycontents/multi-level_prevention_system))

**Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model:** “offers an empirically-validated approach to teaching that helps prepare all students—especially English learners – to become college and career ready. As a framework for organizing instruction, The SIOP® Model supports teachers in planning and delivering high-quality instruction for all students.” (<http://siop.pearson.com/about-siop/index.html>)

**Six Traits of Writing:** “are the qualities that teachers, writers, and readers think are important in good writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions.” ([gse.buffalo.edu](http://gse.buffalo.edu))

**Sixteen Proactive Classroom Management (PCM) Strategies (By Browning Wright):** “is about classroom organization and teacher behavior that are likely to prevent the occurrence of problem behavior. It places emphasis on two critical variables that are associated with learning. The first is instructional time, which refers to the amount of opportunity students have to learn, and the second is academic engagement, which represents the amount of time students actually attend to the academic task at hand.” (<http://www.sjcoe.org/selpa/files/tiers/pcm16/The%2016%20Proactive%20Classroom%20Management%20Skills.pdf>)

**Stanford Achievement Test Series:** “Stanford 10 helps educators make data-driven decisions. A range of user-friendly score reports, designed with the input of administrators and teachers across the country, supports teaching, learning, and accountability requirements. The reports include narrative summaries, process and cluster summaries, and graphic displays to clarify the student’s performance and guide planning and analysis.” (<https://www.pearsonassessments.com>)

**Structured Student Interaction (SSI):** An intervention for improving reading, SSI is part of the Fisher and Frey model for Gradual Release of Responsibility and is targeted to access prior knowledge or allow for processing new information. (<http://fisherandfrey.com/resources?>)

# Engaging and Purposeful Growth

## Section I: Introduction



The Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Project is an independent evaluation of the implementation of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans to improve student achievement in identified schools. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) characterized by the highest level of integrity, with respect and equitable treatment for all persons involved in the study in order to maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of participants in the study (Appendix A). The research was contracted between the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS) in 2012-2013. The research was supported jointly by the NDE and the College of Education and Human Sciences (CEHS).

Dr. Jody Isernhagen, Associate Professor, served as the Principal Investigator. Jackie Florendo, Ed.D., assisted with the report as the secondary investigator. Nicole Effle, Administrative Assistant, assisted with data transcription and development of the report. Dr. Isernhagen, Dr. Florendo, and Nicole Effle served as interviewers for the project. All researchers and members of the research team for the Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Project are listed in Appendix B.

### OVERVIEW

There is a major effort occurring across the nation to increase academic performance of students at the lowest-achieving schools (Education Resource Strategies, 2012). Schools that have not measured up to new education reform mandates for *all students*, including those living in poverty, students learning English for the first time, students with special needs, students that are mobile, and students with diverse backgrounds of experience and needs are “required to formulate school improvement or development plans that focus on student learning outcomes” (Hallinger & Heck, 2011, p. 21). The current education reform efforts to increase academic achievement have one goal in mind: Results!

Nebraska schools are no exception. Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is required to identify the low-performing schools known as Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools

(PLAS) when it accepted the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds of the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). These funds provide additional aid to identified school districts, based on qualifying criteria. “PLAS is yet another way of looking at school performance to identify specific schools for assistance. PLAS does not replace the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of No Child Left Behind. All schools identified as being in need of improvement under AYP are now also considered PLAS” (NDE, n.d., p. 7). In November 2012, 11 school districts and 199 schools were identified as PLAS or Needs Improvement.

Some schools are arguably more challenged to meet academic achievement standards than others. These schools are regarded as Title I schools. Additional funds are allocated to schools that qualify as Title I, with the funds targeted “to bridge the gap between low-income students and other students” (Malburg, 2012, p. 1). “The purpose of this Title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, Sec. 1001 Para. 1). In November, 2012, there were 494 Title I schools in Nebraska based on 2011-2012 data (NDE, 2012). One hundred three (103) of these Title I schools are identified as Needs Improvement schools.

Title I schools have some flexibility to determine the purposes of how they will use the funds allocated to them through the Title I program. “Title I Schoolwide programs have an enormous amount of latitude to organize their operations and allocate the various funding sources available to them to help meet the challenge of academic achievement for all children” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013, Para. 2). “Funds can be used to improve curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, increase staff and program improvement” (Malburg, 2012, p. 1). Title funds can also be used to increase learning time.

All Needs Improvement schools are required to develop a School Improvement Plan or Title I School Improvement Plan. Title I School Improvement Plans are generally synonymous with School Improvement Plans and are referred to interchangeably throughout this study.

**The purpose of Study 1** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plan in **Title I Needs Improvement Schools**.

A second study was conducted to explore the association of perceptions of the Title I and School Improvement Plans from educators in **Title I Needs Improvement Schools** and **Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools**.

**The purpose of Study 2** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I and School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement Schools** and **Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools**.

Significant differences between responses from the two groups within the categories studied were analyzed and are discussed in this document.



A final study was conducted to explore the association of perceptions of the Title I Plans from **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools and **Title I Non-Needs Improvement** Schools.

**The purpose of Study 3** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools and **Non-Title I Needs Improvement** Schools.

Significant differences between responses from the two groups were analyzed and discussed.

All three studies used a mixed-methods research methodology approach. Both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected in the winter and spring of 2013. Areas studied were: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. This research provides Nebraska educators, the Nebraska Department of Education, the State Board of Education, other policy makers, and all other stakeholders with the information to assess the effectiveness of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans.

### **SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH STUDY**

All studies examined perceptions held by administrators and teachers regarding the development and implementation of their School Improvement Plan and the progress evident at their school. Each study focused on specific areas: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected in the winter and spring of 2013.

### **FORMAT**

This report was designed to serve multiple audiences and provide the most pertinent information available relative to the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans in Nebraska.

The report is divided into four sections beginning with an introduction of the report (Section 1); an executive summary of the findings of each study conducted (Section 2); complete research paper of the studies conducted during the 2013 school year (Section 3); and the Appendices (Section 4).

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# Engaging and Purposeful Growth

## Section II: Executive Summary



*“I think a big focus is individual student improvement. We look at every individual student; we’ve been doing this in reading for a long time. I’m happy to say that we’re beginning this process now in math too. Seeing where each student is, what’s their level, and determining how we can best serve that kid where they are and bring them along to hopefully grow them not only that one year in a year, but more than that one year in a year. That would be a focus of ours.” (A Male Secondary Administrator, 2013)*

### INTRODUCTION

There is urgency today to transform schools in order to impact learning and “improve the academic performance of students at the lowest-achieving schools” (Educational Resource Strategies, 2012, para. 1). Educators are asked to embrace research-based strategies that meet the learning needs of *all children*. The current education reform efforts to increase academic achievement have one goal in mind: Results!

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) identifies low-performing schools known as Persistently Low-Achieving Schools (PLAS) as required by the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds of the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

In Nebraska, all schools in need of improvement under Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are also considered as PLAS (Nebraska Department of Education, n.d.). Additionally, schools identified as PLAS are eligible to apply for a School Improvement Grant. The state has divided the PLAS schools into three *levels* or *tiers* to help determine their greatest needs and assist in awarding School Improvement Grant Funds. The Nebraska Department of Education (2012) defines the three tiers as:

- Tier I Schools means the five (5) lowest-achieving Title I schools identified to be in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring plus any Title I served secondary school with a graduation rate of less than 75% percent over the three latest years that was not captured in the above five schools.
- Tier II Schools shall mean the 13 (which is equal to 5%) lowest ranked secondary schools where the “all students” group meets the minimum n-size (30) for AYP that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds plus any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that has a graduation rate of less than 75% over the three latest years and was not captured in the above 12 schools.
- Tier III Schools means any Title I school identified to be in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that is not a Tier I School and any school that is ranked as low as the Tier I and Tier II schools but has no groups of at least 30 students. (pp. 1-2)

Additionally, Title I schools are faced with more challenges to meet academic achievement standards than others. The purpose of Title I as defined by the U. S. Department of Education (2004) “is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (SEC. 1001, para. 1). In November 2012, there were 494 Title I schools in Nebraska based on 2011-2012 data (NDE, 2012). One hundred three (103) of these Title I schools were identified as Needs Improvement. In addition, there were 96 schools that were *non*-Title I schools yet qualified as Needs Improvement for a total of 11 school districts and 199 schools in Nebraska identified as Needs Improvement in November 2012.

The number of Nebraska schools deemed Needs Improvement or PLAS has increased considerably. In 2010, 44 schools were identified as Needs Improvement in Nebraska, compared with 199 in November 2012 (NDE, 2012).

The urgency for results is increasing. John Kotter (2008) explains urgency as important, however communicating and executing this high urgency for change is most critical and challenging. “At the very beginning of any effort to make changes of any magnitude, if a sense of urgency is not high enough and complacency is not low enough, everything else becomes so much more difficult” (p. ix). Urgency must be guided by energized action and a focused determination to win rather than a false sense of urgency found in “moving from meeting to meeting, producing volumes of paper, moving rapidly in circles . . . that often prevents people from exploiting key opportunities and addressing gnawing problems” (p. x).

In order to support the urgency for change, all Needs Improvement schools are required to develop a School Improvement Plan or Title I School Improvement Plan. Since Title I School Improvement Plans generally contain the same data and goals, they are used and referred to interchangeably with School Improvement Plans. Schools are “required to formulate school improvement or development plans that focus on student learning outcomes” (Hallinger & Heck, 2011, p. 21) to help achieve results. Additionally, Title I schools receive supplementary Title I funding with monitored flexibility allowing schools to determine how they will use these funds in order to support change according to what is

determined most important by each school. “Schoolwide programs have great latitude to determine how to organize their operations and allocate the multiple funding sources available to them” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013, para. 2) to help meet the challenge of academic achievement for all children. “Funds can be used to improve curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, increase staff and program improvement” (Malburg, 2012, p. 1).

Research was conducted to examine the implementation of Title I/School Improvement Plans in Needs Improvement schools in Nebraska in each of the elements described by Malburg (2012): “curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and increase staff and program improvement” (p. 1). School Improvement plans and resources which align to Title I Improvement Plans can vary between schools and districts. Survey categories used in the research studies were aligned to Malburg’s elements: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement.

### **Study 1: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress of Title I Needs Improvement Schools**

A primary study was conducted to explore the perceptions of the implementation of the Title I School Improvement Plans in Title I Needs Improvement Schools. Two hundred thirty-five (235) teachers and 23 administrators were surveyed.

**The purpose of Study 1** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plan in **Title I Needs Improvement Schools**.

### **Study 2: Examining Educators’ Perceptions of the Title I and School Improvement Plans in Title I Needs Improvement and Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools**

A second study was conducted to explore the perceptions of the Title I and School Improvement Plans from educators in **Title I Needs Improvement Schools** and **Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools**. Two hundred thirty-five (235) teachers and 23 administrators were surveyed from Title I Needs Improvement schools and 505 teachers and 45 administrators were surveyed from Non-Title I Needs Improvement schools.

**The purpose of Study 2** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I and School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement Schools** compared with **Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools**.

Significant differences between responses from the two groups within the categories studied were analyzed and discussed.

### **Study 3: Examining Educators’ Perceptions of the Title I School Improvement Plan in Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools**

A final study was conducted to explore the perceptions of the Title I Plans from **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools and **Title I Non-Needs Improvement** Schools. Two hundred thirty-five (235) teachers and 23 administrators were surveyed from Title I Needs Improvement status schools and 648 teachers and 90 administrators were surveyed from Title I Non-Needs Improvement status schools.

**The purpose of Study 3** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools with **Title I Non-Needs Improvement** Schools.

Significant differences between responses from the two groups were analyzed and discussed.

For the purpose of this study, all educators in Title I Needs Improvement Schools are referred to as “Group 1,” educators in Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools are referred to as “Group 2,” and all educators in Title I Non-Needs Improvement are referred to as “Group 3.”

All three studies used a mixed-methods research methodology approach. Both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected in the winter and spring of 2013. Areas studied were: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement.

#### **Instrument**

Administrators responded to an 89-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers responded to a 93-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored 9 themes: (1) Title I/School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Some items on the teacher survey were not included on the administrator survey; it is noted in the results when this occurs.

#### **Study Participant Demographic Data**

A total of 1,545 educators participated in the survey: 158 administrators and 1,388 teachers. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of participating schools and districts for each Group in the three studies conducted.

**Table 1**  
*Distribution of Survey Schools and Districts by Group*

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
Schools	12	15	53	80
Districts	10	12	37	*

*Note. \*The total number of districts selected is not the same as the total for each group added together as some districts had schools which fell into more than one group.*



## Locale

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2010) locale code definitions were used to determine whether a school is considered rural or non-rural. According to NCES, “The codes are based on the physical location represented by an address that is matched against a geographic database maintained by the Census Bureau” (Identification of Rural Locales page). For the purpose of this study, schools with the following locale codes are considered Rural:

- 31: Town, Fringe: “Territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from an urbanized area.”
- 32: Town, Distant: “Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 10 miles and less than or equal to 35 miles from an urbanized area.”
- 33: Town, Remote: “Territory inside an urban cluster that is more than 35 miles from an urbanized area.”
- 41: Rural, Fringe: “Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.”
- 42: Rural-Distant: “Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.”
- 43: Rural, Remote: “Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.” (Identification of Rural Locales page)

In addition, the following locale codes were considered Non-Rural:

- 11: City, Large: “Territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with population of 250,000 or more.”
- 21: Suburb, Large: “Territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with population of 250,000 or more.” (NCES, 2010, Identification of Rural Locales page)

Of the surveys returned, 83% (1288 participants) were from rural schools and 17% (258 participants) were from non-rural schools; a further breakdown of participants and schools in each classification is depicted in Table 2. In comparing these numbers, it is important to take into account that rural districts are likely to employ a smaller number of teachers and administrators.

**Table 2**  
*School Locale Codes by Group*

	Locale Codes	Group 1		Group 2		Group 3	
		Participants	Schools	Participants	Schools	Participants	Schools
Rural	31: Town, Fringe 32: Town, Distant 33: Town, Remote 41: Rural, Fringe 42: Rural, Distant 43: Rural, Remote	198	9	423	12	667	47
Non-Rural	11: City, Large 21: Suburb, Large	60	3	127	3	71	6

## Level

For the purpose of this study, schools were classified as either “elementary” or “secondary.” Those classified as “elementary” serve primarily a student population in preschool through grade 5. Schools which primarily serve middle grades (6-8), secondary (9-12), or a combination of grades were considered “secondary.” Table 3 shows the number of survey participants in each Group. There were more elementary Title I Needs Improvement Schools (87) state-wide than middle/secondary Title I Needs Improvement Schools (16) in Nebraska based on November 2012 data (NDE, 2012).

**Table 3**  
*Participants by Level and Group*

		<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
<b>Level</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	210	28	614
	<b>Mid/Secondary</b>	48	522	124

## English Language Learners (ELL)

Within the State of Nebraska, the average English Language Learner (ELL) student population is 6.47% (NDE, 2012, English Language Learners page). Table 4 shows the average ELL student population for each group. For the purposes of this study, participants were divided into two groups based upon the percentage of ELL student population in their school. Those schools with a population of 7% and lower are considered “low” while those higher than 7% are considered “high.”

**Table 4**  
*Average ELL Student Population Percentage by Group*

<b>State of Nebraska</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
6.47%	21%	4%	9%

## Free Reduced Lunch (FRL)

The student Free/Reduced Lunch rate refers to the number of students in the school who are Eligible for Free Meals, Eligible for Reduced Price Meals, or Eligible for Free Special Milk divided by the total number of students in the school (NDE, 2012, Free/Reduced Price Meals Data Definitions & Explanations page). Free/Reduced Lunch programs are available in schools of every level PK-12.

The average rate of Free and Reduced Price meals for the State of Nebraska is 43.79% (NDE, 2012, Free/Reduced Price Meals page). The average FRL rate for each Group is illustrated in Table 5. For the purpose of the study, schools were disaggregated into three groups based upon their rate of FRL. Those with a rate of 39% and lower are considered “low,” those schools between 40% and 55% are considered “average,” and those with a FRL rate of higher than 55% are considered “high.”

**Table 5**  
*Average Rate of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Priced Lunch by Group.*

<b>State of Nebraska</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
43.79%	67%	43%	56%

## Mobility

A mobile student is defined by the Nebraska Department of Education (2012) as, “Any child who enters or leaves school between the last Friday in September and the last day of school” (Student Mobility Data Definitions & Explanations Page). This number is then divided by the total number of students in the school resulting in the student mobility rate. The average rate of student mobility across the State of Nebraska dropped slightly from 12.22% in 2011 to 11.84% in 2012 (NDE, 2012, Student Mobility page). For the purpose of this study, schools were divided into two groups based upon their student mobility rate: those with a rate of 12% or less were considered “low” and those with a rate of 13% or higher were considered “high.” Table 6 depicts the average student mobility rate for each Group.

**Table 6**

*Average Rate of Student Mobility by Group*

State of Nebraska	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
11.84%	18%	12%	13%

## Interview Participant Demographic Data

Participants from 14 schools were selected to take part in face to face interviews. Those interview locations were chosen from those schools who participated in the survey, based upon the schools geographic location, FRL and ELL rates, as well as overall student demographics. Table 7 illustrates the distribution of interview participants within each Group. Further, Table 8 depicts the number of administrator and teacher interviews within each Group.

**Table 7**

*Distribution of Interview Schools and Districts by Group*

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Schools	4	4	6	14
Districts	3	3	5	8*

*Note. \*The total number of districts selected is not the same as the total for each group added together as some districts had schools which fell into more than one group.*

**Table 8**

*Distribution of Administrator and Teacher Interviews by Group*

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Total
Administrator	5	5	7	17
Teacher	6	9	15	30
TOTAL	11	14	22	47

## RESEARCH STUDIES

The Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Research Study was conducted during the winter and summer of 2013. The studies are summarized in this section of the report and presented as three complete reports in Section III.

## **STUDY 1: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans**

**Jody Isernhagen, Ed.D., Associate Professor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**  
**Jackie Florendo, Ed.D., University of Nebraska-Lincoln**



### **Introduction**

This study examined administrator and teacher perceptions about how schools are implementing their Title I School Improvement Plans. A mixed methods research design including both quantitative and qualitative data was used for this study.

### **Purpose of Study**

**The purpose of Study 1** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plan in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools.

Areas studied were: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data was collected in the winter and spring of 2013.

### **Research Design**

This mixed-methods research study focused upon the implementation of Title I School Improvement plans. Administrators and teachers across the state were surveyed using an online instrument inquiring as to their perceptions of the Title I School Improvement process.

Only those schools identified in Title I Needs Improvement status by the Nebraska Department of Education were eligible to participate. Therefore, 80 schools in 28 districts (NDE, 2012, School Improvement page) across the state were invited to participate in the study. Twelve schools in 10 districts agreed to participate resulting in 258 total participants from Title I Needs Improvement schools: 235 teachers and 23 administrators. Participants from Title I Needs Improvement schools are referred to as “Group 1.”

## Demographic School/District Information

### Study Participant Demographic Data

A total of 258 administrators and teachers participated in the survey: 23 administrators and 235 teachers (see Table 9).

**Table 9**  
*Survey Participant Demographic Data, Group 1*

		<b>Group 1</b>
<b>Role</b>	<b>Administrator</b>	23
	<b>Teacher</b>	235
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	27
	<b>Female</b>	231
<b>Locale</b>	<b>Rural</b>	198
	<b>Non-Rural</b>	60
<b>ELL</b>	<b>Low</b>	100
	<b>High</b>	158
<b>FRL</b>	<b>Low</b>	12
	<b>Average</b>	25
	<b>High</b>	221
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>Low</b>	28
	<b>High</b>	230
<b>Level</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	210
	<b>Mid/Secondary</b>	48

### Locale

For the purpose of this research, participating Nebraska public school districts were divided into categories using Urban-Centric Locale Codes as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010). These locale codes are based on proximity to an urbanized area; definitions of each locale code can be found on page 25.

In Group 1, two schools (17%) were classified as “32-Town, Distant,” three schools (25%) were classified as “33-Town, Remote,” two schools (17%) were classified as “42-Rural, Distant,” two schools (17%) were classified as “43-Rural, Remote,” and three schools (25%) were classified as “11-City, Large.” Of the surveys returned, 77% were from rural schools and 23% were from non-rural schools. In comparing these numbers, it is important to take into account the fact that rural schools are likely to employ a smaller number of teachers and administrators. The distribution of locale codes for Group 1 is illustrated in Table 10.

**Table 10**  
*School Locale Code Distribution for Group 1*

	Locale Codes	Group 1	
		Participants	Schools
Rural	31: Town, Fringe 32: Town, Distant 33: Town, Remote 41: Rural, Fringe 42: Rural, Distant 43: Rural, Remote	198	9
Non-Rural	11: City, Large 21: Suburb, Large	60	3

### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Within the State of Nebraska, the average ELL student population is 6.47% (NDE, 2012) while the average for schools in Group 1 is 21%. Within Group 1, 100 participants (39%) were from schools with an ELL population of 7% and lower while 158 participants (61%) were from schools with an ELL student population greater than 7%.

### **Free Reduced Lunch (FRL)**

The average rate of Free and Reduced Price meals for the State of Nebraska is 43.79% (NDE, 2012) while the average for Group 1 is 67%. Of those educators in Group 1, 12 participants (4%) were from schools with an FRL rate of 39% and lower, 25 participants (10%) were from those schools between 40% and 55%, and 221 participants (86%) were from schools with an FRL rate of higher than 55%.

### **Mobility**

The average rate of student mobility across the State of Nebraska dropped from 12.22% in 2011 to 11.84% in 2012 (NDE, 2012); the average rate for Group 1 was higher at 18%. Of the educators in Group 1, 28 participants (11%) were from schools with a mobility rate of 12% or less while 230 participants (89%) were from those schools with a rate of 13% or higher.

### **Level**

In Group 1, 210 participants (81%) were from elementary schools while 48 (19%) were from middle/secondary schools.

### **Interview Participants**

Qualitative interviews were completed across the State of Nebraska in Title I Needs Improvement schools. Those interview locations were chosen from those schools who participated in the survey, based upon the schools geographic location, FRL and ELL rates, as well as overall student demographics. In Group 1, interviews were conducted in four schools from three districts with five administrators and six teachers for a total of 11 interviews.

### **Instruments**

Administrators responded to an 89-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers responded to a 93-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored 9 themes: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional

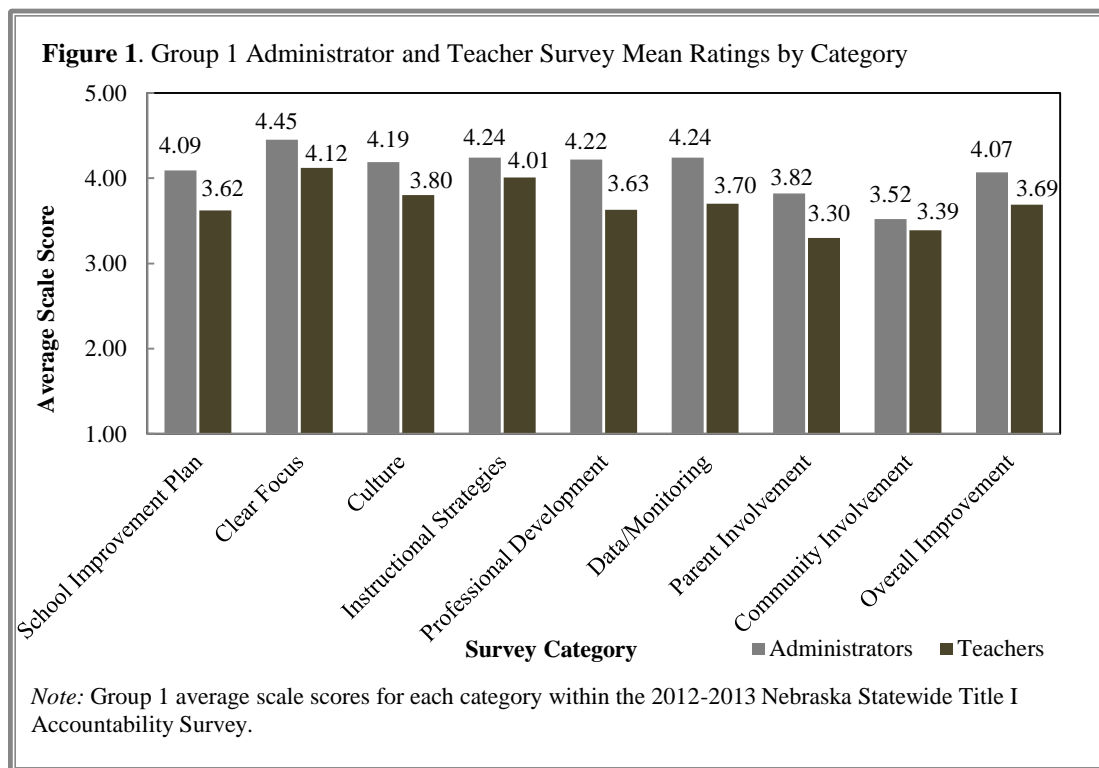
Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Some items on the teacher survey were not included on the administrator survey; this is noted in the results when it occurs. The surveys were designed to collect perceptions about the implementation of the Title I School Improvement Plans. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for this instrument was .975 for all participants.

Second, open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in four public schools within three school districts. The interview protocols were structured around the same nine themes used to structure the survey. Additionally, three new themes emerged in the interviews: Behavior Monitoring, Collaboration, and Meeting Individual Student Needs. Detailed perceptions were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix D) that gathered qualitative data. The interview protocols (Appendix D) asked for participants' demographic information and posed nine questions about their perceptions of their school's Title I School Improvement plan. Probes were identified for use with each question. Interviewers were provided a Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Manual and received training prior to conducting interviews.

## Findings

### Survey outcomes

Figure 1 shows administrator and teacher average ratings in the nine survey categories for participants in Group 1.



In six of the nine themes, teachers and administrators gave the same item the highest mean rating of the category. The items “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement,” “I am passionate about student learning,” “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices,” “Data are essential to our school improvement process,” “The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students,” and “I/Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement” were the highest rated items in each respective category by both teachers and administrators. Table 11 depicts the highest rated items by administrators and teachers in each category.

**Table 11**  
*Group 1 Administrator and Teacher Highest Mean Ratings by Survey Category*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Title I School Improvement Plan</b>	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.57)	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement” (4.24)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	“Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments in my school are used to support instruction and enhance student learning.” (4.70)	“I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” (4.55)
<b>Culture</b>	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.83)	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.75)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	“Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.” (4.52)	“I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.28)
<b>Professional Development</b>	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (4.48)	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (3.89)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.83)	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.40)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	“There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.” (4.26)	“An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs.” (3.86)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (4.26)	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (3.87)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	“Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.48)	“I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.26)

It is worth noting that both teachers and administrators emphasized, by their responses, the importance of using data. This was illustrated by the item, “Data are essential to our school improvement process” receiving the highest mean rating among the nine survey categories by both teachers (4.40) and administrators (4.83).

In five categories, both teachers and administrators gave the same item the lowest mean of the respective category. The items, “The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels,” “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching to improve their/my performance,” “Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe each other/other teachers in the classroom,” “Teachers/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data,” and “Community members recognize improvement as a



result of our Title I Improvement Plan” were rated the lowest in their categories. Educators and administrators both recognized the challenge of engaging the community in the school improvement process. Table 12 illustrates the lowest rated items by administrators and teachers for each of the nine survey categories.

**Table 12**

*Group 1 Administrator and Teacher Lowest Mean Ratings by Survey Category*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Title I School Improvement Plan</b>	“I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.” (3.57)	“I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” (3.14)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	“The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” (4.17)	“The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” (3.89)  “My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program.” (3.89)
<b>Culture</b>	“Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.” (4.00)  “The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty.” (4.00)	“The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” (3.49)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	“Teachers in my school use peer coaching to improve their performance.” (3.78)	“I use peer coaching to improve my performance.” (3.66)
<b>Professional Development</b>	“Teachers are encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.” (3.96)	“I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.” (3.15)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	“Teachers examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.48)	“I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.14)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	“Professional development opportunities have provided me with tools for successfully engaging parents in their child’s education.” (3.39)	“Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” (2.90)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	“Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.” (3.22)	“Strategies have been shared with me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships.” (3.11)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	“Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.” (3.57)	“Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.” (3.20)

### **Results by Survey Category and Interview Theme**

In this section of the report, teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of their Title I School Improvement plans were explored in nine categories: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Qualitative data from interviews were added to support the survey findings. Additionally, three new themes emerged in the interviews: Behavior Monitoring, Collaboration, and Meeting Individual Student Needs.

### ***Title I School Improvement Plan***

In the category of the Title I School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7), the average response of all administrators was 4.09. The average response of teachers was 3.62. Both teachers (4.24) and administrators (4.57) gave the highest item rating in the Title I School Improvement Plan category to “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” Administrators gave the item “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals” the lowest rating in the category (3.57). Teachers gave the item, “I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals” the lowest rating in the category (3.14); this item also resulted in a significant difference between male educators (3.67) and female educators (3.20) ( $p=.030$ ).

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the category (0.81) was for the item, “I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals.” Teachers rated this item 3.50 while administrators rated it higher at 4.30 resulting in a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ). A female elementary teacher explained:

As a teacher I know how my classroom is and how my grade level is because we do a lot of creating formative assessments so it’s an ongoing assessment to see that kids are reaching those goals. Kids who are not (performing) we have interventions; we have a standard intervention day based on student needs. As a grade level, we divide kids up to make sure we’re meeting the needs. Maybe these kids need a certain math goal; these kids might need enrichment, so we work together as a team to meet all second grade needs.

Another inconsistency between teacher and administrator responses was “I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” Teachers were more likely to rate this item closer to “undecided” with an average response of 3.14, whereas administrators rated this item closer to “agree” with an average response of 3.91, a significant difference ( $p=.004$ ). A female elementary administrator explained:

I am responsible for the creation and the forming of a team to ensure that we have strategies and plans in place for the entire school year and our teachers lead that plan. It’s my responsibility to ensure that for the accountability, check backs, and next steps. Currently we’re looking forward to next year and reflecting back on this year. That’s my total responsibility, to keep it at the forefront of what we do.

There was a significant difference between responses from administrators (4.13) and teachers (3.50) for the item, “I have/Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I Goals to teachers” ( $p=.003$ ). A female elementary teacher shared:

I know as far as parents and Title I goals, the principal meets with parents. He does a few meetings a year to communicate those goals. As far as teachers communicating those goals to parents, we have some curriculum nights throughout the year where we talk about standards and objectives for grade levels. We also go into, “This is what our schoolwide goal is.” We even list our SMART goals, what are we going to do to try to meet the overarching school goals.

### ***Clear Focus***

In the category of Clear Focus (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17), administrator’s average rating in this category was 4.45 while teacher’s average rating was

4.12. The item rated strongest by administrators within the Clear Focus category was “Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments in my school are used to support instruction and enhance student learning” (4.70). The item rated strongest by teachers was “I engage students in order to improve academic performance” (4.55).

Administrators (4.17) and Teachers (3.89) gave “The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels” the weakest rating in the Clear Focus category. Teachers (3.89) also rated “My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program” as the weakest item in this category. A female elementary teacher explained how her program is strongly focused and cohesive:

We have a coach in our building. One of our school improvement goals is that we are required to have the coach in our room on a periodic basis whether they are facilitating a lesson, collaborating or just there to watch and give you feedback. A lot of times at our school, we don’t have a say in what school improvement is. It’s a district thing that we’re all doing, but we try to fit it just to us. So, if its math, we pick out, from our math plan what we think we’re low in and try to use that when we build school improvement.

The item, “Teachers/I engage students in order to improve academic performance” resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) between educators in schools with a low ELL student population (4.43) and educators in schools with a high ELL student population (4.62). Also, the item, “There is a clear articulation of standards in my school” resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) between educators from elementary schools (4.21) and educators in schools of all other levels (3.69).

A female, elementary teacher explained how cohesive curriculum is supportive of ELL students, “It’s nice because when you have an ELL student in your room and they’re not in there at the time you’re doing the curriculum activity itself, there’s a nice overlap where the kids will say, ‘We did that too.’”

### *Culture*

In the Culture category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31), the average response of all administrators was 4.19, while the average response of teachers was 3.80. The item rated strongest was “I am passionate about student learning” with the administrator average rating falling between “agree” and “strongly agree” at 4.83 and teacher ratings at 4.75. This item resulted in a significant difference between male educators at 4.52 and female educators at 4.78 ( $p=.010$ ), educators from schools with a low ELL student population at 4.66 and those from schools with a high ELL student population at 4.82 ( $p=.010$ ), rural educators at 4.72 and non-rural educators at 4.87 ( $p=.010$ ), and educators from elementary schools at 4.80 and those from secondary schools at 4.54 ( $p=.003$ ).

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the Culture category was “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.” Teachers rated this item lower at 3.59 while administrators rated it higher at 4.13 resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ). Responses from educators at schools with a low ELL student population (3.34) and those at schools with a high ELL student population (3.83) also resulted in a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ). A non-rural male administrator explained:

I think at times, we have so many competing interests that we may not collaborate at the level we need to. Even though I just talked about how we do really well in collaboration, I think our culture could be more collaborative in what we do for kids. I don't have an answer about how to make that happen when you have so many people at the table. I think we need to work harder at making that happen; where there's a will there's a way. I think it's hard, so we don't go to that next step.

A similar mean discrepancy occurred for the item "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving" which administrators rated 4.04 and teachers rated lowest in the category at 3.49 also resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ). A significant difference ( $p=.016$ ) resulted between educators from schools with a low ELL student population (3.34) and those with a high ELL student population (3.66) as well as between male educators (3.85) and female educators (3.50) ( $p=.040$ ) for this item. A female elementary administrator shared:

We meet once a month as a SIP team, that's a nice time. The principal will always start by asking the team if we've heard any feedback on the professional day. She always wants to know how the teachers felt about it, in a sense to know if it was appreciated and went well. We always go back and share information with them, get insight from them; "What else do they need support in? What questions are coming up?"

The item "Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together" received the lowest rating in the category for administrators (4.00) and resulted in a significant difference between administrators and teachers ( $p=.002$ ) as well as a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from schools with a low ELL student population (3.27) and educators from schools with a high ELL student population (3.82).

The item, "The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty" also received the lowest rating in the category for administrators (4.00); teachers rated it 3.50 resulting in a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ). This item also resulted in a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from schools with a low ELL student population (3.12) and those from schools with a high ELL student population (3.81). A female elementary teacher reflected upon her school's culture:

I think our school culture promotes equality, equal treatment for all students, equal expectations, we want everyone to be successful, and we work hard to make sure kids feel that and believe that. We put a high priority on student relationships and letting kids understand that we care about them and want them to do well, even when things are hard which they sometimes are.

### ***Instructional Strategies***

In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42), the average response of all administrators was 4.24 while teachers average response was 4.01. Administrators rated the item "Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works" highest for the category at 4.52. The item also resulted in a significant difference in responses from educators at schools with a low ELL student population at 3.99 and those with a high ELL student population at 4.34 ( $p<.001$ ).

Teachers rated the item “I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences” highest at 4.28. A female elementary teacher discussed professional development strategies:

The district had an overarching professional development but our team went a little further and did some book studies on specific parts of reading instruction. Teams have done that with math, ELL strategies that work, and different things that we’ve developed. Any staff that wants to participate in book studies can join.

The largest mean discrepancy between teachers and administrators in the category was “Teachers/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.” Teachers rated this item lower at 3.74, and administrators rated it higher at 4.22, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ). A female elementary administrator shared:

I think a lot of our teachers collect a lot of data which also helps when we need to see that data with the RTI kids. As a whole school, I know for climate and culture, we’ve set three schoolwide rules and the teachers track that data daily. The principal also has a poster up front where she’s tracking each classroom. So, a lot of that visual charting to see not only for the teachers, but the students as well.

In addition, both teachers (3.66) and administrators (3.78) rated the item “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improvement their/my performance” lowest in the category. This item resulted in a significant difference between levels of mobility ( $p=.020$ ), rural and non-rural ( $p=.037$ ), and between elementary level and secondary levels ( $p=.010$ ). A female elementary teacher added:

We have some teachers in the building, for a better choice of words, a class within a class. They co-teach, during reading time so instead of just having the classroom teacher, the English Language Arts teacher is actually in there too. There’s some team teaching going on. The coach is one that can do extra things.

### ***Professional Development***

In the Professional Development category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50), the average response of all administrators was 4.22. The average response of teachers was 3.63.

The item rated strongest by both administrators and teachers within the Professional Development category was, “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” Administrators rated this item 4.48, while teachers rated this item 3.89.

The item rated weakest by both administrators and teachers was, “Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.” Administrators (3.96) rated this item between “uncertain” and “agree” whereas teachers’ (3.15) perceptions were lower, just above “agree.” A female elementary teacher shared how teachers are learning from other teachers in her school:

We have grade level teams, our data teams collaborate. Within those teams we have our ELL, we have a special education person, and a little support for teaching those grade levels that can come in so we’re all teaching to the common goal and collaborating in that way. One of the things I’ve done is some coaching and modeling for other teachers; we

had some new teachers in the building within the year, so we'll go in and do some coaching or teaching to help improve math instruction. We share goals with ELL so when we work on improving an instructional strategy we're all doing it the same.

The largest mean discrepancy in the Professional Development category was "I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth." Administrators were more likely to rate this item "agree" at 4.30. However, teachers were more likely to rate this item between "undecided" and "agree" at 3.37. This item resulted in a significant difference between administrators and teachers ( $p < .001$ ) as well as between low and high levels of ELL student populations ( $p = .001$ ). A female elementary teacher explained:

Once a week, the kids get early release and we meet as a grade level. We use time to plan, to talk about what things might be coming up. Sometimes the principal has us use that time to look at implementing something new into our classroom, or ties it to a professional development that we might do.

### ***Data/Monitoring***

In the Data/Monitoring category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67), the average response of all administrators was 4.24 while teacher's average response was 3.70. Items 64 through 67 on the Teacher Survey were not included on the Administrator Survey thus, after Item 63, the item numbers for each survey no longer correlate.

The item rated strongest by both administrators (4.83) and teachers (4.40) in the Data/Monitoring category was, "Data are essential to our school improvement process." This item also resulted in a statistical significance between administrators and teachers ( $p < .001$ ). A male principal explained:

Data teams are professional learning communities; we monitor our data in a variety of ways. We monitor reading data through our district common assessments that are given quarterly; we also monitor our reading data through the tests that go along with the district and are aligned with the report card.

The item rated weakest by both administrators (3.48) and teachers (3.14) was "Teachers/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data." The item, "I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students' performance" (teachers only) resulted in a significant difference between teachers in high and low ELL groups ( $p = .001$ ) and between teachers in elementary and secondary schools ( $p = .009$ ). A female elementary administrator shared that teachers monitor behavioral data and chart it to identify their progress towards school goals:

In our goal, the teachers chart: Were you respectful, yes or no? Were you responsible, yes or no? Were you safe, yes or no? They chart that as a class then they send it to me and I chart it for the whole school.

### ***Parent Involvement***

In the Parent Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-75, Teacher Survey Questions 68-79), the average response of all administrators was 3.82. The average response of teachers was 3.30.

The item rated strongest by administrators (4.26) in the Parent Involvement category was “There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.” This item also resulted in the greatest mean discrepancy for the category at 1.06 between administrators and teachers as well as a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ).

Administrators rated this item mostly agree at 4.26, while teachers rated it between “neutral” and “agree” at 3.20. A female elementary principal shared:

They started a parent program that is very well supported. Families are supported. We have an elementary graduation; . . . They support their kids and they support the school. There is very little vandalism to our school . . . and the community around our school respects our school.

Teachers rated the item, “An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs” the highest in the category at 3.86. This item resulted in a significant difference between educators in schools with a high ELL student population and those in schools with a low ELL student population ( $p = .017$ ). A female elementary teacher reflected on the schools’ efforts to utilize parent input, “I think they do a nice job of really trying to get parent input as to what they want and need for our school.”

Administrators rated this item the lowest, “Professional development opportunities have provided me with tools for successfully engaging parents in their child’s education” at 3.39. Teachers, however, rated this item, “Parents are involved in the identification of the Title I Goals” much lower than administrators at 2.90. A female elementary teacher shared the lack of professional development to successfully engage parents in their child’s education:

It’s instilled that this is a partnership and that was my job. A lot of our staff believes that they want the parents to buy in and be 100%, but they’re not always in. I think when the staff have meetings or conferences, they really try to instill the fact that we want your child to succeed, what can we do together to make that happen. I think the door is open for us to build that.

The item, “Parents have high expectations for their children” resulted in the second highest mean discrepancy in the category between administrators and teachers as well as a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ). A female elementary teacher explained how educators are encouraging high expectations from parents:

What we’re trying to do is partner with families to show them it’s a partnership and we’ll have a higher rate of success if we work together. We did a project this year to show parents that they can teach at home. The early childhood program does a great job of partnering with families because they do home visits, which is a requirement. I know that one of the main goals for that is just showing parents how you can be a teacher at home all of the time.

### ***Community Involvement***

In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 76-81, Teacher Survey Questions 80-85), the average response of all administrators was 3.52. The average response of teachers was 3.39. The item rated strongest by administrators and teachers in the Community Involvement category was “The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” Administrators rated this item mostly “agree” at 4.26,

while teachers rated it between “neutral” and “agree” at 3.87. This item also resulted in a significant difference between responses from those in a school with a low ELL student population rating it 3.68 and those in a school with a high ELL student population at 4.05 ( $p=.002$ ).

Of note, the item, “An annual survey is sent to the community members to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs” resulted in a significant difference between male educators (3.89) and female educators (3.51) ( $p=.010$ ). Administrators rated the item “Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel” the lowest in the category at 3.22. Teachers rated the item “Strategies have been shared with me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships” the lowest at 3.11. A female elementary principal:

I think we have a great staff, a lot of veteran teachers. We did a survey a while back (which) had something to do with, “How do you think the community sees your school?” A lot of our teachers rated that really low, the principal has the specific statistics on that. I think a lot of people perceive it as very low-income poor, that sort of thing. I feel that our teachers really support it and do all they can to meet the goals.

### ***Overall Improvement***

In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 82-88, Teacher Survey Questions 86-92), the average response of all administrators was 4.07. The average response of teachers was 3.69. The item rated strongest by both administrators and teachers in the Overall Improvement category was “Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” Administrators rated this item 4.48 while teachers rated it at 4.26. In addition, this item resulted in a significant difference between male educators (4.04) and female educators (4.30) ( $p=.040$ ). A female elementary administrator explained her role in monitoring the goals:

With our school improvement goals, we work on those all year long. When we look at that data, we report that every month for reading and math, we look at the goals, see where students are and then we plan interventions to meet those. We revisit the data and do formative assessments. The initial goals we made were based on state standards so we know that all of that is tied together.

The item rated weakest by administrators (3.57) and teachers (3.20) was “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.” A female elementary administrator discussed outside influences:

Language is huge. A challenge that we have at our school is that a lot of our parents are non-English speaking so it’s hard for them to sometimes understand what the goals are, how they work, and test scores. I know that papers are sent home trying to explain exactly what the students will be doing and some of our goals. Also, messages are sent to try to inform parents.

Two other items resulted in a significant difference between administrators and teachers. “During teacher evaluations, administrators discuss with me about the way I am helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals” was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.53 by teachers ( $p=.005$ ). The item, “Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap”



was rated 4.09 by administrators and lower at 3.77 by teachers ( $p=.026$ ). A female elementary administrator discussed the new teacher appraisal process within her district:

I think my favorite piece has been the new appraisal process within the district. I learned so much because teachers tell me about what they're doing at such a deep level. I had a teacher interview for an internal position, when asked about areas she wanted to improve, she referred to the appraisal rubric and stated, 'I get those out and look at them and then I try to figure out how I'm going to be proficient and distinguished.' I love how they're connecting that.

### **Emergent Interview Themes**

Three new themes emerged in the interviews: (1) Behavior Monitoring; (2) Collaboration; and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs.

#### ***Behavior Monitoring***

Behavior Monitoring became apparent as an emerging theme during the interviews. Teachers and administrators stressed how behavior impacted instruction and learning therefore requiring implementation of research-based strategies and interventions. There are two prominent processes shared in this study for behavior monitoring: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST). RTI was discussed as a model to contribute to more meaningful learning and improvement of behavioral problems for students to have opportunities to succeed. RTI can be defined as "an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasing intervention services" (Pool, Russell Carter, & Johnson, 2012, para. 2). The process "includes both academic and behavioral aspects of student performance and is based on a three-tiered model" (para. 2).

A female elementary teacher shared how instructional strategies embraced by RTI have changed the constant interruptions to instruction:

In my classroom, I have 21 students, 10 of them are receiving RTI services. That's quite a few kids that are coming and going at different times throughout the day. I think those interventions and those instructional strategies that we have in place are beneficial for our kids, but we have to keep monitoring them and making sure that how they are working is also not negatively impacting the students in terms of how much time they're out of the classroom versus in, and the time it takes them to walk down to one hallway and walk back.

BIST was also mentioned multiple times in participant interviews as a model for behavior management and is used in many Nebraska school districts. This model differs from RTI as it "permeates a school culture and promotes a positive, problem-solving mind-set" (Ozanam, n.d., Success Stories page). BIST "is a proactive school-wide behavior management plan for all students, emphasizing schools partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations. BIST strategies are person-centered and based on the core conditions of congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard" (Evidence Based Outcomes page) and "allows teachers to confront disruptive behavior with grace and accountability" (Philosophy page).

A non-rural female elementary teacher shared how BIST supports consistency for student, We use BIST and positive behavior supports. In doing that schoolwide helps with consistent expectations. Throughout the day, in every part of the day, those standards for behavior and learning are there. In the classroom, this is what we expect; we really work hard to create an environment for learning.

As students face an increasing number of barriers outside of school, they are expected to interact and engage appropriately in the classroom. Teachers are being challenged, as was evident in the interviews, to find quality means to extinguish negative behaviors and provide a safe, secure learning environment which fosters successful student achievement for every child.

There were fourteen quotes referencing behaviors from educators in Group 1. A female elementary administrator shared the extent to which data was used in the school to help students become more responsible, respectful, and safe:

Teachers chart and ask, “Were you respectful, yes or no?” “Were you responsible, yes or no?” “Were you safe, yes or no?” So they have a potential of six ‘yes’s’ per day; they chart that as a class and send it to me and I chart it for the whole school to see how we are doing. This is the first year we’ve been doing that. It’s right out in the front hallway. Some teachers really like it and embrace it, “It’s really helped my classroom management.” I’ve noticed this year, that no matter if you’re going to music or lunch or just in the hallway, I don’t have to teach it to kids, they already know it. I just have to say, “What are we talking about today?” The kids will say, “We weren’t very respectful.” They can lead the conversation and they can go through the verbiage; it’s shortened up office time. It feels like it has lessened office referrals.

A female elementary teacher shared the intervention plan for behavior monitoring:

Certain students are on behavior plans. For example, I have a student who has a really, really hard time focusing and doing what he is asked to do. Every 15 minutes, he has a chart I have to fill out to make sure he’s staying on task at a 1, a 2, or a 3. I know there are plans like that in most of the classrooms. We’ve implemented this respect, responsibility, safe kind of schoolwide rule to keep it consistent. We’re trying to get a schoolwide language going. I think the more they hear that, the more they see that, hopefully it will change down the road.

### ***Collaboration***

Collaboration was another theme that emerged in the study. DuFour (2011) noted the conventional style of teachers working in isolation:

Teachers work in isolation from one another. They view their classrooms as their personal domains, have little access to the ideas or strategies of their colleagues, and prefer to be left alone rather than engage with their colleagues or principals. Their professional practice is shrouded in a veil of privacy and personal autonomy and is not a subject for collective discussion or analysis. (pp. 57-58)

However, DuFour (2011) explained the necessity for teachers to work together, “There is abundant research linking higher levels of student achievement to educators who work in a collaborative culture of a professional learning community” (p. 59).

Apparent in interview responses from this year's study, collaboration is becoming a vital piece of the school improvement processes. "The belief underlying the use of teams in schools is that group decision-making and collaboration produce better outcomes than decision-making by individuals" (Pool et al., 2012, para. 5). These teams, instead of having one isolated individual, combine the plethora of experiences, knowledge, and abilities from every member of the group.

Working in collaboration also allows teachers "to be involved in planning and problem solving. By sharing responsibility as a team, teachers and staff are accountable for student progress and are more aware of the needs of individual students" (Pool et al., 2012, para. 36). With constantly increasing demands on teachers' time and resources, it is no surprise that collaboration and teacher networking were referenced in interviews 53 times. A rural elementary principal shared how collaboration works to build the school's capacity to improve:

We've developed an atmosphere of collaboration, I think that's very important because our staff, hopefully and I believe this is true, and I think they would echo the same thing, that we are in this together. Its collaboration, we're in this together. It's not directives coming down from on high saying we have to do this and that. We get together with our staff and we really try to work with them saying, "Here's our intent, how do we get there?" We collaborate on how we can get there. I'd say data and collaboration are really important.

### ***Meeting Individual Student Needs***

In the interviews, teachers and administrators discussed the importance of meeting individual student needs in order for student learning to transpire. Teachers shared strategies they had identified to meet individual student learning needs, in situations where students' learning needs were not met by classroom strategies. Recent research supports the importance of "personalizing learning for each student by using a variety of appropriate and targeted instructional strategies" (CCSSO, 2010, p. 10). Differentiation of instruction was mentioned 8 times by educators from Group 1. A female elementary administrator shared the school's focus as it relates to the improvement goals:

I think a big focus is individual student improvement. We look at every individual student; we've been doing this in reading for a long time. I'm happy to say that we're beginning this process now in math too. Seeing where each student is, what's their level, and determining how we can best serve that kid where they are and bring them along to hopefully grow them not only that one year (of grade level progress) in a year, but more than that one year (of progress) in a year. That would be a focus of ours.

A female elementary teacher shared how teachers in her school communicate with parents in order to best meet the academic and behavioral needs of every student:

At the beginning before we even talk about the kid, the parent fills out the form. We're getting a view from the parent of what they see as far as strengths and concerns in academics, language, behavior, and social skills. This is first before the teacher fills out the request. It's been amazing, parents know from the start.

## Summary

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the implementation of the Title I plans in Nebraska Title I schools for improving student achievement as identified as Needing Improvement. Findings indicated that Nebraska Title I Needs Improvement schools overall were incorporating group and individual strategies to meet student needs to improve student performance for all students. Administrators and teachers discussed the planning and progress of their School Improvement plan and Title I goals, categorized by these survey themes: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. During the interview process, three new themes emerged in the participant responses: (1) Behavior Monitoring, (2) Collaboration, and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs.

Many of the Title I schools participating in this study discussed working together and establishing a school-based collaboration and networking process. Educators were no longer closing their doors, but inviting their colleagues into their classrooms, engaging in discussion and reflection to overcome student learning barriers and improve performance for all students. Survey data and interview responses showed an increase in collaboration and working collectively; however worth noting, peer observations were discussed by educators in only a few schools.

This year's study revealed educators were not only utilizing data, but seemed to have a deeper understanding and knowledge of what data is and how to use it effectively to improve student performance. Both teachers and administrators noted the importance of using data as a key element to increase student academic achievement as the item, "Data are essential to our school improvement process" received the highest mean rating among the nine survey categories by both teachers and administrators.

In the interviews, more educators discussed having specialized data systems in place where they had timely access to student data giving them the ability to monitor student progress over time. Several educators talked about the 'data culture' that is now evident in their schools. Data is being used to plan large group, small group, and individual instruction and to share student groupings across single grade levels.

Parent and community involvement continue to be a challenge for schools throughout the study. The item, "Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan" was rated the lowest in the Community Involvement category. Educators and administrators both recognized the challenge of engaging the community in the school improvement process as well as establishing shared beliefs and values that form the foundation of a culture of improvement.

In a few locations, there were new and positive activities for parents and community members to become involved in schools. A female ELL elementary teacher shared how their school's faculty is reaching out to parents:

We will have parents come in at the beginning of the school year; we'll give a presentation on math, reading, and writing and go over where we want students to be at the end of the year. For example, when we had our ELL curriculum night, we talked

about writing and how we're looking for proficiency in personal narrative writing and what that means and what that looks like. We also went over our ELL checklist so parents could see how students would be exiting out of the program. At the grade level, we discussed things like how parents can help their children with these skills, especially with math; they talked about how the math homework would be helping them on these standards they need to be proficient on by the end of the year.

## **STUDY 2: Examining Educators' Perceptions of the School Improvement Plan in Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Non-Title Needs Improvement Schools**

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### **Introduction**

This study examined administrator and teacher perceptions about how schools are implementing their Title I School Improvement Plans in Title I Needs Improvement Schools compared with Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools. This study used a mixed methods research design using both quantitative and qualitative data. Significant differences between the two groups were examined, analyzed, and are discussed.

### **Purpose of Study**

**The purpose of Study 2** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I and School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools compared with **Non-Title I Needs Improvement** Schools.

Areas studied were: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data was collected in the winter and spring of 2013.

### **Research Design**

This mixed-methods research study focused upon the implementation of Title I and School Improvement plans. Administrators and teachers across the state were surveyed using an online instrument regarding their perceptions about the School Improvement process.

Schools identified as Title I Needs Improvement as well as schools not in Title I but identified as Needs Improvement by the Nebraska Department of Education were invited to participate. Educators from 12 schools in Title I Needs Improvement status (Group 1) in 10 districts participated for a total of 235 teachers and 23 administrators. Educators from 15 schools in Non-Title I Needs Improvement status (Group 2) in 12 districts participated for a total of 505 teachers and 45 administrators. Demographic information for Group 1 is in Study 1; demographic data for Group 2 is shared in this study with some comparison to the demographics of Group 1.

## Demographic School/District Information

### Study Participant Demographic Data

A total of 258 educators participated in Group 1: 23 administrators and 235 teachers while 550 educators participated in Group 2: 45 administrators and 505 teachers. Table 13 depicts the demographic breakdown of participants in Group 1 and Group 2.

**Table 13**  
*Survey Participant Demographic Data, Group 1 and Group 2*

		Group 1	Group 2
<b>Role</b>	<b>Administrator</b>	23	45
	<b>Teacher</b>	235	505
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	27	185
	<b>Female</b>	231	365
<b>Locale</b>	<b>Rural</b>	198	423
	<b>Non-Rural</b>	60	127
<b>ELL</b>	<b>Low</b>	100	463
	<b>High</b>	158	87
<b>FRL</b>	<b>Low</b>	12	154
	<b>Average</b>	25	259
	<b>High</b>	221	137
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>Low</b>	28	353
	<b>High</b>	230	197
<b>Level</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	210	28
	<b>Mid/Secondary</b>	48	522

Detailed demographic data comparing Group 1 and Group 2 can be found in Section III: Study 2 of this report.

### Locale

For the purpose of this research, participating Nebraska public school districts were divided into rural and non-rural categories using Urban-Centric Locale Codes as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010). These locale codes are based on proximity to an urbanized area.

In Group 2, one school (7%) was classified as “31-Town: Fringe,” two schools (13%) were classified as “32-Town, Distant,” eight schools (53%) were classified as “33-Town, Remote,” one school (7%) was classified as “41-Rural, Fringe,” one school (7%) was classified as “11-City, Large,” and two schools (13%) were classified as “21-Suburb, Large.” The distribution of locale codes for Group 1 and Group 2 is illustrated in Table 14.

**Table 14**  
*School Locale Code Distribution, Group 1 and Group 2*

	Locale Codes	Group 1		Group 2	
		Participants	Schools	Participants	Schools
Rural	31: Town, Fringe 32: Town, Distant 33: Town, Remote 41: Rural, Fringe 42: Rural, Distant 43: Rural, Remote	198	9	423	12
Non-Rural	11: City, Large 21: Suburb, Large	60	3	127	3

Of the surveys returned, 77% were from rural districts and 23% were from non-rural districts. Definitions of each locale code can be found on page 25. In comparing these numbers, it is important to take into account the fact that rural districts are likely to employ a smaller number of teachers and administrators.

### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Within the State of Nebraska, the average ELL student population is 6.47% (NDE, 2012) while the average for schools in Group 2 is 4%. In Group 2, 463 participants (84%) were from schools with a population of 7% and lower while 87 participants (16%) were from schools with higher than 7% ELL student population.

### **Free Reduced Lunch (FRL)**

The average rate of Free and Reduced Price meals for the State of Nebraska is 43.79% (NDE, 2012) while the average for Group 2 is 43%. In Group 2, 154 participants (28%) were from schools with a FRL rate of 39% and lower and considered “low,” 259 participants (47%) were from those schools between 40% and 55% FRL or “middle,” and 137 participants (25%) were from schools with an FRL rate of higher than 55% and considered “high.”

### **Mobility**

The average rate of student mobility across the State of Nebraska dropped from 12.22% (2011) to 11.84% (NDE, 2012); the average rate for Group 2 was similar at 12%. In Group 2, 353 participants (64%) were from schools with a student mobility rate of 12% or less and 197 participants (36%) were from schools that had a rate of 13% or higher.

### **Level**

Within Group 2, 28 participants (5%) were from elementary schools and 522 participants (95%) were from middle, high, or consolidated schools.

### **Interview Participants**

Qualitative interviews were completed across the State of Nebraska in Group 2, Non-Title I Needs Improvement schools. Those interview locations were chosen from schools who participated in the survey, based upon the schools geographic location, FRL and ELL rates, as well as overall student demographics. Group 2 interviews were conducted in four schools from four districts with five administrators and nine teachers for a total of 14 interviews.



## Instruments

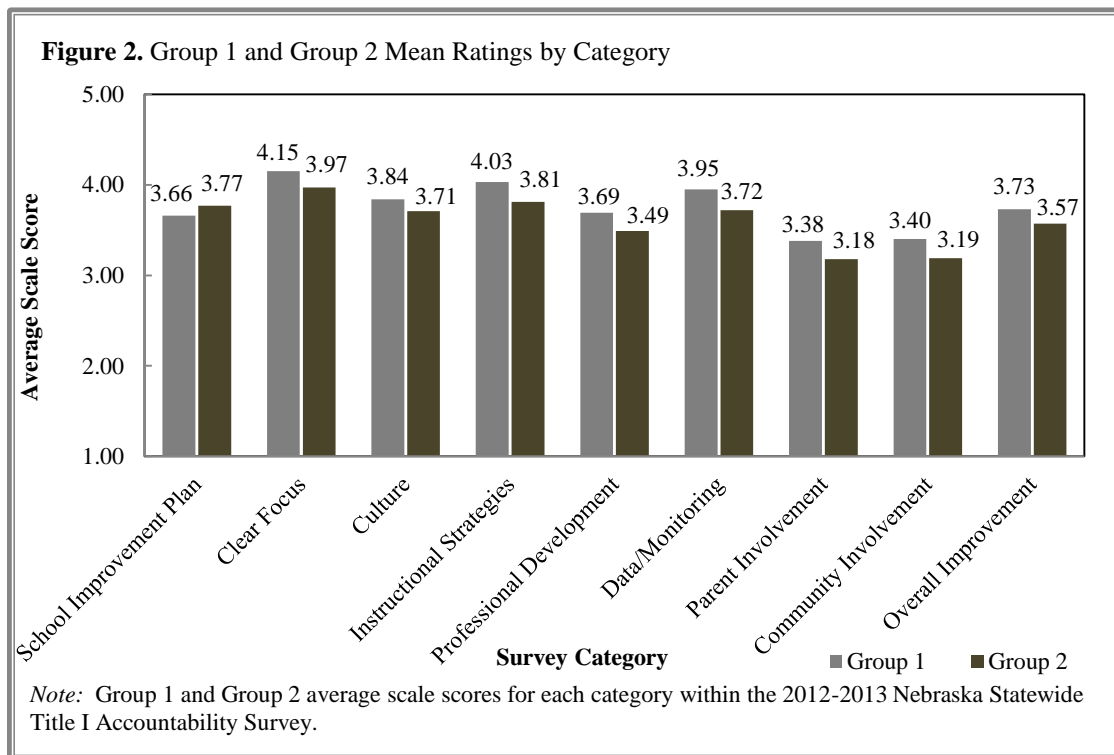
Administrators responded to an 89-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers responded to a 93-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored 9 themes: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Some items on the teacher survey were not included on the administrator survey. Where this occurs, it is noted in the results. The surveys were designed to collect perceptions about the implementation of the Title I School Improvement Plans. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for this instrument was .975 for all participants in Group 1 and .972 for all participants in Group 2.

Second, open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in four public schools in four school districts. The interview protocols were structured around the same nine themes used to structure the survey: (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Additionally, three new themes emerged in the interviews: Behavior Monitoring, Collaboration, and Meeting Individual Student Needs.

## Findings

### Survey Outcomes

Figure 2 displays the mean ratings for educators in Group 1 and Group 2 for the nine survey categories.



Mean scores were used to determine similarities and differences for each survey category. In both Groups 1 and Group 2, the highest rated item for each group was the same survey item in seven of the nine categories. In the category, Culture, the survey item, “I am passionate about student learning” was rated the highest by both Groups 1 and 2.

In two categories, Professional Development and Parent Involvement, participants in Group 1 and Group 2 did not rate the same item the highest. The item, “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices” was rated the highest (3.94) by participants in Group 1 in the category of Professional Development whereas the item, “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning” was rated the highest by those from Group 2 (3.82). In Table 15, the items rated highest within each category for Group 1 and Group 2 are identified.

**Table 15**  
*Group 1 and Group 2 Highest Mean Rating by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 2: Non-Title Needs Improvement
<b>Title I/School Improvement Plan</b>	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.27)	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.10)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	“Teachers/I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” (4.55)	“Teachers/I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” (4.40)
<b>Culture</b>	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.76)	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.69)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	“I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.27)	“I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.08)
<b>Professional Development</b>	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (3.94)	“Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.” (3.82)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.43)	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.14)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	“An annual survey is sent to parents/ guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs.” (3.89)	“Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child (ren)’s education.” (3.70)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (3.91)	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (4.00)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	“Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.28)	“Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.03)

The other category in which Group 1 and Group 2 participants did *not* rate the same item the highest was Parent Involvement. Participants in Group 1 rated the item, “An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs” the highest (3.89) while the item, “Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child (ren)’s education”

was rated the highest by educators in Group 2 (3.70). Of note, the category Parent Involvement resulted in the lowest of the highest mean ratings for both Group 1 and Group 2. This was the lowest rated category overall for both Groups. These lowest mean ratings are depicted in Table 16.

**Table 16**  
*Group 1 and Group 2 Lowest Mean Rating by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 2: Non-Title Needs Improvement
<b>Title I/School Improvement Plan</b>	"I was involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals." (3.21)	"I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I/School Improvement Goals." (3.26)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	"The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels." (3.92)	"There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need." (3.73)
<b>Culture</b>	"The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty." (3.54)  "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving." (3.54)	"The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty." (3.43)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	"Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance." (3.67)	"Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities." (3.37)
<b>Professional Development</b>	"I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom." (3.22)	"I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom." (3.07)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	"Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data." (3.17)	"Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data." (3.05)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	"Parents are involved in identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals." (2.95)	"Parents are involved in identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals." (2.79)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	"Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/ me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/ community partnerships." (3.14)	"Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/ me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/ community partnerships." (2.82)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	"Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I/ School Improvement Plan." (3.24)	"Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I/ School Improvement Plan." (3.13)

For Groups 1 and 2, the lowest rated item for each group was the same in six of the nine categories as depicted in Table 16. In the category Title I School Improvement Plan, the item, "I was involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals" was rated lowest by Group 1 (3.21) while the item, "I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I/School Improvement Goals" was rated lowest by Group 2 educators (3.26).

The second category, Clear Focus, also had different lowest rated items. Group 1 rated the item, "The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels" the lowest at 3.92 while Group 2 rated the item, "There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need" the lowest (3.73). Lastly, within the category of

Instructional Strategies, Group 1 rated the item, “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance” the lowest at 3.67 while Group 2 educators rated the item, “Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities” the lowest at 3.37.

In the category of Parent Involvement the survey item, “Parents are involved in identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals” was rated the lowest by Group 1 (2.95) and Group 2 (2.79). T-Tests were used to determine the mean value of survey items with significant differences using an alpha level of .05 between Groups 1 and 2. These differences are discussed within each survey category when they occur.

### **Results by Survey Category and Interview Theme**

In this section of the report, teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of their Title I and School Improvement plans will be explored in nine categories: (1) Title I/School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Additionally, three new themes emerged in the interviews: Behavior Monitoring, Collaboration, and Meeting Individual Student Needs.

#### ***Title I/School Improvement Plan***

In the category of the Title I/School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7), the average response of educators in Group 1 was 3.66. The average response of Group 2 educators was 3.77. Both Group 1 educators and Group 2 educators gave the highest item rating in the Title I/School Improvement Plan category to “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” This item also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) between educators in Group 1 (4.27) and those in Group 2 (4.10).

Additionally, Group 1 educators gave the item, “I was involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement goals” the lowest rating in the category at 3.21. Group 2 educators gave the item, “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I/School Improvement Goals” the lowest rating in the category at 3.26.

The item, “Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I/School Improvement Goals to teachers” revealed a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators in Group 1 (3.56) and educators in Group 2 (3.87). “I understand the Title I/School Improvement goals and how to achieve these goals” also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) between Group 1 (3.57) and Group 2 (3.76). Lastly, “Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I/School Improvement goals have been identified” resulted in a significant ( $p=.020$ ) difference between Group 1 educators (3.73) and educators in Group 2 (3.89).

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) male secondary teacher shared how progress toward school improvement goals is communicated to teachers:

Usually with teachers, it is done either at the beginning of the year in the large faculty meeting and we share, in general, how we did the past year in reaching those goals. Any

accomplishments that are done throughout the year, we have small group meetings that we might share some of that information.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) male principal explained how the progress toward meeting Title I goals has been communicated to teachers, staff, and parents:

On our website, we post our AYP letters. We do also send out messages. With teachers, we have the monthly faculty meeting then once every other month we have a professional development meeting where we talk about our progress. We also have a grade level responsible for reporting what they are doing with the school improvement strategies; I know you're teaching kids every day, but it's focused instruction, not just whatever you want. There's a sense of expectation, you're here to teach these kinds of things, it's not just about butterflies or whales. Our staff really understands that, especially when you've been a failing school.

### *Clear Focus*

In the category of Clear Focus (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17), the average rating in this category for Group 1 educators was 4.15 while the average rating of educators in Group 2 was 3.97.

The item rated strongest by Group 1 educators at 4.55 and Group 2 educators at 4.40 was "I engage students in order to improve academic performance." This item also revealed a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) between administrators and teachers and a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between male educators (4.29) and female educators (4.46).

Educators from Group 1 rated the item, "The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels" the lowest in the category at 3.92. Educators in Group 2 rated the item, "There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need" the lowest in the category at 3.73. It also produced a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from Group 1 (4.19) and Group 2 (3.73), a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from schools with a low student mobility rate (3.65) and those from schools with a high mobility rate (3.88), and a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from rural (3.81) and non-rural (3.46) schools.

Another significant difference ( $p=.050$ ) was found between educators in Group 1 (4.06) and educators in Group 2 (3.94) for the item, "Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students." A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher discussed instructional strategies and interventions at her school:

We use a lot of cooperative learning which is Kagan and we do a lot of that. We have a big RTI; we have a lot of kids going for different interventions. Some of those are computer related interventions, small group interventions, and sometimes it's a one-on-one intervention. It's always related to something in the school improvement plan, their IEP if they have an IEP, or if it's a step that leads to the point where they need some extra support like Special Ed. RTI is in place, Six Traits of Learning for Writing.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) female secondary teacher shared instructional strategies the district is using:

We all use the same curriculum, that's a district mandate so every student in the district has the same book. We have students pick up in the middle of the semester and go to another school; hopefully they're at about the same place they were at in the last school. Instructional strategies, the first two years I was here they really pushed Kagan Strategies, a lot of group work, and the district as a whole really wants us to use a lot of technology. We're going to move into that . . . I don't know what tools we'll have available (for training); we've talked about laptops or iPad's and I don't know exactly where they'll go with it, but they want a bigger push. It's the kids' world.

### *Culture*

In the Culture category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31), the average response of all Group 1 educators was 3.84 while the average response of Group 2 educators was 3.71. The item rated strongest by Group 1 educators (4.76) and Group 2 educators (4.69) was, "I am passionate about student learning" which also revealed a significant difference ( $p=.028$ ) between Group 2 administrators (4.82) and Group 2 teachers (4.68). The item also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) between educators in elementary schools (4.89) and educators in schools of other levels (4.68).

The item rated weakest by Group 1 educators (3.54) and Group 2 educators (3.43) was "The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty" which was also found to have a significant difference between Group 2 administrators and teachers ( $p<.001$ ). In addition, the item held significance ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from elementary schools (4.43) and educators from all other levels (3.37).

The item, "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving" resulted in a significance between responses from administrators at 3.93 and teachers at 3.42 ( $p<.001$ ) as well as elementary educators who rated the item 3.89 and secondary educators who rated it at 3.44 ( $p=.009$ ). It was also the second item rated weakest by educators in Group 1 (3.54).

Responses from educators in Group 1 (3.83) and Group 2 (3.65) resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) for the item, "Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school." The item also resulted in a significance difference between administrators at 4.04 and teachers at 3.62 ( $p<.001$ ).

"The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning" revealed a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators in Group 1 (3.84) and those in Group 2 (3.59) as well as administrators who rated the item at 3.96 and teachers who rated the item at 3.56 ( $p=.003$ ). A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary administrator described her school's culture:

I think it's had a huge impact on student achievement. I think the way that the teachers are thinking dictates what's going to happen in our school. If the teachers are saying we are going to improve, or we are going to do better, that's what the kids see, feel, hear, and they perform.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) male secondary administrator emphasized the effect school culture has had on school achievement:

I would say it has the potential to have a huge impact. The reason I say that is because when you develop it that way, it's not being micromanaged. I'm ok with that, but we've been in that before here in our district. It doesn't work well with our staff. The difference I've noticed when we do it this way, is the buy-in from the staff is totally different. Our buy in with our coaches is so different than it was five or six years ago. The collaboration that's involved now with the coaches, for example, and what it was five or six years ago is night and day. It's still not perfect, by any means. But, there was a time when our coaches were met with tons of resistance.

### ***Instructional Strategies***

In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42), the average response of all Group 1 educators was 4.03 while the average response of Group 2 was 3.81. Educators in Group 1 (4.27) and Group 2 (4.08) rated the item, "I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences" the highest in the category.

The item rated lowest by Group 1 educators (3.67), "Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their/my performance" revealed a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from schools with a low rate of student mobility (3.27) and those from a school with a high rate of student mobility (3.60). In addition, the item also resulted in a significant difference between elementary educators who rated it 3.86 and those from all other levels who rated it 3.36 ( $p=.004$ ).

Group 2 educators rated the item, "Teachers/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities" the lowest in the category of Instructional Strategies at 3.37. This item also resulted in a significant difference between educators in elementary schools at 3.71 and educators from all other levels at 3.35 ( $p=.016$ ) as well as between educators from Group 1 who rated it 3.78 and those from Group 2 who rated it 3.37 ( $p<.001$ ).

Responses from educators in Group 1 (4.21) and educators from Group 2 (4.01) resulted in a significance difference ( $p<.001$ ) for the item, "Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works." There was also a significant difference between responses from educators in Group 1 (4.00) and Group 2 (3.81) for the item, "Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems" ( $p<.001$ ). Responses from educators in schools with a low mobility rate (3.75) and those from schools with a high mobility rate (3.91) also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.030$ ) for the item.

The item, "I reflect and compare my actual teaching practice to what I had planned and hoped to achieve" resulted in a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators in schools with a low student mobility rate (3.66) and those from schools with a high student mobility rate (3.89). Statistical significance was also apparent between educators from elementary schools at 4.07 and those from other levels at 3.72 ( $p=.012$ ) as well as between educators from Group 1 who rated the item 3.94 and those from Group 2 who rated it lower at 3.74 ( $p<.001$ ).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) rural middle school teacher talked about teacher leaders and teacher collaboration:

We have collaboration between teachers and coaches. Several of the teachers have become trainers; once you become a trainer you learn even more because you have to do the research to train the next group. They're learning more that way. If students are consistently underperforming, we're using data to know which teachers need more professional development.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) secondary teacher shared opportunities for collaboration:

At the middle school level, we get a couple of days a week to meet and confer with our team. It's one period a day: one day a week we have an RTI meeting, one day a week we meet with our instructional coaches, and the other days we might have an IEP or we might get to sit down and talk about students and what we have going on. Beyond that, we don't get much time except at school improvement days and the principal sometimes has us sit by discipline, sometimes by grade level. We get a chance then, but about three or four times a year districtwide, we have curriculum and instruction meetings so all of the language arts teachers get together.

### ***Professional Development***

In the Professional Development category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50), the average response of all educators in Group 1 was 3.69 while the average response of Group 2 educators was 3.49 resulting in a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between the two groups for the category.

Group 1 educators rated the item, "Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices" the strongest in the category at 3.94. The item rated strongest by Group 2 educators (3.82), "Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning" was also found to be significant between rural educators at 3.77 and non-rural educators at 3.98 ( $p = .013$ ).

"Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe each other in the classroom" was the lowest rated item in the category of Professional Development for Group 1 educators (3.22) and Group 2 educators (3.07). In addition, there was a significant difference ( $p = .020$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.12) and those in schools with a high ELL student population (2.79).

Differences in the response rate of educators in elementary schools (4.00) and those in other level schools (3.52) resulted in a significant difference ( $p = .010$ ) for the item, "I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data." Group 1 educator responses at 3.87 and Group 2 responses at 3.54 also revealed a significant difference for the item ( $p < .001$ ).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) male secondary principal discussed processes implemented in his school to build the school's capacity to improve:

I think it starts with our administrative team and our team meetings and retreats when we have to talk about what we need to work on next and what area needs some improvement.



Then it goes to the teacher level with our professional development committee. I think that the district is very supportive of building local capacity so we have trained reading trainers now, we have a core PBIS team who have been to some training, and we have a math team that's been working on implementation for next year. I feel like we are good at using people's strengths to build local capacity.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) male middle school principal illustrated the importance of co-teaching teams and regular, scheduled collaboration:

One area I've forced and micromanaged is planning time with my co-teaching teams. They are forced to meet so many times per week. Before, their plan times were set up so they could meet whenever, but now I know the days, the time, and the room, I had to get to that extent and it's helped. We've really set things up so that hopefully that accountability piece will be there and it becomes natural. I want that to be the habit, we're meeting, we're meeting three days a week. We still struggle in a couple of areas, but they're seeing the rewards in the classroom. I told them, "You're going to see the class run smoother, the kids get more out of it, doesn't mean it's going to be perfect, but it will be better." That's what we should be doing; we should strive to get better every day.

### ***Data/Monitoring***

In the Data/Monitoring category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67), the average response of all Group 1 educators was 3.95 while the average response of Group 2 educators was 3.72.

Items 64 through 67 on the Teacher Survey were not included on the Administrator Survey thus, after Item 63, the item numbers for each survey no longer correlate.

The item, "Data are essential to our school improvement process" was rated highest by Group 1 educators at 4.43 as well as Group 2 educators at 4.14 revealing a significant difference between responses from the two groups ( $p < .001$ ). The lowest rated item by Group 1 (3.17) and Group 2 (3.05) educators was, "Teachers/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data."

A significant difference ( $p = .010$ ) was found between educators from Group 1 (4.18) and educators from Group 2 (4.03) for the item, "Data are used to monitor and focus." The item, "Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations" was also significant ( $p < .001$ ) between Group 1 educators at 3.97 and Group 2 educators at 3.68. As was the item, "I examine disaggregated standardized test score data" between educators from Group 1 who rated the item at 3.89 and those from Group 2 who rated it at 3.59 ( $p < .001$ ) and between administrators who rated it at 3.93 and teachers who rated it lower at 3.56 ( $p = .002$ ).

Three of the four items which were only on the teacher survey were found to have significant differences between educators from Group 1 and those in Group 2. The item, "I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students" was rated at 4.26 by Group 1 and lower at 4.00 by Group 2 ( $p < .001$ ). Second, the item, "I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students performance based on data" was

rated at 4.29 by educators in Group 1 while Group 2 educators rated the item slightly lower at 4.03 ( $p < .001$ ). Lastly, the item, “I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students’ performance” was rated at 3.91 by educators in Group 1 and lower at 3.53 by educators in Group 2 ( $p < .001$ ). In addition, a significant difference was revealed for this item between educators from schools with a low mobility rate at 3.43 and those in a school with a high mobility rate at 3.73 ( $p < .001$ ) as well as between rural educators who rated the item at 3.46 and non-rural educators who rated it higher at 3.79 ( $p = .001$ ).

Data Monitoring had the most survey items with significant differences. Several interview responses are shared from each group of schools supporting the survey data:

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher shared how data is used to determine the achievement of improvement goals:

We look at the data quite a bit. We look at the Acuity scores that the upper grades do and we look at the NeSA scores from last year to adjust and see what we need to do with our students or what a good professional development day might be according to that. We’ve also done it grade level wise where as a second grade teacher, we pair up with the third grade teacher and say, ‘What are your kids missing out on when they come to you?’ All of that ties in with the school improvement goals. So, we do meet and do that at most of our professional development sessions.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher indicated how data is used to monitor implementation of the Title I goals:

We form interventions, re-teaching, or enrichment. That drives everything we do as far as, if you give a formative assessment and the kids all have the skill, then we’ll move on. If half of the kids don’t have the skill, we’ll form a re-teaching and intervention (group).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher discussed how classroom instruction and achievement are monitored:

I’m looking at the group and then at the student, any moves needed up or down, and what interventions are needed in between. I go every quarter to our principal, who wants to know how many students, depending on the level that they’re in, there are a number of lessons and we expect a full year’s growth. So, we have these goals set: How many students met that goal for the quarter? Are they on target to finish the level? Are they ahead? How far are they below?

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) rural female middle school principal discussed how teachers collaborate to analyze data:

We break it into grades. Seven and eight are separated. We look at the seventh grade data and see where they’re at when they come in. For example, with reading, they did a baseline on all of our students in the fall. We gave all of them the MAZE. We started in October and we progress monitor every two weeks and look at that data for the kids that are in reading. However, in December, we gave another progress monitor, a probe, to all of the kids. Not just the reading kids, but every single seventh and eighth grader.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) female secondary teacher shared the extent that data is used to determine student achievement toward identified goals, “It is, I think, our

driving force; our writing goal, we always use our NeSA writing scores, that's how we monitor whether or not we're doing ok. Reading we use our NeSA scores and I can't remember what else."

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) female secondary teacher indicated how data is gathered and monitored in her classroom:

We use formative assessment, that's another we've had a lot of training on. We do a lot of formative assessment to see where they are before their final assessment. We also use the Acuity test; it's a pretest that they take in the fall and the early spring to show us where their gaps are before they take the NeSA so if we need to revisit something we know.

### ***Parent Involvement***

In the Parent Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-75, Teacher Survey Questions 68-79), the average response of all educators in Group 1 was 3.38. The average response of educators in Group 2 was 3.18. The item rated strongest by Group 1 educators in the Parent Involvement category was, "An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs" at 3.89.

Educators from Group 2 rated the item, "Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child (ren)'s education" the strongest in the category at 3.70. This item also revealed a significant difference between educators in schools with a low ELL student population at 3.65 and those from schools with a high ELL student population at 3.99 ( $p < .001$ ).

Both Group 1 (2.95) and Group 2 (2.79) educators rated the item, "Parents are involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals" the lowest in the category.

The item, "Parents want their children to attend college and share this with their children" resulted in a significant difference between elementary level educators at 3.75 and educators at other levels at 3.39 ( $p = .009$ ). In addition, a significant difference occurred between educators in Group 1 who rated the item at 3.21 and educators from Group 2 who rated the item slightly higher at 3.41 ( $p = .010$ ).

Four items proved to be significant between educators in Group 1 and those in Group 2. First the item, "There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents" was rated at 3.29 by Group 1 educators and 3.06 by Group 2 educators ( $p < .001$ ). Next, "Parents provide input for the development of the school improvement plan" was rated primarily "undecided" at 3.19 by educators in Group 1 and educators in Group 2 rated the item primarily lower than "undecided" at 2.90 ( $p < .001$ ).

A significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) also emerged for the item, "Parents are involved in the decision making process for our school/district such as: providing input for the development of a school safety plan, creating a behavior expectations plan" between educators from Group 1 (3.12) and those in Group 2 (2.91). The final significant difference for the category

between educators in Group 1 (3.55) and Group 2 (3.03) was for the item, “Information gathered from the parent survey is shared and embraced by school personnel” ( $p < .001$ ).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female secondary teacher shared the extent parents and community members are engaged in the Title I process:

I just talked to the elementary school, and they have about 20 (family members), but their meetings are in the evening and ours are in the morning. That’s something we all feel we really need to work on, getting more parent involvement and making sure they know there will be a translator here if they come. They’ll be able to understand the conversation that is taking place. That’s one of the pieces that we’re concerned about the most.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary administrator explained how parents were informed of the school improvement process and what it means for the school to be in Title I Needs Improvement status:

I just put it right to them, “We’re a failing school two years in a row.” I thought I might get some phone calls about that (from parents) asking what did you mean? Why did you say that? But there hasn’t been a word, nobody’s called or asked. I would love for them to come in and say, “You told my kid we’re a failing school and I don’t understand.” But, we don’t have that. The parent questions are about when does school lunch start, when you get out today, and when is Girl Scouts.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) male secondary administrator, when asked about the extent parents in the school expect their children to attend college responded:

Our parents want their kids to be successful. I think that’s one of the things that maybe I think our staff is better at than they were a while ago. At one time, it was “Parents don’t come to conferences.” Wait- there are a whole lot of reasons that parents don’t come to conferences, one of them is not that they don’t care about their kids. You mistreat their kid and you’ll find out how much they care. Our parents, again, we all have our own issues; sometimes I wouldn’t trade our issues for some high socio-economic level school where parents have unfair expectations for their kids.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) middle school teacher shared the extent community members as well as parents are engaged in the Title I process:

They are included in our climate goal. I know we have mentors come in from the community that sit with our kids that need that extra boost, beyond that I’m not sure about community. But, we are very much encouraged to send postcards home, very encouraged to make calls and send emails. A lot of teachers do that on a regular basis with parents.

### ***Community Involvement***

In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 76-81, Teacher Survey Questions 80-85), the average response of all Group 1 educators was 3.40. The average response of Group 2 educators was 3.19. There was a significant difference between responses from Group 1 and Group 2 for the category of Community Involvement ( $p < .001$ ).

The item rated the strongest by Group 1 (3.91) and Group 2 (4.00) educators was, “The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” In addition, both Group 1 (3.14) and Group 2 (2.82) educators rated the item, “Strategies have

been shared with me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships” the weakest in the category.

The difference in response rates from male educators (3.25) and female educators (3.06) for the item, “Local businesses or service organizations are provided information from school administrators regarding the importance of parents attending school functions or being involved in their child’s education” was found to be significant ( $p=.010$ ). The item was also significant ( $p=.030$ ) in the difference between educators from Group 1 at 3.27 and educators from Group 2 at 3.12.

Educators from elementary schools rated the item, “An annual survey is sent to community members to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs” at 3.50 while those in schools of other levels rated the item lower at 3.08 resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.027$ ). The difference in responses from educators in Group 1 (3.55) and Group 2 (3.11) was also significant for this item ( $p<.001$ ).

Lastly, the item, “Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel” also revealed a significant difference ( $p<.001$ ) between educators from Group 1 who rated the item at 3.38 and educators from Group 2 who rated the item lower at 3.01. A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher explained some processes in place in her school used to communicate and engage the community:

We always have a newsletter that goes out to our families. The newspaper has been here a lot, which is cool, the media. We’re one of the schools to have programs that not every school has, so we try to allow those celebrations to be publicized so the community does know what is going on. Other schools do that as well. Every quarter we have a character assembly. We have the six pillars of character so two each quarter. The last one is a finale celebration of all of the traits. Sometimes we have guest speakers come in and do that. It really builds that (culture); it’s where we reiterate, “Be safe, be respectful, be responsible.” The student council gets involved with some things; every grade level takes it on and does whatever they want to do.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) male secondary administrator explained how the community involvement brings motivation and passion for learning:

We had community leaders in yesterday, and I think that’s been a big thing for our school. . . . As far as the community, national education leaders have been to our school three times and they advocate for us. I’m developing a parent leadership program based on a community model. This summer we have a meeting to talk about teaching computer programming here with a business in our neighborhood. My big thing is I want to make connections for our literacy program where there’s a mutual benefit.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) female middle school teacher shared how the school beliefs affect the community:

I think the parents just being in the school and not just for parent teacher conferences. When they come for a sporting event or for music performances, like in the spring we have a poetry unit and we have a poetry café where we invite the parents to come in. Any time they’re in the building for a meeting about their student I feel like they get a sense for what we’re about. We did a parent survey at the parent teacher conferences, and they

took the data, the common themes we saw were the positive climate of the school, several comments about teachers and how wonderful the teachers are. I think that being positive is what they get a good sense about.

### ***Overall Improvement***

In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 82-88, Teacher Survey Questions 86-92), the average response of all educators in Group 1 was 3.73. The average response of educators in Group 2 was 3.57.

Both Group 1 (4.28) and Group 2 (4.03) educators rated the item, “Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement” the strongest in the category. This item also resulted in a significant difference between responses from educators in Group 1 and educators in Group 2 ( $p<.001$ ). Both Group 1 (3.24) and Group 2 (3.13) educators rated the same item, “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan” the lowest in the category of Overall Improvement.

The item, “Data shows that progress is being made in meeting our Title I goals” produced a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) between responses from Group 2 administrators (4.00) and teachers (3.68). A significant difference was also found between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population at 3.68 and those in schools with a high ELL student population at 3.84 ( $p=.040$ ) as well as between educators in schools with a low mobility rate at 3.62 and those in schools with a high student mobility rate at 3.85 ( $p<.001$ ).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher discussed the extent the overall Title I Improvement process has improved student performance so far:

I know from being the reading coach and having the percentages for the past three years. I can see improvement in the number of students who have met the end of the year target for reading at grade level. I’ve seen that improve. The DIBELS scores, specifically for kindergarten and second grade improved from winter to spring. So, there have been specific things that I’ve seen improve.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) female middle school teacher discussed the extent the overall School Improvement process improved student performance:

I think it has even before I got here. By the time I got here, the writing goal had been in place for a long time and students were doing very well. They decided they were going to keep it going, it’s on monitor status because there’s no real need for a push right now, then they moved to reading. I don’t think we’ll see the results of what we’ve started for a couple of years. When I get the current sixth graders, I’ll really see that. So far, I can’t really say. We really only added the vocabulary and the analyzing of text this year.

### **Emerging Interview Themes**

Three new themes emerged in the interviews: (1) Behavior Monitoring; (2) Collaboration; and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs. Table 17 displays the number of interview quotes for Group 1 and Group 2 in each of the emerging themes.

**Table 17***Distribution of Interview Quotes for Emerging Themes*

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Behavior Monitoring	14	8
Collaboration	8	23
Meeting Individual Student Needs	8	9

### ***Behavior Monitoring***

Behavior Monitoring became apparent as an emerging theme during the interviews. Teachers and administrators stressed how behavior impacted instruction and learning therefore requiring implementation of research-based strategies and interventions. There are two prominent processes shared in this study for behavior monitoring: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST). RTI was discussed as a model to contribute to more meaningful learning and improvement of behavioral problems for students to have opportunities to succeed. RTI can be defined as “an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasing intervention services” (Pool et al., 2012, para. 2). The process “includes both academic and behavioral aspects of student performance and is based on a three-tiered model” (para. 2). Group 1 educators made fourteen references to behavior monitoring while educators in Group 2 made 8 references.

BIST was also mentioned multiple times in participant interviews as a model for behavior management and is used in many Nebraska school districts. This model differs from RTI as it “permeates a school culture and promotes a positive, problem-solving mind-set” (Ozanam, n.d., Success Stories page). BIST “is a proactive school-wide behavior management plan for all students, emphasizing schools partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations. BIST strategies are person-centered and based on the core conditions of congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard” (Evidence Based Outcomes page) and “allows teachers to confront disruptive behavior with grace and accountability” (Philosophy page).

As students face an increasing number of barriers outside of school, they are expected to interact and engage appropriately in the classroom. Teachers are being challenged, as was evident in the interviews, to find quality means to extinguish negative behaviors and provide a safe, secure learning environment which fosters successful student achievement for every child.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female teacher explained behavioral challenges collide with high expectations:

I think overall there’s a lack of respect towards each other (students) and towards the teachers. Again, there are so many factors outside of the school building that influence that, it’s a challenge, it’s a huge thing. Then, there are certain students here that are awesome, that do great, and follow directions, and listen; who want to be here and try their best all of the time. I would say motivation and respect is a huge concern at least in my class that I’m seeing this year and overall is an issue for most grade levels.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) secondary teacher explained a behavior management system newly implemented in her school:

We implemented the BIST program. That was our big one to support the behavior goal; it seems to be working really well. We finally feel like we have the structure down. In the first year, it was a lot of “stuff” and a lot of processes but we didn’t know how we were going to make that happen. Now we’ve had more training, and I think this is our third year. We really feel like we have a smooth process in tracking kids, that’s how we’re meeting that one (goal). Then, math, every classroom came up with a way they were going to put computation into a focus in their lessons. Reading, we just started doing extra strategies, we’re doing specific strategies for reading comprehension.

### ***Collaboration***

Collaboration was another theme that emerged in the study. DuFour (2011) noted the conventional style of teachers working in isolation:

Teachers work in isolation from one another. They view their classrooms as their personal domains, have little access to the ideas or strategies of their colleagues, and prefer to be left alone rather than engage with their colleagues or principals. Their professional practice is shrouded in a veil of privacy and personal autonomy and is not a subject for collective discussion or analysis. (pp. 57-58)

However, DuFour (2011) explained the necessity for teachers to work together, “There is abundant research linking higher levels of student achievement to educators who work in a collaborative culture of a professional learning community” (p. 59).

Apparent in interview responses from this year’s study, collaboration is becoming a vital piece of the school improvement processes. “The belief underlying the use of teams in schools is that group decision-making and collaboration produce better outcomes than decision-making by individuals” (Pool et al., 2012, para. 5). These teams, instead of having one isolated individual, combine the plethora of experiences, knowledge, and abilities from every member of the group.

Working in collaboration also allows teachers “to be involved in planning and problem solving. By sharing responsibility as a team, teachers and staff are accountable for student progress and are more aware of the needs of individual students” (Pool et al., 2012, para. 36). With constant increased demands on teachers’ time and resources, it is no surprise that collaboration and teacher networking were referenced 8 times by educators in Group 1 and twenty-three times by Group 2 educators.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher shared how classroom achievement is monitored in her classroom:

The principal comes in, quite a bit to our classrooms. She’ll drop in to check how things are going. When we are first year teachers, the first two years we’re in the district, we have a mentor that we work with. They come in and observe us, we go and observe them, there’s a lot of collaboration going on. I think, overall, as a staff, we keep each other accountable for what we’re doing in terms of instruction and making sure we’re staying on our pacing guide.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) elementary administrator shared how teachers collaborate in the school:



Every week we have a team time. I feel teachers share their resources, they talk about things they've discovered or found, and they share with their team. I feel that everyone, for the most part- and I coach three grade levels- I see them work together even though outside of school they may not want to call each other on that personal level. But, in school they get through it and they work together.

### ***Meeting Individual Student Needs***

In the interviews, teachers and administrators discussed the importance of meeting individual student needs in order for student learning to transpire. Differentiation of instruction was mentioned many times by educators. Teachers shared strategies they had identified to meet individual student learning needs, in situations where students' learning needs were not met by classroom strategies. Recent research supports the importance of "personalizing learning for each student by using a variety of appropriate and targeted instructional strategies" (CCSSO, 2010, p. 10). There were eight references from Group 1 and nine references from Group 2 educators indicating the need for individualized instruction.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) male elementary administrator discussed meeting student needs:

We have a lot of overlapping situations that are difficult to overcome so we have to work extra hard and focus our services in ways to help kids. We have a kid coming from poverty and they're struggling academically. We want to care for the whole child. How do we meet the language and academic needs of that whole kid? When you read our action plan, we have a counselor. We have 60% of our kids were or are in ELL; that's a big portion of our school.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) secondary teacher described "connecting with kids" as the most important value in the school:

Having the students feel like there is someone here that truly cares about them and sees them not necessarily as a student, but as a person. We have been attending trainings from Diana Browning Wright, who is an RTI expert. We're focusing, as far as behavior goes, on Tier I and using those proactive strategies to improve so we have fewer behaviors in the classroom. We've been trying to implement the 16 proactive strategies: meeting students at the door, giving a five to one positive to redirection, having the agenda on the board, walking around the classroom instead of just standing, and trying to use cooperative learning to get the students engaged.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the implementation of the Title I and School Improvement Plans in Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools.

Findings indicated that Nebraska Title I "Needs Improvement" schools overall were incorporating group and individual strategies to meet student needs to improve student performance for all students. Administrators and teachers discussed the planning and progress of their School Improvement plan and Title I goals, categorized by these survey themes (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8)

Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. During the interview process, three new themes emerged in the interviews: (1) Behavior Monitoring, (2) Collaboration, and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs.

Many of the Title I Schools participating in this study discussed working together and establishing a school or district-based collaboration and networking process. Educators were no longer closing their doors, but inviting their colleagues into their classrooms and engaging in discussions and reflections to overcome student learning barriers and improve performance for all students. Survey data and interview responses showed an increase in collaboration and working collectively; however worth noting, peer observations were discussed by educators in only a few schools.

This year's study revealed educators were not only utilizing data, but seemed to have a deeper understanding and knowledge of what data is and how to use it effectively to improve student performance. Both teachers and administrators noted the importance of using data as a key element to increase student academic achievement as "Data are essential to our school improvement process" received the highest mean rating among the nine survey categories by both teachers and administrators.

In the interviews this year, more educators discussed having specialized data systems in place where they had access to student data and monitoring student progress over time. Several educators talked about the 'data culture' that is now evident in their schools. Data is being used to plan large group, small group, and individual instruction and share student groupings across single grade levels.

Parent and community involvement continue to be challenging. The item, "Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I/School Improvement Plan" was rated the lowest in the category. Teachers and administrators both recognized the challenge of engaging the community in the school improvement process as well as establishing shared beliefs and values that form the foundation of a culture of improvement.

In a few locations, there were new and positive activities for parents and community members to becoming involved in schools:

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female ELL elementary teacher discussed the types of parent involvement at her school:

Some grade levels had better than others; I'm not sure if any grade level met 50%. This year we did not have math night or reading night, we've done that in the past and usually get a good turnout for that. We have really good turnout for our parent teacher conferences and we go over these standards with the parents then as well.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) male secondary administrator shared:

Parents in our building actively participate in their students' activities and many help with various activity specific functions. Increased levels of parental involvement would be good as we're currently hitting approximately 35% of our parent population. We host quarterly parent-teacher conferences to encourage staff/parent communication.

Translators are on duty to help with the language barriers that exist with some of our Latino parents.

A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) female secondary administrator was encouraged by changes happening in her school, “Our school has focused on parent engagement with ELL families. We are planning our third session and getting a system in place that is working well.”

### **STUDY 3: Examining Educators' Perceptions of the Title I School Improvement Plan in Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools**

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#### **Introduction**

This study examined administrator and teacher perceptions about how schools are implementing their Title I Plans in Title I Needs Improvement Schools compared with Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools. This study used a mixed methods research design using both quantitative and qualitative data. Significant difference between the two groups were examined, analyzed, and are discussed.

#### **Purpose of Study**

**The purpose of Study 3** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I and School Improvement Plan in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools compared with **Title I Non-Needs Improvement** Schools.

Areas studied were: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected in the winter and spring of 2013.

#### **Research Design**

This mixed-methods research study focused upon the implementation of Title I/School Improvement Plans. Administrators and teachers across the state were surveyed using an online instrument regarding their perceptions about the School Improvement Process.

Schools identified as Title I Needs Improvement schools by the Nebraska Department of Education and Title I Non-Needs Improvement schools were invited to participate. Educators from 53 Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) schools in 37 districts participated as well as 12 Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) schools in ten districts. Demographic information for Group 1 is shared in Study 1; demographic data for Group 3 is shared in this study with some comparison to the demographic data of Group 1.

## Demographic School/District Information

### Study Participant Demographic Data

A total of 738 educators participated in Group 3: 90 administrators and 648 teachers while a total of 258 educators participated in Group 1: 23 administrators and 235 teachers. Table 18 depicts the demographic data for the participants in Group 1 and Group 3.

**Table 18**  
*Survey Participant Demographic Data, Group 1 and Group 3*

		Group 1	Group 3
<b>Role</b>	<b>Administrator</b>	23	90
	<b>Teacher</b>	235	648
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	27	118
	<b>Female</b>	231	620
<b>Locale</b>	<b>Rural</b>	198	667
	<b>Non-Rural</b>	60	71
<b>ELL</b>	<b>Low</b>	100	582
	<b>High</b>	158	156
<b>FRL</b>	<b>Low</b>	12	158
	<b>Average</b>	25	243
	<b>High</b>	221	337
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>Low</b>	28	402
	<b>High</b>	230	336
<b>Level</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	210	614
	<b>Mid/Secondary</b>	48	124

Detailed demographic data comparing Group 1 and Group 3 can be found in Section III: Study 3 of this report.

### Locale

For the purpose of this research, participating Nebraska public school districts were divided into rural and non-rural categories using Urban-Centric Locale Codes as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010). These locale codes are based on proximity to an urbanized area. Definitions of each locale code can be found on page 25.

In Group 3, four schools (8%) were classified as “32-Town, Distant,” 14 schools (26%) were classified as “33-Town, Remote,” 2 schools (4%) were classified as “41-Rural, Fringe,” 4 schools (8%) were classified as “42-Rural, Distant,” 23 schools (43%) were classified as “43-Rural, Remote,” and 6 schools (11%) were classified as “11-City, Large.”

Of the surveys returned from Group 3, 90% were from rural schools and 10% were from non-rural schools. In comparing these numbers, it is important to take into account the fact that rural districts are likely to employ a smaller number of teachers and administrators. The distribution of locale codes for Group 1 and Group 3 is illustrated in Table 19.

**Table 19**

*School Locale Code Distribution, Group 1 and Group 3*

	Locale Codes	Group 1		Group 3	
		Participants	Schools	Participants	Schools
Rural	31: Town, Fringe 32: Town, Distant 33: Town, Remote 41: Rural, Fringe 42: Rural, Distant 43: Rural, Remote	198	9	667	47
Non-Rural	11: City, Large 21: Suburb, Large	60	3	71	6

### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Within the State of Nebraska, the average English Language Learner (ELL) student population is 6.47% (NDE, 2012), while the average for Group 3 is 9%. In Group 3, 582 participants (79%) were from schools with an ELL student population of 7% and lower and 156 participants (21%) were from schools with an ELL student population higher than 7%.

### **Free Reduced Lunch (FRL)**

The average rate of Free and Reduced Price meals for the State of Nebraska is 43.79% (NDE, 2012) and the average rate for schools in Group 3 is 56%. In Group 3, 158 participants (21%) were from schools with a “low” FRL rate of 39% or lower; 243 participants (33%) were from “average” rate schools with a FRL of 40-55%; and 337 participants (46%) were from schools with a “high” rate of FRL, 55% and up.

### **Mobility**

The average rate of student mobility across the State of Nebraska dropped from 12.22% (2011) to 11.84% (NDE, 2012); the average rate for schools in Group 3 is 13%. Those schools with a student mobility rate of 12% or less are considered “low” and include 402 participants (54%) of Group 3. In addition, 336 participants (46%) were from schools with a student mobility rate of 13% or higher.

### **Level**

Within Group 3, 614 participants (83%) were from elementary level schools while the remaining 124 (17%) were from middle, high, or consolidated schools.

### **Interview Participants**

Qualitative interviews were completed across the State of Nebraska to gather qualitative data from educators in Group 3, Title I Non-Needs Improvement schools. Those interview locations were chosen from those schools who participated in the survey, based upon the schools geographic location, FRL and ELL rates, as well as overall student demographics. Interviews were conducted in 6 schools from 5 districts with 7 administrators and 15 teachers for a total of 22 interviews.

## Instruments

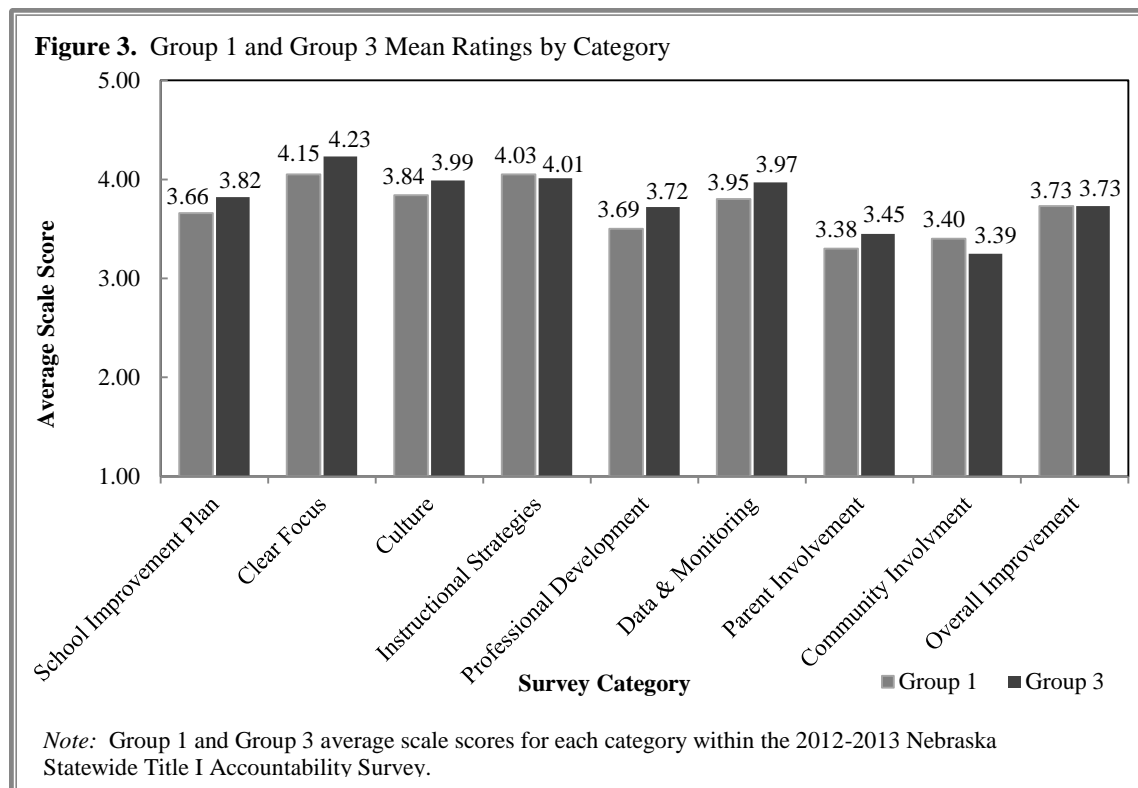
Administrators responded to an 89-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers responded to a 93-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored nine themes: (1) Title I/School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Some items on the teacher survey were not included on the administrator survey. Where this occurs, it is noted in the results. The surveys were designed to collect perceptions about the implementation of the Title I School Improvement Plans. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for this instrument was .975 for Group 1 participants and .975 for Group 3 participants.

Second, open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in six public schools from five school districts. Detailed perceptions were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix D) that gathered qualitative data. The interview protocols were structured around the same nine themes used to structure the survey. Additionally, three new themes emerged in the interviews: Behavior Monitoring; Collaboration; and Meeting Individual Student Needs.

## Findings

### Survey Outcomes

Figure 3 display the mean ratings for educators in Group 1 and Group 3 for the nine survey categories.



Mean scores were used to determine similarities and differences for each survey category. In Table 20, the items rated highest within each category for Group 1 and Group 3 are identified. In both Groups 1 and Group 3, the highest rated item for each group was the same survey item in eight of the nine categories.

**Table 20**  
*Group 1 and Group 3 Highest Mean Rating by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 3: Title I Non-Needs Improvement
<b>Title I School Improvement Plan</b>	"The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement." (4.27)	"The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement." (4.39)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	"Teachers/ I engage students in order to improve academic performance." (4.55)	"Teachers/ I engage students in order to improve academic performance." (4.53)
<b>Culture</b>	"I am passionate about student learning." (4.76)	"I am passionate about student learning." (4.74)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	"I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences." (4.27)	"I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences." (4.24)
<b>Professional Development</b>	"Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices." (3.94)	"Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices." (4.09)
<b>Data/ Monitoring</b>	"Data are essential to our school improvement process." (4.43)	"Data are essential to our school improvement process." (4.41)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	"An annual survey is sent to parents/ guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs." (3.89)	"Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren)." (3.96)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	"The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students." (3.91)	"The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students." (4.07)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	"Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement." (4.28)	"Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement." (4.19)

In the category of Parent Involvement, educators from Group 1 rated the item, "An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs" the highest at 3.89. However, educators from Group 3 rated the item, "Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren)" the highest at 3.96. These were the lowest of the highest mean ratings for any category in the survey.

For Groups 1 and 3, the lowest rated item for each group was the same in seven of the nine categories. In the category Title I School Improvement Plan, the item, "I was involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals" was rated lowest by Group 1 (3.21) while the item, "I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I/School Improvement Goals" was rated lowest by Group 3 educators (3.37).

In the category Culture, both groups rated the item, "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving" the lowest at 3.54 for Group 1 and 3.77 by Group 3. Group 1 also rated the item, "The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared



power among faculty” the lowest in the category (3.54). Table 21 illustrates the lowest mean ratings for Group 1 and Group 3 within each category.

**Table 21**  
*Group 1 and Group 3 Lowest Mean Rating by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 3: Title I Non-Needs Improvement
<b>Title I School Improvement Plan</b>	“I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” (3.21)	“I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Goals.” (3.37)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	“The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” (3.92)	“The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” (4.02)
<b>Culture</b>	“The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” (3.54) “The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty.” (3.54)	“The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” (3.77)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	“Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” (3.67)	“Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” (3.56)
<b>Professional Development</b>	“I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.” (3.22)	“Teachers in my school/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.” (3.23)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	“Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.17)	“Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.14)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	“Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” (2.95)	“Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” (3.17) “There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/ advocate for parents.” (3.17)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	“Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships.” (3.14)	“Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships.” (3.07)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	“Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Plan.” (3.24)	“Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I plan.” (3.24)

In the category of Professional Development, educators also deviated on which item received the lowest mean rating. Educators from Group 1 rated the item, “I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom” the lowest at 3.22 while educators from Group 3 rated the item, “Teachers in my school/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth” the lowest at 3.23.

Finally, in the category of Parent Involvement, both Group 1 educators (2.95) and Group 3 educators (3.17) rated the item, “Parents are involved in the identification of the Title I Goals” the lowest. However, Group 3 educators also gave another item the lowest mean rating in the category, “There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents” at 3.17.

T-Tests were used to determine the mean value of survey items with significant differences using an alpha level of .05 for Groups 1 and 3. These significant differences, where they occur, are discussed within each survey category.

### **Results by Survey Category and Theme**

In this section of the report, teachers' and administrators' perceptions of their Title I/School Improvement Plans were explored in nine categories: (1) Title I/School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Additionally, three new themes emerged in the interviews: Behavior Monitoring, Collaboration, and Meeting Individual Student Needs.

#### ***Title I/School Improvement Plan***

In the category of the Title I School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7), the average response of all Group 1 educators was 3.66 while the average rating from educators in Group 3 was 3.82, a significant difference for the category ( $p=.008$ ).

Educators from Group 1 (4.27) as well as Group 3 (4.39) rated the item, "The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement" the highest in the category. The item rated lowest by educators from Group 1 (3.21) was, "I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals" while the lowest rating by Group 3 educators (3.37) was for the item, "I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals."

The item, "Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I goals to teachers," produced a significant difference between response from educators in Group 1 at 3.56 and educators in Group 3 at 3.80 ( $p=.002$ ). The item, "I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals" also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.012$ ) between responses from Group 1 educators (3.57) and Group 3 educators (3.76).

The final item revealing a significant difference between responses from educators in Group 1 (3.73) and educators in Group 3 (3.87) for this category was, "Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I goals have been identified" ( $p=.044$ ). A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) administrator explained how data is used to share their school's progress:

We have a data day where we take a look at data, disaggregate it, and break it down with our teachers. Actually, we give them the raw data and some questions; they have to go through and find answers then we share the information that they discovered. We can use that data to show, "Here's how we've grown, here's how we've improved compared to last year." That is definitely something we do. At parent meetings I'm able now, because I had five people come and I'm hoping they're going to stay, show some of that same data as we get it and show improvement.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) school administrator commented how they stay in touch with their community, "We also have newsletters, articles in the newspaper. I know the superintendent writes things, we have our update that we send out (electronically) that may have some information, also our school web site."

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female secondary teacher shared how her school communicates the progress of Title I goals to teachers, staff, and parents:

Our school district is good about, at parent teacher conferences we have our secretaries at a big table and as parents walk in, they are handed the data for their student. The parents bring it to us and then each individual area teacher will discuss: the reading teacher will discuss the reading progress made; the math teacher would talk about the math progress that's made. We have parents take surveys that say, "Since you've looked at this data, do you think your students making it? What could the school district do to better prepare your student?" I think that's a huge thing.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female secondary teacher talked about the processes in place to share the beliefs, values, and understandings related to the Title I plan with the school community:

I think that's another thing we've worked on, trying to increase communication. We have a new parent council that has become more active this year to try to get the outside parent perspective when they're not in the mix of it every day. Articles are in the newspaper from the superintendent weekly; we also have the school website, keeping it current and updated, trying to let parents know they are always welcome. We've done some open houses, the (after school) program is a really positive communication piece. They're good about communicating with parents about homework and they have folders from each teacher so if a child forgets it or they have one of those nights it's there in the morning.

### ***Clear Focus***

In the category of Clear Focus (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17), the average rating in this category for educators in Group 1 was 4.15 while the average rating for educators in Group 3 was 4.23. The item, "I engage students in order to improve academic performance" was rated the highest by Group 1 educators (4.55) as well as Group 3 educators (4.53). The item, "The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels" was rated the lowest in the category by both Group 1 educators (3.92) and Group 3 educators (4.02).

There were **no items** resulting in a significant difference between responses from educators in Group 1 and educators in Group 3 for the category of Clear Focus.

### ***Culture***

In the Culture category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31), the average response of all educators in Group 1 was 3.84 and the average for Group 3 was similar at 3.99. The item rated the highest in this category by both Group 1 educators (4.76) and Group 3 educators (4.74) was "I am passionate about student learning."

Educators in Groups 1 and 3 also rated the same item the lowest in the category. The item, "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving" was rated 3.54 by Group 1 and 3.77 by Group 3, a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ). The item, "The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty" was also rated the lowest by Group 1 (3.54).

Another item, “Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together” resulted in a significant difference between educators of Group 1 who rated it at 3.61 and those from Group 3 who rated it at 3.78 ( $p=.011$ ). “Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning” also revealed a significant difference ( $p=.043$ ) between educators from Group 1 (3.81) and Group 3 (3.93).

The item, “The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue, and the search for new ideas” was significant in the difference between response from educators in Group 1 at 3.75 and Group 3 at 3.92 ( $p=.016$ ) as was the item, “The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity” which was rated 3.79 by educators in Group 1 and 3.98 by educators in Group 3 ( $p=.003$ ).

Educator responses between Group 1 (3.64) and Group 3 (3.88) also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) for the item, “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.” The final item resulting in a significant difference between Group 1 (3.74) and Group 3 (3.95) for the category of Culture was, “The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts” ( $p=.001$ ).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary administrator discussed the processes used to share the school culture with the school community:

I try to smile when I go through there, whether I’m having the worst day ever or not, I always smile. When I see parents, I greet them, “Welcome! Come on in.” They don’t know about American schools, so they are shy. If you keep smiling at them, they will smile back at you and feel more comfortable. Also just letting teachers know that I’m modeling smiling, you need to model smiling to your kids and be happy. Even when your days are tough, we need to be happy. We try to model that. When we have staff meetings, we try to start with happy celebrations, good things, and recognizing and submitting teachers for awards and honors. It’s very important to recognize their achievements.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) male elementary administrator shared how the school culture is conducive to improvement:

I think our culture is very conducive to success. I think our teachers have seen success with the reading over the last few years and are asking for that next step which is that math piece. We want a curriculum that goes from grade to grade, we want more structure, and we want to know exactly what our kids should be able to do. They’re asking for it now, and I don’t necessarily know that I saw that earlier on in my career.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) male middle school principal discussed how data plays a role in creating a culture successful to improvement:

I think it’s very conducive to it. I’ll go back to data analysis, I see teachers who work very hard, teachers who are willing to take an honest look at where their students are and try new ideas. They’re not the ones who sit back and say, “Well, I know that what I’m doing is good because it feels good to me.” They’re saying, “My students are performing. Here’s how I want them to perform, what can I do, how do I make myself a better teacher, how do I make my class more effective for my students?” I’m very proud of the hard working staff that we have in this building. They are incredible workers.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) male elementary administrator discussed how collaboration with the ESU has validated the impact teachers have on the school climate:

We had the ESU come down and interview our students to get school climate perceptual data. She said the number one thing that came across is that the students think that they're really cared for here. They said, don't go to (a larger nearby school district) because in there you're just a number, here you have teachers who are going to grab you and make sure you get your homework done and help out to make sure you get things taken care of. It's more of a perception that they're getting taken care of here. I don't think it's a reflection of the other school, I think it's a reflection on them saying, "We're getting taken care of here."

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) rural female elementary administrator shared how teacher commitment and visible support from administration are important pieces of school improvement:

We have a lot of veteran teachers; I would say the culture is just there. This is how it's done, and this is the way it's always been done. Again, I think it starts at the top, if your school board and administration are putting school improvement as a focus and importance. If we have school improvement meetings and I never showed up, just sat in my office and worked, it wouldn't be as effective. I'm right there at the table and I'm going to do this stuff right along with you guys. I think building that culture from the top down; leadership is huge. Then, just to make sure your teachers are buying in along the way. In a small school, all of our teachers are really committed to kids. I know that's probably in big systems too, but I have that feel about small schools. That's one of the reasons I've been scared to go to a big school, I love that piece. I love the hands on being with the kids. I want to be out there with kids, I want to be meeting with teachers, and living it. I think the culture has to be modeled at the top.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female elementary teacher illustrated the impact culture has had on student behavior:

We're seeing a reduction in the number of students that need the intensive interventions. You'll always have students who need some interventions but I think we're really starting to figure out where there is a gap in skills. We're focusing on that particular skill. We're better able to do that because you're not working with such large numbers and we're starting to separate out what's a behavior problem as opposed to what is a skill deficit.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) rural female elementary teacher illustrated the value of having a supportive staff especially with the pressure to increase test scores:

I think it's a good thing. Because we rely upon each other so much, that support system is huge. I think sometimes it does become difficult, especially during testing time, to not take it personally. We work hard, everyone in this building does everything they can and goes above and beyond, it's frustrating when you're not getting the score that you feel like you should when you look at the effort you pour in and to remember that we have some extreme demographics and there are so many social and physical needs that have to be filled and attended to besides the comprehension of reading; finding that balance is really hard.

A female elementary administrator continued discussing culture and its impact on collaboration in her Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) school:

I think we're much more willing to search for new ways to teach. A lot more collaboration and "What are you seeing with Johnny in that class? Are you seeing that?" I think the change is asking for help and knowing that you're not in this alone, this is a collaborative culture and we will try, try again. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness and I think that is ok now. It used to be that you'd close the door. Now, the elementary (gets) to go to the high school and the high school (teachers) come here. They did that for a year and watched each other; they did the critiquing then shared with the administration in their building what they saw and how they would improve the lesson.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female elementary teacher described the collaboration between teachers:

It varies, sometimes it's all of us, K-12, working together. Other times it is K through 6 working together and high school working together. There are some times where it is my individual self as a classroom teacher along with the Title teacher or SPED teacher. Sometimes we have K-2 and 3-6 that work together.

### ***Instructional Strategies***

In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42), the average response of all Group 1 educators was 4.03 while the average response for Group 3 educators was similar at 4.01.

Both Group 1 educators (4.27) and Group 3 educators (4.24) rated the item, "I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences" the strongest in the category of Instructional Strategies. The item, "Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their/my performance" was the lowest rated item for both Group 1 (3.67) and Group 3 (3.56).

There were **no items** in the category of Instructional Strategies which produced a significant difference between responses from educators in Group 1 and educators in Group 3.

### ***Professional Development***

In the Professional Development category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50), the average response of Group 1 educators was 3.69 while, similarly, the average response from Group 3 educators was 3.72.

The item, "Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices" was rated the strongest in the category for educators in Group 1 (3.94) and Group 3 (4.09). Educators from Group 1 rated the item, "Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe each other in the classroom" the lowest at 3.22. Group 3 educators, however, rated the item, "I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth" the lowest in the category at 3.23.

A single item, "Professional development is provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies" resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.038$ )

between educator responses from Group 1 (3.80) and educator responses from Group 3 (3.93).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female secondary teacher added how professional development has been provided to support instructional strategies, “I would say no additional strategies, just because this past year we had training at the beginning of the year and we’ve been focused on them.”

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female elementary administrator described the value of quality professional development that is relevant to the strategies being utilized in the classroom:

Just before the beginning of the school year, they brought somebody here that was well versed not only in our reading curriculum, Direct Instruction Reading, but also gave us hints and ideas of things to use that would enhance that instruction that’s not there. I got so many wonderful ideas that I’ve used throughout this year.

### ***Data/Monitoring***

In the Data/Monitoring category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67), the average response of Group 1 educators was 3.95; Group 3 educators had a similar average response at 3.97.

Items 64 through 67 on the Teacher Survey were not included on the Administrator Survey thus, after Item 63, the item numbers for each survey no longer correlate.

The item, “Data are essential to our school improvement process” was rated the highest in the category by both educators from Group 1 (4.43) and Group 3 (4.41). Both groups also rated the same item the lowest in the category, “I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data” was rated 3.17 by Group 1 educators and 3.14 by Group 3 educators.

There **were no items** resulting in a significant difference between responses from educators in Group 1 and educators in Group 3.

### ***Parent Involvement***

In the Parent Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-75, Teacher Survey Questions 68-79), the average response of educators in Group 1 was 3.38 and Group 3 was 3.62.

Group 1 educators rated the item, “An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs” the highest in the category at 3.89. Group 3 educators rated the item, “Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren)” highest at 3.96; this item also resulted in a significant difference between Group 1 and Group 3 responses ( $p=.005$ ).

The item, “Parents are involved in the identification of the Title I Goals” was rated the lowest in the category by Group 1 (2.95) as well as Group 3 (3.17). Group 3 also rated the item,

“There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents” lowest at 3.17.

Four additional items resulted in significant differences between responses from educators in Group 1 and educators in Group 3. The item, “Parents have high expectations for their children” was rated at 3.25 by Group 1 and 3.43 by Group 3 ( $p=.015$ ). Next, the item, “Parents want their children to attend college and share this with their children” was rated 3.24 by Group 1 and 3.39 by Group 3 ( $p=.019$ ). “Strategies have been shared with me on how to effectively communicate with parents” was also significant ( $p=.013$ ) between Group 1 (3.40) and Group 3 (3.58). Lastly, the item, “Parents provide input for the development of the school improvement plan” was rated 3.19 by educators in Group 1 and 3.34 by educators in Group 2 ( $p=.040$ ).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female secondary teacher shared how parents and community members are engaged with the Title I process in the school:

We have a parent advisory committee. I know there were some mornings we would have it and one or two people would show up. We did a little bit of calling around trying to get people to come; these last couple of times he’s had six or seven people come. The principal sits with them, answers their questions, and goes over things. Five or six doesn’t sound like many, but it’s an improvement, that’s a big piece we want to improve on even more.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) elementary administrator, when asked if parents know about the classroom coaches and the students being pulled out for interventions responded, “Yes, absolutely. I think we do a great job of individual parent notifications, but not as far as groups, looking at group data, looking at classroom data or anything like that.”

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) elementary administrator shared how parents are involved in supporting their child in reaching goals in school and how data is shared with them:

I have the 21 kids randomly numbered, parents will know, “My kid is number 2” and you’ll be able to see how they compare with the others. Then, the teacher helps that parent actually set a data driven goal to work on at home for the next quarter. I think that’s really powerful because it holds them more accountable, but it also gives them something to do. They want to be involved, but we need to tell them, “You can do that by doing some letter cards every night, reading, turning the TV off.” Give them something real and most of them can do it. I’m not interested in the fact that we’re not as good as we need to be here, I’m just interested in ways to do it better, I’m being honest.

A rural Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) elementary administrator shared challenges in engaging parents:

They still want to have bake sales and plan the parties; the booster club wants to be at the after prom because that’s their comfort zone. I think a lot of them that show up are pretty involved parents in terms of their child’s homework and education. I’m not going to generalize and say that all of those parents have straight A students, but on that committee, the Parent Advisory Council, three of them have teacher training and now they’re stay at home moms. So, it’s sometimes getting those parents involved that live far



away and having them recognize, “I’m not a teacher, but I can do something.” I would say that bar none, is our greatest area of need in terms of involvement. I think we have parents who are involved, they show up to open houses, and coffees, but I wouldn’t say they’re highly engaged, there’s a huge difference in involved and engaged.

### ***Community Involvement***

In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 76-81, Teacher Survey Questions 80-85), the average response of all educators in Group 1 was 3.40 and Group 3 was 3.39. The item, “The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students” was rated the highest by Group 1 educators at 3.91 as well as Group 3 educators at 4.07 resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.011$ ).

The item, “Strategies have been shared with me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships” was rated the lowest by both Group 1 (3.14) and Group 3 (3.07).

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) rural elementary administrator discussed how community members are involved in the school improvement process:

The school improvement process, however, I see as two different things right now, but we’re working to put those two pieces together. The school improvement process, we do a really great job of including a board member, some community members, some teachers, we do a much better job there than we do with the Title I. This year, because we’re reviewing our Title I plan, I’d like to see us using that same group of people.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female secondary teacher explained how the values and beliefs of the school impact the surrounding community:

I think we’ve had a lot of partnership in the community because of our commitment to building relationships with kids. Our value of relationships with kids is going into the community and saying, “We’d like you to have a relationship with our kids.” We have lots of opportunities, at the grade school we have people who come in and have lunch with the kids. That’s great for the people who don’t have kids there. We have a woman who rides the school bus with our school kids to the grade school as a volunteer project-she’s been doing it all year. What a great thing for them to know our kids at school. She wouldn’t necessarily know them otherwise. That’s one of the ways I see it going through to the community is through partnerships. That’s really good for our school to let them know we value these students no matter what their achievement is.

### ***Overall Improvement***

In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 82-88, Teacher Survey Questions 86-92), the average response of all educators in Group 1 and Group 3 was 3.73. The item, “Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement” was rated the highest in the category by Group 1 at 4.28 and Group 3 at 4.19.

The item, “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan” was rated the lowest by both groups at 3.24 by Group 1 educators and 3.24 by Group 3 educators.

There were **no items** resulting in a significant difference between responses from Group 1 and Group 3 educators in the category of Overall Improvement.

### **Emerging Interview Themes**

Three new themes emerged in the interviews: (1) Behavior Monitoring; (2) Collaboration; and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs. Table 22 displays the number of interview quotes for Group 1 and Group 3 in each of the emerging themes

**Table 22**  
*Distribution of Interview Quotes for Emerging Themes*

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
Behavior Monitoring	14	10
Collaboration	8	22
Meeting Individual Student Needs	8	12

### ***Behavior Monitoring***

Behavior Monitoring became apparent as an emerging theme during the interviews. Teachers and administrators stressed how behavior impacted instruction and learning requiring implementation of research-based strategies and interventions. There are two prominent processes shared in this study for behavior monitoring: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST). RTI was discussed as a model to contribute to more meaningful learning and improvement of behavioral problems for students to have opportunities to succeed. RTI can be defined as “an assessment and intervention process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasing intervention services” (Pool et al., 2012, para. 2). The process “includes both academic and behavioral aspects of student performance and is based on a three-tiered model” (para. 2). There were 14 references to behavior monitoring by Group 1 educators and 10 references by Group 3 educators.

BIST was also mentioned multiple times in participant interviews as a model for behavior management and is used in many Nebraska school districts. This model differs from RTI as it “permeates a school culture and promotes a positive, problem-solving mind-set” (Ozanam, n.d., Success Stories page). BIST “is a proactive school-wide behavior management plan for all students, emphasizing schools partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations. BIST strategies are person-centered and based on the core conditions of congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard” (Evidence Based Outcomes page) and “allows teachers to confront disruptive behavior with grace and accountability” (Philosophy page).

As students face an increasing number of barriers outside of school, they are expected to interact and engage appropriately in the classroom. Teachers are being challenged, as was evident in the interviews, to find quality means to extinguish negative behaviors and provide a safe, secure learning environment which fosters successful student achievement for every child.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female administrator shared how a consistent behavior management plan is impacting performance:

I've noticed this year, because it's the first year we've started, that no matter if you're going to music or lunch or just in the hallway, I don't have to teach it to kids, they already know it. I just have to say, "What are we talking about today?" The kids will say, "We weren't very respectful. . . ." They can lead the conversation and they can go through the verbiage; it's shortened up office time. It feels like it has lessened office referrals.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female teacher explained how behavioral challenges collide with high expectations:

I feel the staff is very welcoming; I have an amazing team of teachers I work with. We get along very well together, some people don't mesh as well with other people, but I would say overall, it's very positive, we support one another, and we look out for each other's benefit. Students, this year has been an interesting year, it's a very challenging class overall; more behavior than academic. A lot of our students, their parents see the importance of school, and they want them here; but students have a hard time respecting what's being asked of them.

### *Collaboration*

Collaboration was another theme that emerged in the study. DuFour (2011) noted the conventional style of teachers working in isolation:

Teachers work in isolation from one another. They view their classrooms as their personal domains, have little access to the ideas or strategies of their colleagues, and prefer to be left alone rather than engage with their colleagues or principals. Their professional practice is shrouded in a veil of privacy and personal autonomy and is not a subject for collective discussion or analysis. (pp. 57-58)

However, DuFour (2011) explained the necessity for teachers to work together, "There is abundant research linking higher levels of student achievement to educators who work in a collaborative culture of a professional learning community" (p. 59).

Apparent in interview responses from this year's study, collaboration is becoming a vital piece of the school improvement processes. "The belief underlying the use of teams in schools is that group decision-making and collaboration produce better outcomes than decision-making by individuals" (Pool et al., 2012, para. 5). These teams, instead of having one isolated individual, combine the plethora of experiences, knowledge, and abilities from every member of the group.

Working in collaboration also allows teachers "to be involved in planning and problem solving. By sharing responsibility as a team, teachers and staff are accountable for student progress and are more aware of the needs of individual students" (Pool et al., 2012, para. 36). With constant increased demands on teachers' time and resources, it is no surprise that collaboration and teacher networking were referenced eight times by Group 1 educators and 22 times by Group 3 educators.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female elementary teacher explained teacher collaboration in her school:

Informally, I think teachers talk a lot because we don't have our homeroom kids. We have communication even between the specialist classes and homerooms. They always carry a folder, this was a great day, this went well, and this didn't go well. I think that's a big collaboration thing that we have to do as he had a great day in reading, came to math and it was not so good. What can we do to help this kid, is something going on, or not.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female elementary administrator identified ways collaboration supports Title I goals:

The Title I teacher has coordination day meetings every six weeks. We have floating subs that come into our school which frees up our teachers just long enough for a fifteen or 20 minute session (with the Title I teacher) where we sit down and go through what is happening with each student.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) female elementary teacher shared:

(Teachers) have some data team, or cadre, time which is what it has evolved into. We were able to reach out to various reading, math, and science teachers. You can talk vertically; you also get to network with other schools. It's nice to have the views of other teachers who are in similar shoes.

### ***Meeting Individual Student Needs***

In the interviews, teachers and administrators discussed the importance of meeting individual student needs in order for student learning to transpire. Teachers shared strategies they had identified to meet individual student learning needs, in situations where students' learning needs were not met by classroom strategies. Recent research supports the importance of "personalizing learning for each student by using a variety of appropriate and targeted instructional strategies" (CCSSO, 2010, p. 10). There were 8 interview references from educators in Group 1 and 12 from Group 3 educators indicating the need for individualized instruction.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) female elementary teacher shared:

As a teacher I know my classroom and how my grade level are, because we do a lot of creating formative assessments, so it's an ongoing assessment to see that kids are reaching those goals. Kids who are not, we have interventions; we have a standard intervention day based on student needs. As our grade level, we divide kids up to make sure we're meeting the need. Maybe these kids need a certain math goal; these kids might need enrichment, so we work together as a team to meet all second grade needs.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) male elementary administrator discussed the effect the school culture has had on school achievement through making connections with individual students:

I think, once again, the culture is one that we care and we're going to find ways to help you out. Every time we make a decision on an initiative, the number one question is this right here, "Is it the best thing to do to help students?" If that answer is yes, it becomes very easy to sell it to the school board, parents, students, or staff. I just have to say, "Here's what we're doing, we have the opportunity to help our students learn." If it passes that test, then it has a chance of becoming important, so just that we're trying to work to improve student learning and give them a chance.

## Summary

The purpose of this mixed method research study was to examine the implementation of the Title I Plans in Nebraska Title I Schools for improving student achievement as identified as needing improvement. Findings indicated that Nebraska Title I “Needs Improvement” schools overall were incorporating group and individual strategies to meet student needs to improve student performance for all students. Administrators and teachers discussed the planning and progress of their School Improvement plan and Title I goals, categorized by these survey themes (1) Title I School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. During the interview process, three new themes emerged in the interviews: (1) Behavior Monitoring; (2) Collaboration; and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs.

Many of the Title I Schools participating in this study discussed working together, establishing a school-based collaboration and networking process. Educators were no longer closing their doors, but inviting their colleagues into their classrooms, and engaging in discussions and reflections to overcome student learning barriers and improve performance for all students. Survey data and interview responses showed an increase in collaboration and working collectively; however worth noting, peer observations were discussed by educators in only a few schools.

This year’s study revealed educators were not only utilizing data, but seemed to have a deeper understanding and knowledge of what data is and how to use it effectively to improve student performance. Both teachers and administrators noted the importance of using data as a key element to increase student academic achievement as “Data are essential to our school improvement process” received the highest mean rating among the nine survey categories by both teachers and administrators.

In the interviews this year, more educators discussed having specialized data systems in place where they had access to student data and monitoring student progress over time. Several educators talked about the ‘data culture’ that is now evident in their schools. Data is being used to plan large group, small group, and individual instruction and share student groupings across single grade levels.

Parent and community involvement continue to be a challenge. The item, “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan” was rated the lowest in the category. Educators and administrators both recognized the challenge of engaging the community in the school improvement process as well as establishing shared beliefs and values that forms the foundation of a culture of improvement. In a few locations, there were new and positive activities for parents and community members to becoming involved in schools.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) rural female elementary teacher shared:

We have a lot of programs with families so families are here in the evenings. We have literacy nights for ELA, we have a (parent) program that builds morale with their kids so they learn how to communicate with their kid and have a meal with their kid. Our parent liaison is the cream of the crop. She gets so many outside sources involved in what we’re

doing here. We do our best to let everyone know what we're doing. We try to toot our horn! Sometimes others won't toot it for us, so we do it ourselves.

A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) non-rural female ELL teacher discussed how the overall culture of the school has changed, "I think, as a school, we've become more and more collaborative and thinking of school improvement as a community effort."

## CONCLUSION

Researchers examined the implementation of Title I/School Improvement Plans in three types of school settings:

1. Title I Needs Improvement Schools
2. Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools
3. Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools

On both the survey and in the interviews, administrators and teachers provided information about the implementation of their Improvement Plans. Both similarities and differences were noted in their perceptions within the three studies that were conducted with schools during the 2012-13 school year. Educators from all three types of school settings noted their increased knowledge and understanding of the expectations and pathways to help students have greater success as they moved forward as noted by this Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) secondary math teacher, "Overall, I think it has because it makes teachers more intentional about what they're doing. It makes us more aware. We know that our administration is serious about us wanting to improve and it helps us to get all on the same page."

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) rural female principal shared her thoughts about how teachers truly believe that all students can learn and better realize how important it is not to make excuses but instead find pathways for helping students:

I really, for the first time, believe that these teachers believe that all students can learn. I don't hear so many excuses, I think there's still some frustrations with parenting; feeling like the parents aren't doing their part at times, but I think that's a behavioral piece. I think they would really like to have more support from parents in terms of behavior and that type of thing. I don't know if I ever realized what a steep curve that was. Maybe it's a leadership thing, the high school principal and I, we are in an absolute mindset of no excuse making, that all students can learn. Our typical mind is that parents aren't keeping the good kids at home and sending the bad ones; they're sending the best they have. All of those kids belong to somebody. I'm not saying that maybe a teacher or two don't occasionally have a doubt. But, given the opportunity, enough practice, and good instruction, kids can learn. Teaching is too hard for teachers to not believe it.

Within the interviews, there was evidence of more direct involvement and focus provided by school district personnel in the process of improvement for both large and small districts. Building level leaders and teachers shared key district led processes and expectations with monitoring systems ensuring that expectations were met. A Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) elementary school administrator stated:

The Title I teacher has what we call coordination day meetings every six weeks. We have floating subs that come into our school; that frees up our teachers just long enough for a

fifteen or twenty minute session where we sit down and go through what is happening with each student. We talk about students who are in that process of Title I, RTI, or progress monitoring as well as students who aren't, so basically every student we have. We talk about every student individually at coordination day meetings and we have early out in-service once a month. The Title I teacher actually goes into the classroom and coaches them then they meet afterwards.

Additionally, there were more building level instructional coaches available in districts that discussed the expectations set at the district level. Some districts indicated that every teacher is assigned an instructional coach with the responsibility of observation and assistance periodically during the school year. This was evidenced by the desire for increased collaboration as emphasized by a Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) male secondary teacher:

We have collaboration between teachers and coaches. Several of the teachers have become trainers; once you become a trainer you learn even more because you have to do the research to train the next group. They're learning more that way. If students are consistently underperforming, we're using data to know which teachers need more professional development. We have had to invite teachers back (to training) because they've not learned certain things. Sometimes they may have switched levels, other times they're just invited by the administration because they feel the teachers could use that again. It's difficult on their part to have to tell a teacher they need additional support, but it's needed.

The use of data driven decision making was much more evident during the 2012-13 study year than in previous years. Not only was data used to monitor student performance and plan instruction strategies, but it was also being used to monitor behavioral performance when using proactive strategies to reduce the number of behavioral concerns as illustrated by this Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) rural middle school teacher:

We're focusing, as far as behavior goes, on Tier I and using those proactive strategies to improve so we have fewer behaviors in the classroom. We've been trying to implement the 16 proactive strategies: meeting students at the door, giving a five to one positive to redirection, having the agenda on the board, walking around the classroom instead of just standing, and trying to use cooperative learning to get the students engaged.

Student engagement was once again evidenced in the interviews this year. A Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) non-rural male elementary administrator shared his school's focus on engagement strategies with students:

Currently in our building, we are focusing on engagement strategies that increase the number of students responding that utilize the multiple intelligences. By increasing our engagement of students, retention and learning can increase. We have focused on incorporating various multiple intelligences to reach the unique needs of learners with the school.

A central finding of this research project was the outcome of sum survey scores of the three groups of educators: Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement) schools, Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement) schools, and Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement) schools. There

were observed differences between the groups in that Group 1 responses differ from Group 2 responses and Group 2 responses differ from Group 3 responses.

Perceptions of educators in Title I Non-Needs Improvement schools (Group 3) had the greatest (most positive) mean survey score at 294.97, followed by educators' perceptions from Title I Needs Improvement Schools (Group 1) whose mean survey score was 290.78. The lowest mean survey score of the three groups was from educators in Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools (Group 2) at 278.23. It should be noted that all Title I schools receive additional funding; this is not true for Non-Title I Needs Improvement schools. Additional resources provided professional development support, instructional coaches, additional support for interventions, etc.; perhaps the additional resources provided to Title I Schools may account for some of the differences in educators' perceptions of their ability to implement their Title I/School Improvement plans.

But in the end when all is said and done there is a return to those issues that are not always under the control of educators; issues that are difficult for students to deal with on a daily basis. These issues not only are reflected by students' voices and actions, but also in the adults that hear their voices and are in charge of directing their learning, as illustrated in the frustration from this Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) male secondary non rural principal:

I think one thing that you can't do is take academic success and isolate it. It's tied to people. . . . We have lots of things to support kids because they can't be successful in the classroom if they're too worried about life decisions and things going on outside. You could say that's our focus in our school, we're an educational institution, but you can't separate the two. They're kids, they're people, they have other things going on in their lives. . . .



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## **2013 Recommendations**

The fourth year research study focused upon examining the implementation of the Title I/School Improvement Plans in Nebraska Title I Schools, Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Non-Title Needs Improvement Schools. Evidence was provided in the 2013 study that positive changes were occurring based upon earlier study recommendations. Therefore, all previous recommendations have been consolidated into New Recommendations based on the 2013 study.

### **New Recommendations based on the 2013 study**

- 1) Provide schools with assistance and resources to help students, parents and communities understand the importance of seeking continuing education after high school, especially for populations that traditionally do not seek further education beyond high school. This must start in the late elementary years in order for students and families to be prepared for higher education.
- 2) Educators discussed parent involvement as important to the process of school improvement however it is difficult for schools to attract parents to schools. Provide professional development and resources for Title I schools about research based models of parent involvement and ways they can engage parents of diverse cultures in informal processes within their school.
- 3) Additional investigation into why such significant differences existed between the three school groups (Title I Schools, Title I Needs Improvement Schools, and Non-Title Needs Improvement Schools) may be helpful in developing a better understanding of the needs of these schools.
- 4) Engage all Title I “Needs Improvement” schools in collaborative efforts to share research-based strategies and interventions that have proven successful in their schools to positively impact student achievement.
- 5) Provide technical assistance and resources for both the value and strategies on how to schedule observation of peers in classrooms at grade level, above their grade level and below their grade level that supports a continuum of learning Pre-12.

## *Engaging and Purposeful Growth*

### **Section III: Research Studies**

#### **Study 1: Administrator and Teacher Perceptions of the Progress of Title I Needs Improvement Schools**



*“I think our school culture promotes equality, equal treatment for all students, equal expectations, we want everyone to be successful, and we work hard to make sure kids feel that and believe that. We put a high priority on student relationships and letting kids understand that we care about them and want them to do well, even when things are hard which they sometimes are.”* (A Nebraska Elementary Teacher, 2013)

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

There is urgency today to transform schools in order to impact learning and “improve the academic performance of students at the lowest-achieving schools.” (Educational Resource Strategies, 2012, para.1)

Educators are asked to embrace research-based strategies that meet the learning needs of *all children*. The current education reform efforts to increase academic achievement have one goal in mind: Results!

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) identifies low-performing schools known as Persistently Low-Achieving Schools (PLAS) as required by the State Fiscal Stabilization Funds of the America Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

In Nebraska, all schools in need of improvement under Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are also considered PLAS (Nebraska Department of Education, n.d.). Additionally, schools identified as PLAS are eligible to apply for a School Improvement Grant. The state has

divided the PLAS schools into three *levels* or *tiers* to help determine their greatest needs and assist in awarding School Improvement grant funds. The Nebraska Department of Education (2012) defines the three tiers as:

- Tier I Schools means the five (5) lowest-achieving Title I schools identified to be in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring plus any Title I served secondary school with a graduation rate of less than 75% percent over the three latest years that was not captured in the above five schools.
- Tier II Schools shall mean the 13 (which is equal to 5%) lowest ranked secondary schools where the “all students” group meets the minimum n-size (30) for AYP that are eligible for, but do not receive, Title I funds plus any secondary school that is eligible for, but does not receive, Title I funds that has a graduation rate of less than 75% over the three latest years and was not captured in the above 12 schools.
- Tier III Schools means any Title I school identified to be in school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring that is not a Tier I School and any school that is ranked as low as the Tier I and Tier II schools but has no groups of at least 30 students. (pp. 1-2)

Additionally, Title I schools are faced with more challenges to meet academic achievement standards than others. The purpose of Title I as defined by the U. S. Department of Education (n.d.) “is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (SEC. 1001, para. 1). In November 2012, there were 494 Title I schools in Nebraska based on 2011-2012 data (NDE, 2012). One hundred three (103) of these Title I schools were identified as Needs Improvement. In addition, there were 96 schools that were *non*-Title I schools yet qualified as Needs Improvement for a total of 11 school districts and 199 schools in Nebraska identified as Needs Improvement in November 2012.

The number of Nebraska schools deemed Needs Improvement or PLAS has increased considerably. In 2010, 44 schools were identified as Needs Improvement in Nebraska, compared with 199 in November 2012 (NDE, 2012).

The urgency for results is increasing. John Kotter (2008) explains urgency as important, however communicating and executing this high urgency for change is most critical and challenging. “At the very beginning of any effort to make changes of any magnitude, if a sense of urgency is not high enough and complacency is not low enough, everything else becomes so much more difficult” (p. ix). Urgency must be guided by energized action and a focused determination to win rather than a false sense of urgency found in “moving from meeting to meeting, producing volumes of paper, moving rapidly in circles . . . that often prevents people from exploiting key opportunities and addressing gnawing problems” (p. x).

In order to support the urgency for change, all Needs Improvement schools are required to develop a School Improvement Plan or Title I School Improvement Plan. Since Title I School Improvement Plans generally contain the same data and goals, they are used and referred to interchangeably with School Improvement Plans. Schools are “required to formulate school improvement or development plans that focus on student learning outcomes” (Hallinger & Heck, 2011, p. 21) to help achieve results. Additionally, Title I

schools receive supplementary Title I funding with monitored flexibility allowing schools to determine how they will use these funds in order to support change according to what is determined most important by each school. “Schoolwide programs have great latitude to determine how to organize their operations and allocate the multiple funding sources available to them” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013, para. 2) to help meet the challenge of academic achievement for all children. “Funds can be used to improve curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, increase staff and program improvement” (Malburg, 2012, p. 1).

Research was conducted to examine the implementation of Title I/School Improvement Plans in Needs Improvement schools in Nebraska for each of the elements described by Malburg (2012): “curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and increase staff and program improvement” (p. 1). School Improvement plans and resources which align to improvement plans can vary between schools and districts. Survey categories used in the research studies aligned to Malburg’s (2012) elements include: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement.

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plan in Title I Needs Improvement schools. This research provides Nebraska educators and the Nebraska Department of Education, the State Board of Education, other policy makers, and all other stakeholders with the information to assess the implementation of Nebraska Title I/School Improvement Plans.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

This mixed-methods research study was conducted to explore perceptions of the implementation of the Title I School Improvement plans in Title I Needs Improvement Schools. Administrators and teachers across the state were surveyed using an online instrument inquiring as to their perceptions of the Title I School Improvement process.

Only those schools identified in Title I Needs Improvement status by the Nebraska Department of Education were eligible to participate. Therefore, 80 schools in 28 districts (NDE, 2012, School Improvement page) across the state were invited to participate in the study. Twelve schools in 10 districts agreed to participate resulting in 258 total participants from Title I Needs Improvement schools: 235 teachers and 23 administrators. This group of participants from Title I Needs Improvement schools is referred to as Group 1 throughout this research project.

### **Demographic School/District Information**

#### **Study Participant Demographic Data**

A total of 258 administrators and teachers participated in the survey: 23 administrators and 235 teachers (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1***Group 1 Survey Participant Demographic Data*

	<b>Group 1</b>	
<b>Role</b>	<b>Administrator</b>	23
	<b>Teacher</b>	235
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	27
	<b>Female</b>	231
<b>Locale</b>	<b>Rural</b>	198
	<b>Non-Rural</b>	60
<b>ELL</b>	<b>Low</b>	100
	<b>High</b>	158
<b>FRL</b>	<b>Low</b>	12
	<b>Average</b>	25
	<b>High</b>	221
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>Low</b>	28
	<b>High</b>	230
<b>Level</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	210
	<b>Mid/Secondary</b>	48

**Locale**

For the purpose of this research, participating Nebraska public school districts were divided into categories using Urban-Centric Locale Codes as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010). These locale codes are based on proximity to an urbanized area; definitions of each locale code can be found on page 25.

Schools were divided into rural and non-rural based upon their locale code. In Group 1, two schools (17%) were classified as “32-Town, Distant,” three schools (25%) were classified as “33-Town, Remote,” two schools (17%) were classified as “42-Rural, Distant,” two schools (17%) were classified as “43-Rural, Remote,” and three schools (25%) were classified as “11-City, Large.”

**Table 1.2***Group 1 School Locale Code Distribution*

	<b>Locale Codes</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	
		<b>Participants</b>	<b>Schools</b>
Rural	31: Town, Fringe 32: Town, Distant 33: Town, Remote 41: Rural, Fringe 42: Rural, Distant 43: Rural, Remote	198	9
Non-Rural	11: City, Large 21: Suburb, Large	60	3

Of the surveys returned, 77% were from rural schools and 23% were from non-rural schools. In comparing these numbers, it is important to take into account the fact that rural schools are likely to employ a smaller number of teachers and administrators. Table 1.2 illustrates the distribution of locale codes for Group 1.

### **English Language Learners (ELL)**

Within the State of Nebraska, the average ELL student population is 6.47% (NDE, 2012) while the average for schools in Group 1 is 21%. For the purpose of this study, schools were divided into two groups: low ELL student population and high ELL student population. Within Group 1, 100 participants (39%) were from schools with an ELL population of 7% and lower while 158 participants (61%) were from schools with an ELL student population higher than 7%.

### **Free Reduced Lunch (FRL)**

The average rate of Free and Reduced Price meals for the State of Nebraska is 43.79% (NDE, 2012) while the average for Group 1 is 67%. Data has been disaggregated based upon each school's reported rate of FRL into Low, Average, and High. Of those educators in Group 1, 12 participants (4%) were from schools with an FRL rate of 39% and lower (Low), 25 participants (10%) were from those schools between 40% and 55% (Average), and 221 participants (86%) were from schools with an FRL rate of higher than 55% (High).

### **Mobility**

The average rate of student mobility across the State of Nebraska dropped from 12.22% to 11.84% (NDE, 2012); the average rate for Group 1 was higher at 18%. Data has been disaggregated based upon the rate of student mobility reported by each school and categorized as low or high. Of the educators in Group 1, 28 participants (11%) were from schools with a mobility rate of 12% or less (Low) while 230 participants (89%) were from those schools with a rate of 13% or higher (High).

### **Level**

Lastly, data from Study 1 was disaggregated by the grade levels in the school. Educators who primarily work in schools with grades PK-6 are categorized as "Elementary" while educators who identify with a middle school, high school, or a mixed grade school were referred to as "Middle/Secondary." In Group 1, 210 participants (81%) were from elementary schools while 48 (19%) were from schools of all other levels: middle, high, and mixed grade.

### **Interview Participants**

Qualitative interviews were completed across the State of Nebraska in Title I Needs Improvement Schools. Interview locations were chosen from those schools who participated in the survey, based upon the schools geographic location, FRL and ELL rates, as well as overall student demographics. In Group 1, interviews were conducted in 4 schools from 3 districts with 5 administrators and 6 teachers for a total of 11 interviews.

### **Instruments**

Administrators responded to an 89-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers responded to a 93-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored nine themes: (1) Title I/School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Some items on the teacher survey were not included on the



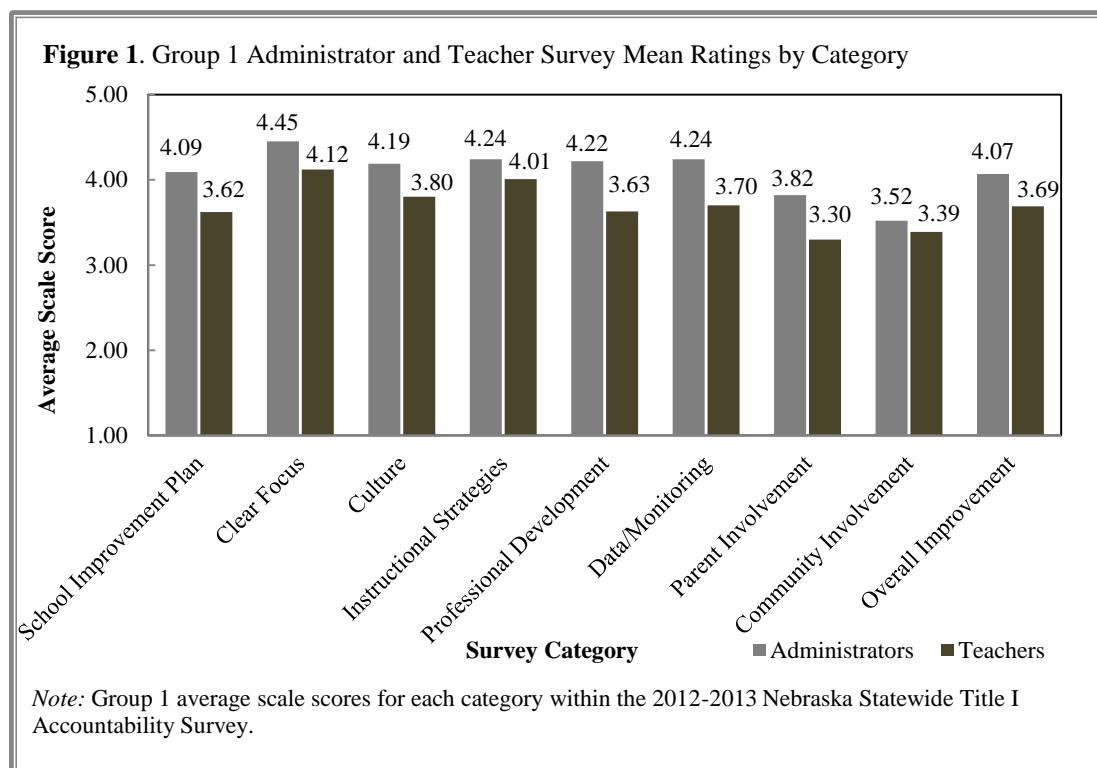
administrator survey; this is noted in the results when it occurs. The surveys were designed to collect perceptions about the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for this instrument was .975 for all participants.

Second, open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in four public schools within three school districts. The interview protocols were structured around the same nine themes used to structure the survey: (1) Title I/School Improvement Plans, (2) Clear Focus, (3) Culture, (4) Instructional Strategies, (5) Professional Development, (6) Data/Monitoring, (7) Parent Involvement, (8) Community Involvement, and (9) Overall Improvement. Additionally, three new themes emerged in the interviews: Behavior Monitoring, Collaboration, and Meeting Individual Student Needs.

Detailed perceptions were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix D) that gathered qualitative data. Probes were identified for use with each question. Interviewers were provided a Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Manual and received training prior to conducting interviews.

## SURVEY RESULTS

As shown in Figure 1, administrator and teacher perceptions were categorized by nine themes: Title I School Improvement Plan, Clear Focus, Culture, Instruction Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Administrators and teachers responded to survey items using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*).



## Theme 1: Title I School Improvement Plan

In the category of the Title I School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7), the average response of all administrators was 4.09. The average response of all teachers was 3.62.

**Table 1.3**

*Title I School Improvement Plan Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.57)	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.24)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	“I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.” (3.57)	“I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” among grade levels.” (3.14)

Male educators rated this category 3.80 while female educators rated it 3.65. Educators from schools with an average FRL rated this category 3.36 while schools with a high FRL rated this 3.71, a significant difference ( $p=.047$ ). Schools with low FRL rated the category at 3.51. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated the Title I School Improvement Plan category at 3.58 while schools with above 7% rated this 3.72. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as schools with lower mobility rated it at 3.32 while schools with higher mobility rated this 3.71. Elementary school educators rated the category 3.74 and secondary educators rated it slightly lower at 3.35. Rural schools rated the category at 3.68 while non-rural schools rated it similar at 3.61.

For the purpose of this study, we have chosen to report teachers and administrators together as ‘Educators’ in the disaggregated data to protect confidentiality. The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category Title I School Improvement Plan was .901 for all participants.

### Title I School Improvement Plan Discussion

#### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 1: “I was/Administrators were involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.”** This item was rated 3.83 by administrators and 4.07 by teachers.

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 4.06 for females and 3.96 for males.

**Table 1.4**

*Item 1 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	4.00	4.06	3.96	4.11	4.07	4.05	4.10	3.85	4.09	3.92

- A Title I coordinator explained, “We sit down and go through each area: reading or language arts, math, and writing. We also have climate and culture. We look over last year’s goals and decide if we want to keep some of those goals, change them, or add to them. I believe the principal was the note taker last year and changed the document as we went. We brainstormed any new ideas; we spent the morning going over those and in the afternoon worked on some of those ideas we wanted to use.”
- A female elementary assistant principal clarified how administrators and teachers are involved in the Title I plan, “I think we are better at involving the teachers in the Title I Plan. In my tenure here the Title I plan itself was more of an administrative plan. Over the last couple of years, we’ve done a better job of pulling in those teachers, the Title I teachers, the reading coaches, to help us write that plan.”

**Item 2: “Teachers were/I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” This item was rated 3.91 by administrators and 3.14 by teachers, the lowest rated item by teachers in the category. This item also resulted in a significant difference between administrators and teachers ( $p=.004$ ).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item the lowest in this category; males rated this item 3.48 while females rated it 3.18.

**Table 1.5**  
*Item 2 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/ Second	Rural	Non- Rural
Item Rating	3.25	*2.88	*3.24	*3.20	3.22	*2.79	*3.26	*3.30	*2.79	*3.22	3.18

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female principal shared, “In the summer there are five classroom teachers, myself and our principal that are part of our School Improvement Plan Team. We sit down and go through each area: reading or language arts, math, and writing. We also have climate and culture. We look over last year’s goals and decide if we want to keep some of those goals, change them, or add to them. I believe the principal was the note taker last year and changed the document as we went. We brainstormed any new ideas; we spent the morning going over those and in the afternoon worked on some of those ideas we wanted to use.”
- A female teacher explained her involvement, “We have a school improvement team and each grade level and all areas: ELL, special education, and early childhood education are all represented on that team. We work together to formulate a plan, our main goals are to improve reading and writing and math across all areas. Each team comes and discusses what we are doing to work on those goals through data teams and PLCs; every area is working on what their students need.”

**Item 3: “All teachers in my school were/I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Goals.” This item was given a rating of 3.57 by administrators and a rating of 3.22 by teachers. This was the lowest rated item by administrators in the School Improvement Plan category.**

Male Educators (3.67) rated this item higher than female educators (3.20). This item resulted in a significant difference for male/female educators ( $p=.033$ ).

**Table 1.6**

*Item 3 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.33	2.96	3.28	3.34	*3.20	2.93	3.29	3.31	3.00	3.29	*3.12

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female teacher explained the involvement of teachers and the principal in the identification of Title I goals, “A lot. We have a group of individuals who are our school improvement committee. We oversee and always get all of the feedback we can from all of our staff members.”
- A female teacher shared the amount of involvement by staff to determine Title I goals, “I would say very involved; we sit down, as a school improvement team to look at the goals, revise them, and add to them.”

**Item 4: “I have consistently/Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I Goals to teachers in my school.” Administrators rated this item 4.13, and teachers rated it 3.50. There was a significant difference between teacher and administrator ratings for this item ( $p=.003$ ).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similar as males rated this 3.67 and females rated this 3.55.

**Table 1.7**

*Item 4 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*3.00	3.16	3.63	3.46	3.62	2.89	3.64	3.62	3.27	3.59	3.47

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female principal explained the process of engaging her teachers in sharing progress toward Title I goals, “With teachers, during the teachers meetings, we have the monthly faculty meeting then once every other month we have a professional development meeting where we talk about our progress. We also have a grade level responsible for reporting what they are doing with the school improvement strategies; third grade will be in April and they’re going to talk about Math Talk and how they’re using those strategies to improve the math comprehension and fluency. It keeps it in the forefront, I know you’re teaching kids every day, but it’s focused instruction, not just whatever you want. There’s a sense of expectation, you’re here to teach these kinds of things, it’s not just about butterflies or whales. Our staff really understand that, especially when you’ve been a failing school for two years. Our staff would really like to be off of that.”

- A female elementary teacher explained how teachers discuss Title I goals with administrators, “I would say that at our staff meetings we bring up, “These are our goals, the reason we’re doing some of these things are so that we meet the goals.” We revisit them at every staff meeting because there’s a component of our staff meeting where a grade level will get up and share. Let’s say for Daily 5, they have to share an aspect of Daily 5 that connects to our reading goal, they may have to share a student structured interaction they’re doing, or an activity that the district is looking for in our classrooms. Those are visited fairly frequently through our staff meetings, that’s one way that the staff knows they’re present.”

**Item 5: “Teachers in my school/I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals.” This item was rated 4.30 by administrators and 3.50 by teachers, revealing a significant difference (p<.001).**

Male educators rated this item 3.70 while females rated this slightly lower at 3.55.

**Table 1.8**  
*Item 5 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.08	3.62	3.45	3.65	3.07	3.63	3.66	3.19	3.57	3.57

- A female ELL teacher revealed how teachers are engaged with the implementation of Title I goals, “We have three goals; our first one is to improve student achievement in reading. Second is to improve student achievement in math, third is a parent involvement goal. We monitor our goals, at each grade level, through Professional Learning Communities. We use the Data Teams process to monitor student achievement through those goals. So, at the beginning of the year, we sat down and chose Power Standards in math and reading as well as an ELL team in writing. We mapped out our school year, choosing standards that would help students be lifelong learners and what would help students for the next grade level. Also, what would help students achieve on assessments.”
- A female teacher shared, “With our school improvement goals, we work on those all year long. Through our PLC teams and when we look at that data, we report that every month for reading and math, we look at the goals, see where students are and then we plan interventions to meet those. We revisit the data and do formative assessments. The initial goals we made were based on state standards so we know that all of that is tied together; we look at our state standards with our curriculum and make sure that all meshes together.”

**Item 6: “Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified.” This item was rated 4.30 by administrators and 3.68 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item at 3.96 for males and 3.71 for females.

**Table 1.9***Item 6 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.42	3.36	3.79	3.61	3.81	3.36	3.78	3.80	3.44	3.72	3.78

- A female teacher explained how the Title I plan is organized, “The Title I plan has a lot of different pieces to it as you well know. There are a lot of people on our school improvement team and we look at it because there are people that can address different areas, not just academic but the parent involvement and (other) different ways.”
- A female ELL teacher explained how everyone has different goals for their grade level depending upon need, “We did look vertically at them as well. We looked at everybody’s and gave some feedback on them. I was on the third grade team this year, we went and looked at everyone’s and saw how the progression moved throughout each grade.”

**Item 7: “The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” This item was rated 4.57 by administrators and 4.24 by teachers. This was the highest rated item for both administrators and teachers in the School Improvement Plan category.**

**Table 1.10***Item 7 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*4.00	*4.08	*4.31	*4.03	*4.42	*4.11	*4.29	*4.36	*3.88	*4.28	*4.25

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

- A female teacher shared how the overall Title I Improvement process has improved student performance so far, “The whole process keeps you accountable, and it keeps the issues that are important at the forefront. It makes sure you are hitting those marks, following through with what you say you’re going to do. So, I feel like having those checks along the way really helps us move forward versus settling for the same thing. The principal has changed how things are happening at our school in professional development, committees, and having a school improvement team, she’s always trying to figure out what’s the best fit for our school and how we can keep our school improving in terms of scores, meeting goals, and setting high expectations for ourselves.”
- A male principal explained how progress has been made on improving student achievement, “It looks like we have some work to do still. We have steadily gone up but not at the level that we need to go up. We were in Needs Improvement, got out of Needs Improvement, went back in Needs Improvement, so we’ve had some steady growth and I would say that the environment factors that go along with that mean a lot. Our student population has increased a ton. I just got an email from the ELL

teacher reminding her of what percentage of our kids are in ELL. It's been a lot of hard work and sometimes that doesn't show but you can't sit there and say you'll be ok with that. You can't."

## Theme 2: Clear Focus

**In the Clear Focus category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17), the average response of all administrators was 4.45. The average response of teachers was 4.12.**

Male educators rated this category 4.06 while female educators rated it slightly higher at 4.15.

**Table 1.11**

*Clear Focus Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	"Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments in my school are used to support instruction and enhance student learning." (4.70)	"I engage students in order to improve academic performance." (4.55)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	"The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels." (4.17)	"The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels." (3.89) "My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program." (3.89)

Educators from schools with low FRL rated the category 4.06, those from schools with an average FRL rated it 4.12, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it 4.15. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated this 4.04 while schools with above 8% rated this 4.21. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as schools with lower mobility rated it at 4.10 while schools with higher mobility rated this 4.15. Elementary school educators rated the category 4.19 and secondary educators rated it slightly lower at 3.94. Rural school educators rated the Clear Focus category 4.16 while non-rural schools rated it similar at 4.10.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Clear Focus was .895 for all participants in Group 1.

## Clear Focus Discussion

### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 8: "My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program." This item was rated 4.35 by administrators and 3.89 by teachers and was the lowest rated item by teachers in the category of Clear Focus.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item lowest in the category with males at 3.89 and females at 3.94.

**Table 1.12***Item 8 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	*3.96	3.93	*3.62	4.13	*3.75	3.96	3.98	3.73	*3.95	3.87

Note. \*Lowest in the category

- A male principal indicated his school is strongly focused on academics, “I say all academic areas, but really the schoolwide area is to focus on what a kid really needs and to continue to move every kid. We want to continue to help every kid improve no matter what.”
- A female elementary teacher explained the extent to which there is a schoolwide focus on improvement, “I would say the character is pretty wide spread because we do; it’s really hard to make something universal in terms of reading, math, and writing because it varies so much between grade levels. Our goal is to improve reading comprehension, our goal is to improve math fluency, and that looks different at each grade level, it’s hard to have a ‘This is how it looks for everyone’ sort of thing. With character, it’s the same from kindergarten until fifth grade. Being responsible looks like this. I would say the schoolwide focus is the culture and climate.”
- A female principal shared the continuity of curriculum in her district, “It’s that way with every piece of curriculum, if one building gets it we all get it. I feel very confident that what another elementary school has, we have the same exact materials, so our kids have anything and everything that any other kid in the district would have.”

**Item 9: “My school engages in continuous school improvement.” This item was rated 4.65 by administrators and 4.31 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item the highest in the category at 4.26 and female educators rated it similarly at 4.35.

**Table 1.13***Item 9 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.08	4.28	4.37	4.22	4.42	4.36	4.34	4.40	4.10	4.34	4.35

- A female teacher revealed the year long process of school improvement, “With our school improvement goals, we work on those all year long. Through our PLC teams and when we look at that data, we report that every month for reading and math, we look at the goals, see where students are and then we plan interventions to meet those. We revisit the data and do formative assessments. The initial goals we made were



- based on state standards so we know that all of that is tied together; we look at our state standards with our curriculum and make sure that all meshes together.”
- An ELL teacher shared a different view of the school’s focus, and how PLCs contribute to the improvement process, “It’s not easy to say we have a schoolwide focus on, let’s say, we’re all really focused on writing. What we’re really focused on is working as professional learning communities to improve student achievement. It looks different at different grade levels and that gives us the freedom to see what our students really need and to work as a PLC to meet those needs.”

**Item 10: “There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need.” This item was rated 4.48 by administrators and 4.17 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 4.11 by males and 4.20 by females.

**Table 1.14**  
*Item 10 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.00	*3.96	4.23	3.95	4.35	3.96	4.22	4.29	3.77	4.14	4.38

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category

- A female elementary teacher explained how to differentiate for students with a background of limited environment and experiences, “We’ll have the data from this year’s NeSA; we’ll use that to start. You do the best you can with what you have. A lot of our kids don’t have the background knowledge. If they’ve improved by two steps, that’s an improvement and that’s a celebration. Maybe we didn’t meet the 88% or whatever, that’s not fair. Not every school is the same, they want us to differentiate for kids, they (whoever sets the standards) need to differentiate for buildings. Not every building is the same. I can only share my background from here; you can’t put us in the same pot as those who have extra background knowledge and take trips to Siberia. A good trip for our kids might be to Wal-Mart, it’s still a trip and they can still share that experience.”
- A female elementary teacher shared their school’s focus and how it related to their goals and needs, “I think how we’ll be successful is through our data teams. We really break down data. As we record it on our PLC forms, it really shows: these kids are proficient, these kids are close, and these kids need improvement or are far from the goal. It really lists it in black and white and lets you know where you need to work with which students. The way that our grade level does it and everybody does the same type of thing, it’s very clear. Teachers are held accountable through the process both to the principal and to themselves because we record our data. It’s a really good way to be at that meeting, see what you need to do, and plan for interventions or instructional strategies that you want to use to help.”

**Item 11: “There is a clear articulation of standards in my school.” This item was rated by administrators as 4.43 and by teachers as 4.08.**

Male educators rated this item at 4.00 and female educators rated it slightly higher at 4.13.

**Table 1.15**  
*Item 11 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.00	4.04	4.13	3.95	4.22	4.11	4.11	4.21	*3.69	4.11	4.12

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category

This item resulted in a significant difference between responses from elementary educators at 4.21 and middle/secondary educators at 3.69 ( $p=.002$ ).

- A female teacher explained how curriculum is aligned to state standards, “It is completely (aligned). With common core, I’m not sure how that’s all going to look. I’m also on the social studies curriculum team. . . . When we rewrite things the standards are all right in front of us in order to do that.”
- A female teacher shared how new curriculum can be more challenging and produce better results for meeting standards, “The standards for reading appear to be higher; what’s on level for the old curriculum is not on level. I have really seen the results within my grade level, the other two teachers are piloting (new curriculum) and I am not. The progress those kids are making because of those high expectations is phenomenal. We’re looking at kids who are able to reach higher reading levels. They have a lot of kids that are above and beyond because the reading text and the materials that lead up to it are more rigorous than the curriculum we are currently using.”

**Item 12: “Teachers in my school/I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” This item was rated 4.48 by administrators and 4.55 by teachers, the highest rated item in the category of Clear Focus for teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 4.30 while female educators rated it 4.58, the highest rated item in the category.

**Table 1.16**  
*Item 12 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*4.42	*4.48	*4.56	*4.43	*4.62	*4.61	*4.54	*4.61	*4.25	*4.54	*4.57

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

This item resulted in a significant difference between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population at 4.43 and schools with a high ELL student population at 4.62 ( $p=.010$ ).

- A female teacher shared how she engages students in all subject areas, “We really lay out the goals, what they are and what our expectations are so there isn’t anything for them to wonder. They know these are our reading goals, we’re trying to build comprehension, and we’re trying to build vocabulary. Then math, of course kids love math, that’s always their favorite thing. . . I don’t sugar coat things, this is what your expectations are, and this is what we’re doing as a school. With NeSA testing, we all are in this together; we have to do the best we can. When I see that your effort is slacking, these kids up here have to pull. You have to meet them in the middle, not all of my kids read at grade level, it’s a challenge. My expectations are still the same.”
- A female principal shared how they keep students actively engaged, “We’re going to do student structured interactions to keep kids moving. That’s been our most recent one, how do you keep kids kinesthetically engaged in the lesson and not just sit there. There are still some teachers who want to talk for 40 minutes; these kids have left 30 minutes ago. So, really trying to keep kids moving and what strategies we can use.”

**Item 13: “The curriculum in my school is supportive of the academic needs of students.” This item was rated 4.30 by administrators and 3.98 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item 3.96 by males and 4.02 by females.

**Table 1.17**  
*Item 13 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.08	4.08	4.00	4.05	3.99	3.96	4.02	4.02	3.96	4.07	3.82

- A female principal explained how limited budgets have impacted curriculum alignment, “Our district knows that we have to follow standards. Off the top of my head, I know that our Nebraska State tests for science, our curriculum does not match at all and it’s a big issue. I believe last year, they wanted to change, but with budgets they have not . . . I know when we changed curriculum; they said our kindergarten learning number sense is much better than the old curriculum . . . I wonder if other districts feel this way about curriculums, that it’s an ongoing thing.”
- A female teacher shared how their curriculum supports student learning in new ways, “The K-2 (Math) curriculum is a different way to look at teaching math because it works more at really getting a good understanding of number sense instead of teaching at kids. It’s allowing kids to create that understanding for themselves. We have a district writing curriculum, which builds through the grade levels. Math builds on each other throughout the grades because the author did that purposefully. The writing curriculum, K-5 is the same, it provides a good foundation in kindergarten and every year it goes forward. By the time they get to fourth grade to do their writing assessment, they’ve had a lot of different experiences with the different genres of writing.”

**Item 14: “The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” This item was rated 4.17 by administrators and 3.89 by teachers, the lowest rated item in the category of Clear Focus for administrators and teachers.**

Male educators also rated this lowest in the category at 3.89; female educators rated the item similarly at 3.92.

**Table 1.18**  
*Item 14 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*3.75	*3.96	*3.92	3.89	*3.94	3.86	*3.93	*3.96	3.73	3.96	*3.78

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female teacher explained how the district provides support for pacing of curriculum to ensure learning for all students, “We have a district-wide guide that we have to follow. It tells us which lessons we’re supposed to teach, when we’re supposed to teach them, to make sure we’re all on the same track and keeping up with where we’re supposed to be. . . . It’s basically making sure that what we’re teaching is aligned with the state standards.”
- A male principal explained, “We don’t do vertical as much as we would like. . . . I like to have vertical work embedded in what we do. At a staff meeting where we’re doing an activity, the last one was on configuration of classrooms in the building; you have to hear everybody’s perspective for the grade level and the needs of the grade level. Then, you regroup and have those vertical conversations; we do them with behavior too.”

**Item 15: “The curriculum in my school is aligned with the state standards.” This item was rated 4.35 by administrators and 4.15 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item 4.07 and female educators rated the item 4.18.

**Table 1.19**  
*Item 15 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.00	4.28	4.17	4.23	4.13	4.18	4.17	4.17	4.19	4.25	3.92

- A male principal shared the process for alignment to state standards, “Within the data teams, there’s a procedure for unpacking standards. The district does a lot of work for us within the standards. If you pull a math card, you’ll have that alignment there. With new and current staff, we want to make sure they understand what children do in kindergarten and how that connects all the way through the curriculum. We take a look at the standards and follow our process for identifying the essential outcomes. Then, they identify and develop a curriculum for the year.”

- An ELL teacher shared how the district provides support to ensure for curriculum alignment, “That’s been a little bit of a struggle since we have started to do the NeSA testing, we’ve had to look really critically at that. The school district has really helped with that; we went through training a couple of years ago to look at how the curriculum aligned to state standards and where were the gaps and how we could change the instruction to meet state standards.”

**Item 16: “Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments are used to support instruction and enhance student learning.” This item was rated 4.70 by administrators, their highest rated item in the category, and 4.11 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item at 4.07 for males and 4.17 for females.

**Table 1.20**  
*Item 16 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.25	4.16	4.16	4.05	4.23	4.11	4.17	4.20	4.00	4.21	4.02

- An ELL teacher explained how assessments are used to guide instruction, “We monitor fluency through RTI. We have added in the Daze comprehension through DIBELS. With the reading comprehension we monitor the district assessments and our own formative assessments. We also monitor writing; with each genre we have an assessment of some sorts with a rubric based on the six traits. In math, we’re monitoring student achievement on the math goals for each chapter. There’s also CRT’s for the social studies and science units taught in unit studies.”
- A female teacher explained, “We have set common formative assessments that we put into our plan. For example, in summarizing, we had one in each theme because our curriculum has six themes. To monitor how students are doing on that goal. [Were they teacher written?] These are ones we had from the curriculum and partly teacher written. We took a story from the curriculum, adapted a rubric from the curriculum that we felt met the state standard more effectively and used that. The students then wrote a story based on the curriculum and we used the rubric that we had modified from the curriculum, made it a little more rigorous. Different teams do different things. Sometimes we are creating common formative assessments together as a team. Other times we are using the district summative assessments as a baseline or as a post assessment on a skill.”

**Item 17: “Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students.” This item was rated 4.61 by administrators and 4.00 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 4.07 by males and 4.06 by females.

**Table 1.21***Item 17 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.08	4.04	4.06	3.98	4.11	4.11	4.05	4.08	3.98	4.03	4.17

- A female teacher shared instructional practices used at her school, “We have set common formative assessments that we put into our plan. These are the ones we had from the curriculum and are partly teacher written. We took a story from the curriculum, adapted a rubric from the curriculum that we felt met the state standard more effectively and used that. The students wrote a story based on the curriculum and we used the rubric that we had modified from the curriculum. Different teams do different things. Sometimes we are creating common formative assessments together as a team. Other times we are using the district summative assessments as a baseline or as a post assessment on a skill.”
- A female Title I coordinator explained, “We also do a lot of SSI, Structured Student Interactions. A lot of teachers have implemented that. Daily 5 is one that has been going on for a while that we’ve tried to work with our kids. It’s a program where you listen to, read, do word work, work on writing, read to someone, and read to self. So, during our guided reading time, students are working on those “stations” while the teacher is doing guided reading. Those are trained in the first few weeks of school very heavily on what that should look like and what they should be doing.”

### Theme 3: Culture

**In the Culture category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31), the average response of all administrators was 4.19. The average response of teachers was 3.80. This resulted in a statistical significance for the category between teachers and administrators ( $p < .001$ ).**

Male educators rated this category 3.81 while female educators rated it similarly at 3.84. Educators from schools with a low FRL rated this category 3.88, those from schools with an average FRL rated it 3.72, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it 3.85. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated this 3.56 while schools with above 8% rated this 4.01, resulting in a significant difference between the two groups for the category of Culture ( $p < .001$ ). Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as schools with lower mobility rated it at 3.77 while schools with higher mobility rated this 3.85. Elementary school educators rated the category 3.90 and middle/secondary educators rated it lower at 3.58. Rural school educators rated the Culture category 3.84 while non-rural educators rated it similar at 3.83.

**Table 1.22***Culture Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	"I am passionate about student learning." (4.83)	"I am passionate about student learning." (4.75)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	"Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together." (4.00) "The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty." (4.00)	"The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving." (3.49)

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Culture was .941 for all participants.

### Culture Discussion

#### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 18: "The culture of our school plays a dominant role in exemplary student performance." This item was rated 4.13 by administrators and 3.91 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.89 and female educators rated it similarly at 3.94.

**Table 1.23***Item 18 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	4.16	3.90	3.79	4.02	4.07	3.91	3.98	3.71	3.96	3.82

- A female teacher discussed the value of the school culture and climate in her building and how it's conducive to success for all, "I'm the culture/climate person. We try really hard to build the culture in the building and I think, I would say the last three years in particular, it's a family. We all want what's best for our kids; we all want them to be successful. We're all after that same ultimate goal, if we're not then we shouldn't be here."
- A female principal explained the impact of culture, "Our kids understand more and more how important learning is and that they have to do well on all assessments. I told them straight out, I went to the fifth grade classes, talked to the teachers and said, 'We failed two years in a row.' They said, 'What do you mean?' I had to explain to them, 'Do you realize this test isn't just about you, it's about us as a community and as a school? If fifth grade fails, even if third and fourth grade pass, our whole school still fails. It's up to you to do the very best.'"
- The female principal continued to respond to the students' questions, "They (the kids) said, 'What score do we need? What goals should we have?' They were looking for a goal! I said, 'That's a good question, sometimes there's not an easy answer for that. How about you shoot for getting over half of the questions right? That could be a goal, get half of the questions right and we'll do great.' I continued, 'If you don't even try, if you just click, click, click, I know we won't pass.' They understood that;

sometimes I go by in the hall and they'll say, 'We got done with our test.' I'll say, 'How did you do?' They would respond, 'Oh, we did great!' or 'It was hard!' Just celebrating the fact that this is about showing your learning!"

**Item 19: "Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school." This item was rated 4.13 by administrators and 3.80 by teachers resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.014$ ).**

Male educators rated this item at 3.67 and female educators rated it slightly higher at 3.84.

**Table 1.24**

*Item 19 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.80	3.84	3.49	4.04	3.79	3.83	3.89	3.56	3.82	3.83

This item resulted in a significant difference between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population who rated it 3.49 and educators in schools with a high ELL student population who rated it higher at 4.04 ( $p<.001$ ).

- A female teacher shared her perception of the positive learning environment in her school, "I feel like the culture you feel when you walk into the building is an open, positive place to be. I'm a bit biased, but when people come in, they see students learning, they see them (students) in their classroom, and they see a high expectation for all kids. It feels like, as a staff member, it's a team effort. How can I help your friends to succeed? We have academic support, different interventions, and teachers really team because we want high student achievement. We really brainstorm to find out how we can meet the needs of these kids."
- A female elementary teacher revealed the positive culture in her school, "I think it has a positive effect. As I work with different students and sometimes help out in the office, I think that kids know that we want them to do well, even when it's hard. Teachers work hard to instill that in the kids so they feel good about it and they know that success comes from within, you have to give some effort. I've seen that in all different grade levels, it helps to instill that positivity and the importance of learning in kids."

**Item 20: "Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together." This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.57 by teachers, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ). This was the lowest rated item in the category of Culture for administrators.**

Male educators rated this item the lowest in the category at 3.44; female educators rated it higher at 3.63. This item resulted in a significant difference between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population who rated the item at 3.27 and educators from schools with a high ELL student population who rated it higher at 3.82 ( $p<.001$ ).



**Table 1.25***Item 20 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*3.42	3.44	3.64	3.27	3.82	3.64	3.60	3.70	*3.21	3.58	3.70

Note. \*Lowest in the category.

- A female teacher explained, “Every quarter we have a character assembly; the six pillars of character so two each quarter. The last one is a finale celebration of all of the traits. It really builds that (culture); it’s where we reiterate, ‘Be safe, be respectful, be responsible.’ The student council gets involved with some things; every grade level takes it on and does whatever they want to do. . . . We get outside sources and we invite community members. . . .”
- A female principal explained that her Needs Improvement school is a very special place, “I think students that go to school here, (even) if they move to another school area, we let them stay at our school. They want to stay at school because they have lots of friends and really like the school. Once they’re here, even though we’re a failing school, they want to be here. We had a family move to another nearby town; they called today, ‘We’re going to try one more week, but we might have to option enroll back and we’ll just drive them 30 miles to come back to school.’ I chuckled because it’s really better for them to stay where they’re at, they’ll adjust and be okay. It makes me proud that families move out of the area, or threaten to, but they never go. They may go check it out, but they stay. I know they are just upset about one thing, but they’ll never go. We’re welcoming, we’re very supportive, we talk to families, we try to take the time to explain, and I think they appreciate that. Just smiling and making them feel welcome and that they feel safe here.”

**Item 21: “Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.” This item was rated by administrators as 4.17 and by teachers as 3.77. This resulted in a significant difference between administrators and teachers ( $p<.001$ ).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item at 3.78 for males and 3.81 for females.

**Table 1.26***Item 21 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	3.80	3.80	3.61	3.93	3.89	3.80	3.86	3.58	3.82	3.75

This item resulted in an additional significant difference between schools with a low ELL student population whose educators rated at 3.61 and schools with a high ELL student population whose educators rated it at 3.93 ( $p=.008$ ).

- A female elementary teacher discussed how the school culture has impacted student achievement, “I think it helps, I just think it makes them realize that we, as a staff, are

all on the same page, we all want the same things. We had a kick off last week when the NeSA window opened. They also understand the reality; we have to do this (testing) for a reason. It affects me personally, it affects my classroom, it affects our school, and it affects our town. We don't sugar coat it. We really let them know, this is what is expected, most of them work with that."

- A rural female elementary principal shared the extent the school culture is conducive to successful improvement, "I would say, 95% of our staff are committed, work as a team, and do extra. We have one grade level that is more negative, it's difficult to get them to buy in. They put in the extra time and work as a team. I think because teachers don't leave; they like it here, they feel rewarded and successful as a team and feel a sense of purpose."
- A rural female elementary teacher from a school with a high ELL student population shared how the overall culture impacts teaching in her school, "We get along very well together, some people don't mesh as well with other people, but I would say overall, it's very positive, we support one another, and we look out for each other's benefit. Students, this year has been an interesting year. A lot of our students, their parents see the importance of school, and they want them here. There are so many factors outside of the school building that influence that, it's a challenge, it's a huge things."

**Item 22: "The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning." This item was rated by administrators at 4.26 and by teachers at 3.80.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this similarly at 3.63 for males and 3.87 for females.

**Table 1.27**  
*Item 22 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	3.56	3.87	3.45	4.09	4.00	3.83	3.97	3.31	3.85	3.82

Responses from educators in elementary schools (3.97) and educators in middle/secondary schools (3.31) resulted in a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ).

- A female principal explained, "We promote learning, we promote equity for all. It doesn't matter who you are or when you go here, you get the same thing everybody else gets. We expect you to come to school; we'll call you if you're not, we'll even come and pick you up. You get the same treatment; we expect you to follow our school expectations, you'll get the best we can give you."
- A female Title I coordinator shared the perceptions related to working in a low socio-economic environment and the frustrations felt, "I feel that our teachers really support it and do all they can to meet the goals. You hate to hear it is perceived badly, but I believe our teachers care a lot and perceive it as a great place to be."

**Item 23: "The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation." This item was rated 4.35 by administrators and 3.97 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item between “neutral” and “agree” at 3.78 and female educators primarily rated it “agree” at 4.03.

**Table 1.28**  
*Item 23 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.00	3.76	4.03	3.63	4.24	4.07	4.00	4.11	3.52	3.97	4.10

A significant difference was revealed between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population who rated the item 3.63 and those in schools with a high ELL student population who rated the item higher at 4.24 ( $p<.001$ ). In addition, a significant difference occurred between responses from elementary educators who rated the item 4.11 and educators in middle/secondary schools who rated it lower at 3.52 ( $p=.001$ ).

- A female principal discussed how culture impacts teaching and learning, “Our culture highly impacts teacher instruction. First of all, just their attitude and feelings about teaching kids. You know, when you go into a classroom - who loves it and is having the time of their life or when you go into their room and you think, ‘(audible sigh) two more hours.’ You can tell, the kids can read that. I think culture is huge; a teacher needs to be happy, enjoy what they do, and enjoy all the kids and the challenges involved. They have to embrace that change and the challenges they have and be willing to work through them. Otherwise it is a struggle every day; it is hard work. If you don’t like it, it makes it harder and you won’t be successful.”
- A female teacher explained how behavioral challenges collide with high expectations, “I feel the staff is very welcoming, I have an amazing team of teachers I work with. We get along very well together, some people don’t mesh as well with other people, but I would say overall, it’s very positive, we support one another, and we look out for each other’s benefit. Students, this year has been an interesting year, it’s a very challenging class overall. . . . More behavior than academic. A lot of our students, their parents see the importance of school, and they want them here; but students have a hard time respecting what’s being asked of them. If they’re asked to do something, it’s on their time and whenever they get around to it. So, I think overall there’s a lack of respect towards each other and towards the teachers. Again, there are so many factors outside of the school building that influence that, it’s a challenge. Then, there are certain students here that are awesome, that do great, and follow directions, and listen; who want to be here and try their best all of the time. I would say motivation and respect is a huge concern at least in my class that I’m seeing this year and overall is an issue for most grade levels.”
- A female ELL teacher discussed high expectations for all students, “One thing that I love about my school is that we don’t give up on kids. You will never hear a teacher say, ‘That child is not going to get it’ or ‘I’ve given up on that child’ which I’ve heard at other schools. You won’t hear that here. I feel like we have academic optimism here that, through effort, through hard work, both on our part and getting the student involved in their own learning, we can help them achieve.”

**Item 24: “The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas.” This item was rated 4.13 by administrators and 3.71 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 3.89 for males and 3.73 for females.

**Table 1.29**  
*Item 24 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	*3.36	3.78	3.59	3.85	3.39	3.79	3.79	3.56	3.78	3.65

\*Lowest in the category.

- A Title I coordinator explained the balance a teacher must maintain to ensure student learning, “I’ve seen two sides of that. I feel like I go into some rooms and the teachers love trying to get these kids on the right track and it can interfere with academics, like they care too much about the children. You see some teachers who can balance those very well and still be successful. I don’t feel it’s negative in any sense, I feel like our teachers do a great job of loving these kids and providing academics. I feel there are a couple (of teachers) who love them too much. You have to draw the line.”
- A female teacher shared, “At our PLC’s we have an academic support teacher who does Reading Recovery, but she also does lit support. It’s really nice to get that other point of view in there, she can give good reading strategies and she can give good ideas of other ways to help kids. It feels like a team effort as a staff and a school. I just had an observer who came in and was really impressed; all the kids know, they were focused, and they were learning. To me, it wasn’t a big deal because that’s the way we are, so it’s a good feeling that someone else sees it too.”

**Item 25: “The culture of our school initiates caring, sharing, and mutual help among staff and students.” This item was rated 4.13 by administrators and 3.96 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 4.04 and female educators rated it similarly at 3.97.

**Table 1.30**  
*Item 25 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.00	3.84	3.99	3.66	4.17	3.79	4.00	4.01	3.81	3.97	3.97

There was a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.66) and educators in schools with a high ELL student population (4.17).

- A female teacher shared, “I would say when our students leave here; we would like them to be respectful, responsible, and safe individuals. Those three words we use a lot and I think those are some of the main values we’d like our students to uphold.”

- A female teacher explained the values her school culture instills, “I think our school culture promotes equality, equal treatment for all students, equal expectations, we want everyone to be successful, and we work hard to make sure kids feel and believe that. We put a high priority on student relationships and letting kids understand that we care about them and want them to do well, even when things are hard which they sometimes are.”

**Item 26: “The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among staff.” This item was rated 4.00 by administrators, the lowest rated item in the category of Culture, and 3.50 by teachers and resulted in a significant difference between administrators and teachers ( $p<.001$ ).**

**Table 1.31**  
*Item 26 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.83	3.48	*3.53	*3.12	3.81	*3.21	3.58	3.58	3.38	*3.54	3.57

\*Lowest in the category.

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 4.11 by males and 4.20 by females.

This item resulted in a significant difference between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population who rated it 3.12 and educators from schools with a high ELL student population who rated it higher at 3.81 ( $p<.001$ ).

- A female principal shared that a smile can impact teacher and student trust and respect, “I try to smile when I go through there, whether I’m having the worst day ever or not, I always smile. . . . I talk to everybody I greet. I like my job, I’m happy here; I hope you’re happy here. When I see parents, I greet them, ‘Welcome! Come on in.’ Also just letting teachers know that I’m modeling smiling, you need to model smiling to your kids and be happy. Even when your days are tough, we need to be happy. We try to model that.”
- A female principal discussed a common vocabulary that builds respect and trust for all members of the school community, “The three rules this year have taken on a new role. With me seeing kids from the rooms using those three words, the kids get it. The teachers were asked at the beginning of the year to do a T chart: what does it look like, what does it not look like. You’ll see those hanging in some of the classrooms, it’s been really great to use that vocabulary and they know right away what we’re asking. We can say, ‘Are you being safe?’ and they’ll immediately say, ‘No, I’m not.’ With that, I think it’s helped the teachers almost to be on the same page. We all have the same language; we talk to all of our students in that manner.”

**Item 27: “The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.” This item was rated 4.17 by administrators and 3.76 by teachers, resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item between “undecided” and “agree” with males at 3.67 and females at 3.81.

**Table 1.32**

*Item 27 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	3.84	3.78	3.44	4.02	3.89	3.78	3.86	3.52	3.82	3.70

This item resulted in a significant difference for two groups. Educators in schools with a low ELL student population rated the item at 3.44 while educators in schools with a high ELL student population rated the item higher at 4.02 ( $p < .001$ ). In addition, educators from elementary schools rated the item at 3.86 and educators from middle/secondary schools rated it lower at 3.52 ( $p = .039$ ).

- A female teacher shared the processes implemented to build the school’s capacity to improve, “The school improvement team, we’re here to make sure that the goals we set in the summertime when we meet are carried throughout the year so the school improvement team is a big part of it. Also, just doing things as an improvement team; trying to think of ways to involve the staff and making it count for them so they invest in it. I think it’s important to hold them accountable for things. I’ve learned that not everybody wants to be a part of the team; you have to set some measures in place that hold them accountable for the goals or expectations you’re setting forth. I feel like, as a team, we do a pretty good job of involving people who want to get involved, for those who may not want to take a leadership role; they still have some accountability for those goals that we set.”
- A female principal explained the connection between staff consistency and productivity, “We have an experienced staff that stays; we have very little turnover. The staff that has been here has been here a long time. They’re committed to the hard work it takes to teach English Language Learners, to the differentiation that has to occur, and they hear, often times, from substitutes that they love teaching at our school, but we work hard. They stay; they don’t leave to another school or city.”

**Item 28: “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.” This item was rated 4.13 by administrators and 3.59 by teachers, a significant difference ( $p = .001$ ).**

**Table 1.33**

*Item 28 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.48	3.66	3.34	3.83	3.32	3.68	3.67	3.52	3.63	3.67

Male educators rated this item at 3.78 whereas female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.62. A significant difference resulted between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population at 3.34 and educators in schools with a high ELL student population at 3.83 ( $p < .001$ ).

- A male principal explained the importance of collaboration and the effort it takes to establish and maintain this in a school, “I think at times, we have so many competing interests that we may not collaborate at the level we need to. Even though I just talked about how we do really well in collaboration, I think our culture could be more collaborative in what we do for kids. I don’t have an answer about how to make that happen when you have so many people at the table. I think we need to work harder at making that happen; where there’s a will there’s a way. I think it’s hard, so we don’t go to that next step.”
- A female Title I coordinator discussed weekly collaboration in place at her school, “Once a week the students get out early. They (teachers) don’t get plan time embedded in the week, so this is the plan time. It is a requirement of our building that all grade-level teams meet. So, all of kindergarten teachers are in a group, on up to fifth. What’s cool about it is that I will sometimes go to kindergarten team, first grade team and second grade team and the principal will go to third through fifth grade teams. We’ll have a certain thing we ask or talk about. . . . It’s a set time for resource teachers to go around and meet with each of the teams. It is in every building. I know not all buildings necessarily make them get together like that, but it is a requirement here.”

**Item 29: “The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” This item was rated 4.04 by administrators and 3.49 by teachers, the lowest rating for any item in the Culture category. There was also a significant difference between the two groups ( $p=.001$ ).**

Male educators rated this item at 3.85 while female educators rated this item the lowest in the category at 3.50. Resulting in a statistical significance between male and female educators ( $p=.038$ ).

**Table 1.34**

*Item 29 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.52	3.54	3.34	*3.66	3.46	*3.55	*3.58	3.38	3.56	*3.47

\*Lowest in the category.

Differences in responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.34) and educators in schools with a high ELL student population (3.66) resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.016$ ).

- A female Title I coordinator explained the emphasis on communication, “We meet once a month as a SIP team, that’s a nice time. The principal will always start by asking the team if we’ve heard any feedback on the professional development day. She always wants to know how the teachers felt about it, in a sense to know if it was appreciated and went well. We always go back and share information with them, get insight from them, what else do they need support in? What questions are coming?”
- A male principal discussed communication and problem solving to meet student needs, “On the other hand, a parent just walked in and had a meeting with ten people

to help one kid. So, you have all of that going on but I think we've come a long ways. We have to do it that much more and at a higher level because we're a Title I School. I have trained the staff on using adaptive schools. It's a great sign when I stand in front of the staff and ask, 'What norm is going to be tough in the activity we're doing today? Tell me one.' Someone will yell it out. 'Tell me another one.' Someone else yells it out. They know that; one teacher summarized a training video, 'He taught us how to talk to each other.' So, we need to keep going with this. That's how it is; you learn from each other, you work with each other."

**Item 30: "The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts." This item was rated 4.17 by administrators and 3.69 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item at 3.89 for males and 3.72 for females.

**Table 1.35**  
*Item 30 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.56	3.76	3.48	3.90	3.43	3.77	3.80	3.48	3.73	3.75

A significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) was revealed between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.48) and those in schools with a high ELL student population (3.90).

- A female teacher explained how commitment is an important part of helping students achieve, "I would say that the teachers here are invested in helping our students become better students overall, otherwise they wouldn't be here. This is a tough school, it's the only school that I've taught at but people have said it's a tough school to be at because we're dealing with a lot of other factors outside of the academics then we have standards and expectations that we're being accountable to statewide, districtwide. So, I would say the teachers are invested and they understand why those things have to happen. Sometimes, it feels like another thing we have to do, but as a school improvement team member, I understand where they're coming from because we have a lot going on. At the same time the things we do, I feel, have a purpose and there's a reason that we're doing them; to hold ourselves accountable and that the teachers understand that."
- A female teacher discussed the building culture through improvement efforts, "The theme has been a big deal; we've created a theme every year. We decorate, we design, and we incorporate our school improvement goals into that theme too. We have a board in the hallway that states our theme. We have math, writing, reading, and culture on this board. Each month, one of the grade levels displays how they're meeting those goals. That's schoolwide. We have different things that promote culture just within the staff; when we see somebody having a crummy day and we know they like stickers, I might put a sticker in their box. This time of year it becomes really stressful on teachers because it's assessment, assessment, assessment! You've got kids being pulled here and being pulled here. (As a teacher) you feel like you never just have your whole group. We try to keep up by doing little things.



During the testing, the little kids like kindergarteners will be paired up with one of us. . . . We really try hard.”

**Item 31: “I am passionate about student learning.” This item was rated 4.83 by administrators and 4.75 by teachers; these were the highest ratings in the category for both administrators and teachers.**

**Educators of both** genders rated this item the highest in the category at 4.52 for males and 4.78 for females. This item also resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.014$ ).

**Table 1.36**  
*Item 31 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/ Second	Rural	Non- Rural
Item Rating	*4.92	*4.48	*4.78	*4.66	*4.82	*4.75	*4.76	*4.80	*4.54	*4.72	*4.87

\*Highest in the category.

This item resulted in a significant difference for three groups. First, educators from schools with a low ELL student population rated the item at 4.66 and educators in schools with a high ELL student population rated it higher at 4.82 ( $p=.010$ ). Elementary level educators rated the item 4.80 while secondary educators rated it lower at 4.54 ( $p=.003$ ). Lastly, rural educators rated the item 4.72 and non-rural educators rated it higher at 4.87 ( $p=.010$ ).

- A female teacher explained how different strategies can motivate teachers and learners, “It’s really fun; we revealed our theme for next year. It’s fun for the teachers to get involved, the kids see it throughout the school, and see that we’re all in this together. I think that’s really why, one of the big reasons we did it; we want to be unified as a school and that we’re all here for you, we’re here to make this the best year we can. We want you to learn and to get as much out of this as possible. It’s fun, it’s really fun to have that. I think when we decided on it, I don’t think we knew how big of an impact it would have. It’s exciting!”

## Theme 4: Instructional Strategies

**In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42), the average response of all administrators was 4.24. The average response of teachers was 4.01.**

Male educators rated this category 3.90 while female educators rated it slightly higher at 4.05. Educators from schools with a low FRL rated this category 3.85, those from schools with an average FRL rated it 3.73, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it 4.07. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated this 3.90 while schools with above 8% rated this 4.12. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as educators from schools with lower mobility rated it at 3.75 and educators from schools with higher mobility rated this 4.06. Elementary school educators rated the category 4.07 and secondary school educators rated it slightly lower at 3.84. Rural school educators rated the

Instructional Strategies category 4.02 while non-rural school educators rated it similar at 4.08.

**Table 1.37**  
*Instructional Strategies Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	“Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.” (4.52)	“I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.28)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	“Teachers in my school use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” (3.78)	“I use peer coaching and peer review to improve my performance.” (3.66)

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Instructional Strategies was .849 for all Group 1 participants.

### **Instructional Strategies Discussion** *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 32: “Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.” This item was rated 4.52 by administrators and 4.17 by teachers. This was the highest rating by administrators in this category.**

Male educators rated this item at 4.11 while female educators rated it slightly higher at 4.22.

This item resulted in a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.99) and educators from schools with a high ELL student population (4.34).

**Table 1.38**  
*Item 32 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
<b>Item Rating</b>	3.83	3.96	4.25	3.99	4.34	3.82	4.25	4.26	3.96	4.20	4.23

- A female principal shared how instructional strategies are determined for every student, “The effective instruction in the classroom and identifying, purposefully, every student and what standards they were not achieving. We used Acuity; our third, fourth, and fifth grade teams administered that. The next year we were able to administer that in August. Looking at that data, looking at the kids, and creating plans for every kid and continuing to monitor their progress.”
- A female principal shared the extent of focus upon reading improvement, “I would say very high. Third, fourth, and fifth are NeSA testing, the kids hear about how we’re going to take this test and work on these strategies. Kindergarten teachers through second grade teachers understand they are part of the piece; they have to do

their job so the kids are ready for the next level, so they're ready for more information. I think they take responsibility for that also. I don't feel like they think it's not their problem. They are like, 'How can we do this?'"

**Item 33: “Teachers in my school collectively reflect on instructional strategies used daily in the classroom.” This item was rated 4.26 by administrators and 3.98 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item primarily “agree” with males at 3.96 and females at 4.01.

**Table 1.39**  
*Item 33 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.68	4.06	3.75	4.16	3.64	4.05	4.08	3.67	3.97	4.10

- A female teacher revealed how changes in instructional strategies have affected student learning, “I think that since I’ve been here and learned more about the school, my first year I felt like I didn’t know anything. We’ve added more interventions and I do have a lot of kids pulled for interventions. The time that they’re away from the classroom, they have to be missing some sort of instruction. So, we try to pull them at times when it’s not our core academic, math, writing, times when we’re not doing those things. But, sometimes it doesn’t work out. That really affects the flow of the classroom when I have people leaving the classroom at 10:00, 10:30, 10:45, it creates a constant flow of kids coming and going.”
- A female ELL teacher reflected on her own growth in regards to the success of instructional strategies, “With any strategy, you always have to go back and modify and see if they are effective or not. One year we were working on reciprocal teaching and I realized I did not do it the way we were supposed to. But, it’s okay, we’re all learning. We have a chance to look at that, it has impacted student achievement. Just this year, thinking about when we were working with students finding the main idea and developing different strategies for that. I thought it would take us a month to meet proficiency, for some of the kids it took two or three weeks, that was really powerful. Last year and the year before it took us a lot longer, we’re learning what’s been effective in the past and where to start.”

**Item 34: “Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” This item was rated 3.78 by administrators and 3.66 by teachers, the lowest rating for both administrators and teachers in the category of Instructional Strategies.**

**Educators of both genders** also rated this item the lowest in the category at 3.44 by males and 3.69 by females.

**Table 1.40***Item 34 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*3.08	*3.20	*3.75	*3.57	*3.73	*3.14	*3.73	*3.76	*3.27	*3.60	3.90

Note. \* Lowest in the category.

This item resulted in a significant difference between responses in three areas. Educators in schools with low student mobility rated the item 3.14 while those in schools with high mobility rated it higher at 3.73 ( $p=.020$ ). Elementary educators rated this item 3.76 while educators in secondary schools rated it lower at 3.27 ( $p=.010$ ). Lastly, rural educators rated this item 3.60 while educators from non-rural schools rated it higher at 3.90 ( $p=.037$ ).

- A female elementary teacher talked about her co-teaching experience with an ELL teacher, “We have some teachers in the building, for a better choice of words, a class within a class. They co-teach, so the first grade teacher and ELL teacher co-teach during reading time so instead of just having the classroom teacher, the ELL is actually in there too. There’s some team teaching going on. The learning facilitator is one that can do extra things, the math coach. During our school improvement process, we used to have a vertical team where a sixth, fifth, fourth, third, second, and first (grade teacher) all switched kids for reading. I might teach fourth grade, but I might have second graders and third graders in that group. So, that was a neat way to collaborate.”
- A female Title I coordinator discussed the use of co-teaching and modeling to support the implementation of research based interventions and instructional strategies, “Sometimes I do some co-teaching or modeling. If it’s an instructional strategy that a teacher may not feel comfortable with trying on their own, I may go in and assist them or model for them. All of our interventions have to be research-based.”

**Item 35: “Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems.” This item was rated 4.04 by administrators and 3.99 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.89 while female educators rated it slightly higher at 4.01.

**Table 1.41***Item 35 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.75	3.76	4.04	3.78	4.13	3.61	4.04	4.01	3.94	3.97	4.08

A significant difference ( $p=.040$ ) was revealed between responses from educators in schools with a low student mobility rate (3.61) and educators from schools with a high student mobility rate (4.04).

- A female teacher shared how teachers examine data collectively as a team, “Twice a month in the PLC’s, that’s a given. That’s not necessarily only twice a month because we have our goals based on that, but that’s only one goal. There are many more, every day, all day long. For example, in our grade level, we just taught a lesson this morning with story problems. We just sat down to have a quick meeting about what we did to help meet those needs, what instructional strategies did you use: math mountain, comparison bar, equations, it’s ongoing. As far as, in our grade level, it’s an ongoing PLC because we’re always looking at what we’re doing and how our kids are doing with it.”
- A male principal shared how teachers work collectively to reflect on instructional strategies and improvement, “It goes back to the data team’s process, they use the strategies within that. As I look at a weakness, it’s the implementation of what we say we’re going to do in PLC’s. You can’t just have the PLC meeting; you have to have another meeting after that to really talk about how you’re going to do it. That has been our focus, the data team’s piece but we’ve also done professional development on the Power Standards with the staff and it’s been a focus. I walk around in classrooms and do some informal observations; I can walk into one grade level and see that they are implementing the same thing they said they were going to, but I wish it were more pervasive.”

**Item 36: “Teachers in my school/I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” This item was rated 4.22 by administrators and 4.28 by teachers, the highest rating in the category by teachers.**

**Table 1.42**

*Item 36 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*4.42	*4.08	*4.29	*4.12	*4.37	*4.18	*4.28	*4.30	4.17	*4.25	*4.33

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

Male educators rated this item at 3.93 while female educators rated it slightly higher at 4.31, the highest rated item for female educators in the category.

- A female teacher discussed how professional development helps target instructional strategies, “Sometimes they’ll throw new ones at us during professional development. Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) was another one. It’s like building background, that’s one of its components. We trained in that, there were learning targets, content and language targets, then those were expected to be implemented into our classrooms. Each year, I think the plan is to give us another level of that so we’ll build on that. The district, I know there’s sometimes when I think, ‘one more thing.’ But they are trying to not make it be one more thing; you’re already doing it, just filter this piece in with it.”
- A female teacher explained how instructional strategies are determined, “They always make us fill out a survey; I think that’s how they determine what they want to do. Here we also fill out, for example with Google right now, what’s your comfort level? What training do you still need? So we take that information and they may hold a

session on the Google Calendar so we, as staff members, understand before we have to implement that to kids. If we don't get it, they're never going to get it. We do use it that way. They (the district) usually ask where you are at, what are the needs of your school?"

**Item 37: “Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.” This item was rated 4.22 by administrators and 3.74 by teachers, resulting in a significant difference between administrators and teachers ( $p=.002$ ).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item between “undecided” and “agree” with male educators at 3.56 and female educators at 3.81.

**Table 1.43**

*Item 37 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.56	3.81	3.77	3.78	3.79	3.78	3.78	3.77	3.73	3.95

- A female Title I coordinator discussed the challenges of meeting the individual needs of kids with various backgrounds and needs, “We have lost a lot of kids going to preschool. Then, we get about half of the kids in kindergarten who have attended preschool and half who haven’t. Our biggest thing is a lot of these kids are starting an entire grade behind as far as letter names and sounds. That’s where our kindergarten is tracking the data and has seen a huge gap. To me, some of our goals are not being met because we have a chunk of kids who are starting behind and then a chunk of kids who are ready to go.”
- A female teacher explained a process of regrouping across grade level to ensure skill development, “What we’ve also done is regrouped within our grade level to make sure we’re meeting all of the kids needs for whatever skill they might need. We use our data, we dissect it, and we revamp it.”

**Item 38: “Teachers in my school/I reflect and compare their/my actual teaching practice to what they/I had planned and hoped to achieve.” This item was rated 4.13 by administrators and 3.92 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item between “undecided” and “agree” with male educators at 3.89 and female educators at 3.95.

**Table 1.44**

*Item 38 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.64	4.00	3.85	4.00	3.75	3.97	4.00	3.71	3.91	4.03

- A female teacher discussed how their school is constantly reflecting on ways to ensure that children are receiving quality instruction, “One thing that we’ve talked about as a school improvement team, is how we can eliminate some of that constant interruption and what is the smoothest way to get those kids the help that they need and in a way we can accommodate the most kids. I think those interventions and those instructional strategies that we have in place are beneficial for our kids, but we have to keep monitoring them and making sure that how they are working is also not negatively impacting the students in terms of how much time they’re out of the classroom versus in, and the time it takes them to walk down to one hallway and walk back. We’re using them as efficiently as possible, but they are helping kids.”
- A female ELL teacher shared how professional development is used to perfect teaching practices and learn new strategies, “We’ve used Marzano’s Classroom Instruction that Works and we’ve used John Hattie’s Visible Learning. In the professional development that we have, we’ve done sharing, so people will share what they’ve done in their classroom and what it looks like. They’ve done presentations on cooperative learning strategies from Kagan, teachers have presented on summarizing strategies that they’ve used. Also, when we go through the Data Teams process, we have a list of strategies that we look at and discuss, it’s not an exhaustive list by any means, but they’re the ones with the highest effect size. We look at those first and how they would impact learning and other options for that as well. As teams, we try to co-plan so we have common instructional strategies that we use with the students overall and also with the students who are at those different levels. We’re using a common instructional strategy for students who are close, students who have far to go, and students who are proficient and beyond.”

**Item 39: “My teachers are/I am implementing research-based interventions and strategies to meet Title I Goals.” This item was rated 4.26 by administrators and 4.08 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.85 and female educators rated it higher at 4.12.

**Table 1.45**  
*Item 39 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.08	3.52	4.16	3.98	4.16	3.64	4.15	4.16	3.81	4.08	4.15

This item resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low student mobility rate (3.64) and educators in schools with a high student mobility rate (4.15).

- A female teacher explained how assessments are used to measure progress and align effective teaching strategies, “The creative formative assessments are related to whatever our end goal is. If we’re working on main idea details as the end goal, along the way we might have two formative assessments to see how we’re doing then we collaborate to teach that in small group and whole groups across our grade level.”

- A female teacher explained a different way for selecting effective strategies, “If it didn’t work they’d try again! Sometimes that’s the best way. If the data doesn’t show or the worksheet doesn’t show that it was the right approach, then try something different.”

**Item 40: “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.” This item was rated 4.48 by administrators and 4.19 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item primarily “agree” at 4.07 while female educators rated it slightly higher at 4.23.

**Table 1.46**  
*Item 40 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.42	3.92	4.24	4.02	4.34	4.04	4.23	4.28	3.94	4.19	4.28

This item revealed two significant differences. First, educators from schools with a low ELL student population rated the item at 4.02 while educators from schools with a high ELL student population rated the item higher at 4.34 ( $p < .001$ ). Also, elementary level educators rated the item 4.28 while educators from middle/secondary schools rated the item lower at 3.94 ( $p = .001$ ).

- A female principal discussed how assessment data is used to determine research-based interventions, “We have writing scores, we have fall and winter prompts, so we can analyze those; then in reading we have some reading research based assessments that we give. We have our research based interventions that are Title I.”
- A female Title I coordinator discussed how progress monitoring helps identify areas needing improvement, “A lot of it does relate to progress monitoring, it will show me those reading and math areas, for example, we have the ‘m comp’ which is computation and would relate to our goal of fluency. So, some of those things we see.”

**Item 41: “Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.” This item was rated 4.30 by administrators and 4.12 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly with males at 4.15, the highest rating in the category of Instructional Strategies for male educators, and females at 4.14.

**Table 1.47**  
*Item 41 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.75	4.08	4.17	4.09	4.17	3.96	4.16	4.12	*4.21	4.23	^3.85

*Note.* ^ Lowest in the category. \*Highest in the category.



This item revealed a significant difference ( $p=.009$ ) between responses from rural educators (4.23) and non-rural educators (3.85).

- A non-rural elementary principal shared how incorporating additional time for individual and small group work has impacted learning, “In some teams, the whole key to make it work is to carve out extra time. The teams that carve out extra times (for instruction) are the ones that really see the impact. The ones that have really stuck to their plan for the year have seen it. I would say that teams follow the protocol, teams do what they need to do with the protocol, but the difference between the teams that have higher achievement are the ones that do the extra work outside and really do what they say they’re going to do. They’re figuring it out and they’re a lot further than they were before.”
- A rural middle school principal illustrated how the after school program supports students, “Outside of the school day with our after school program, we have been able to be kind of creative and get some students involved with some homework clubs. The assistant principal put together a club that was designed to build leadership and help students with their academics. We also have time we’ve carved out during the school day for interventions for students in reading, writing, and now in math also.”

**Item 42: “Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school’s Title I Improvement Plan.” This item was rated 4.43 by administrators and 3.98 by teachers.**

**Table 1.48**  
*Item 42 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.17	3.60	4.06	3.94	4.08	3.68	4.07	4.09	3.75	4.04	3.97

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 4.04 by male educators and 4.02 by female educators.

- A female elementary administrator discussed assessment data, “Within the district, we have district benchmarks and we do those for math and writing. They are helping to see if those kids are reaching those standards. What our math curriculum team did was during the summer, they created a district benchmark to reach each standard. When the assessments are graded, the kids each have a page where they go through and circle if they get it correct or not, under each strand. . . . We also have writing assessments; we do those in the fall, winter, and spring.”
- A female teacher shared how data is analyzed through PLC teams and interventions are planned, “With our school improvement goals, we work on those all year long. Through our PLC teams when we look at that data, we report that every month for reading and math, we look at the goals, see where students are and then we plan interventions to meet those. We revisit the data and do formative assessments. The initial goals we made were based on state standards so we know that all of that is tied together; we look at our state standards with our curriculum and make sure that all meshes together.”

## Theme 5: Professional Development

**In the Professional Development category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50), the average response of all administrators was 4.22. The average response of teachers was 3.63.**

**Table 1.49**

*Professional Development Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (4.48)	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (3.89)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	“Teachers are encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.” (3.96)	“I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.” (3.15)

Male educators rated this category 3.75 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.68. Educators from schools with a low FRL rated the category at 3.40, while those from schools with an average FRL rated it 3.50, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it at 3.72. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated this 3.47 while schools with above 8% rated the category 3.82. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as educators in schools with lower mobility rated it at 3.28 and schools with higher mobility rated this 3.74. Elementary school educators rated the category 3.74 and middle/secondary educators rated it slightly lower at 3.44. Educators from rural schools rated the Professional Development category 3.69 while educators from non-rural schools rated it similar at 3.68.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Professional Development was .869 for all participants in Group 1.

### Professional Development Discussion

*Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 43: “Professional development needs at my school were based on analysis of data.” This item was rated 4.17 by administrators and 3.62 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.89 and female educators rated it 3.64.

**Table 1.50**

*Item 43 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.52	3.68	3.47	3.79	3.29	3.71	3.68	3.60	3.72	3.50

- A female principal shared how they determine professional development needs, “I would say at the beginning of the year when we have the teachers fill out, ‘Where are you at on each of these goals?’ We look at what the data tells us. We may need something in math, reading fluency, vocabulary. I got them all journals; when they

write exit slips or reflect about the learning, it's kind of the whole years plan so they can grow from it and have it back to read their thoughts at the beginning of the year. We'll keep the same journal and do that next year, so next year they'll have two years of reflective thoughts."

- A male principal explained how professional development occurs at their school through the use of data teams, "We have a BIST consultant that works with us three times a month and they lead professional development at staff meetings. Our school improvement team, we've decided unanimously that our professional development will be extended to data teams' time. Then, I'll do a little refresher with data teams; then they go follow the protocol for their area. The district has a lot of professional development for teachers; in fact, there's so much it's unbelievable. I provide teachers with resources and they also have book studies."

**Item 44: "Professional development was provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies." This item was rated 4.30 by administrators and 3.75 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.93 while female educators rated it lower at 3.78.

**Table 1.51**

*Item 44 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.52	3.84	3.62	3.91	3.43	3.84	3.82	*3.71	3.81	3.77

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

This item resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.016$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population at 3.62 and educators in schools with a high ELL student population at 3.91.

- A female ELL teacher explained how professional development is based on resources and research in her school, "As a SIP team, we meet and discuss professional development and at the whole staff meeting people give input as well. We take that and make suggestions of what we'd like to use for professional development. We have to think about budget and what we can do based on our budget. We have some control over what we can do and we talk about that. Is this (professional development) helping, how is it helping student achievement, is this something that has research behind it?"

**Item 45: "Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices." This item was rated 4.48 by administrators and 3.89 by teachers, the highest rated item in the category for both administrators and teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** also rated this item the highest in the category at 4.11 by male educators and 3.92 by female educators.

**Table 1.52***Item 45 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*3.83	*3.64	*3.98	3.71	*4.08	*3.61	*3.98	*3.99	3.71	*3.94	*3.93

Note. \*Highest in the category.

- A female principal explained how professional development affected instruction, “Yes (it impacts instruction), especially when I send an email that says, ‘We just learned about this and this, I’ll be out looking for that.’ I try to make sure they’re using it. They understand we’re doing it so they can get something out of it; I am always trying to provide work time for them. If you want to see something applied in the classroom and you give them work time, you’ll see it. Otherwise I won’t see it. If you give them a lot of good ideas, then you go to the weekend, you’ll never see it. If you give them work time to create some activities or create a lesson plan, then I generally see more in the classroom.”
- A female teacher shared “We’ve also done book studies in our teams; we’ve taken apart, for example, Jan Richardson’s book. The district had an overarching professional development but our team went a little further and did some book studies on specific parts of her reading instruction. Teams have done that with math, ELL strategies that work, and different things that we’ve developed. Any staff that wants to participate in those book studies can join; a good cooperative conversation is good for adults too.”

**Item 46: “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.” This item was rated 4.43 by administrators and 3.78 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.93 and female educators rated it at 3.83.

**Table 1.53***Item 46 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.56	3.89	3.50	4.06	3.32	3.90	3.89	3.63	3.81	*3.93

Note. \*Highest in the category.

This item revealed a significant difference between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population who rated it 3.50 and educators from schools with a high ELL student population who rated it higher at 4.06 ( $p < .001$ ).

- A female teacher described the value of the opportunity to apply professional development in the classroom, “Those are the professional developments that have been the most beneficial for our group because if you want us to do this, you’ve got to give us time. There isn’t time in our day and we have families, things that we do.

You need to give us time to implement what you're asking. This last one that we had was one of the better ones; we were able to walk away with physical things that we could do in the classroom. That was the 'task cards' or five minute fillers for kids that are done with the lesson and needing something to do that will academically fit. We could actually walk away with, 'I'm going to use this one tomorrow.' One of the things I like, is when we actually can collaborate as a staff, third grade is doing this, fifth grade is doing this, we're in the middle, how does that flow together?"

- A female principal discussed how grade level teams collaborate during professional development, "During our professional development, we'll have K and 1 (kindergarten and first grade) meeting and talking about what they are doing in each area. They'll come out with ideas of what each can do to prepare the kids for the next level. What can we do to prepare them for first grade with the strategies you need them to know and use? We'll do some pre-teaching."

**Item 47: "Groups of teachers in my school have shared/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth." This item was rated 4.30 by administrators and 3.37 by teachers resulting in a significant difference between the two ( $p<.001$ ).**

**Table 1.54**

*Item 47 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	2.83	3.28	3.51	*3.10	3.68	*2.64	3.56	3.58	*2.92	3.50	*3.32

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

**Educators of both genders** rated this item between "undecided" and "agree" at 3.30 by males and 3.48 by females. One significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) was apparent for this item between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.10) and educators in schools with a high ELL student population (3.68).

- A male principal explains how teachers collaborate during shared planning periods at his school, "At the school improvement meetings there's collaboration twice a month. We have our team kid talks where we all meet together in the library and we talk about putting in protective plans for kids. Our data team PLC's all meet in the same room. I can sit in my office and watch them work with the Google Docs; it's great!"
- A female teacher explained the limited time teachers in her school have planned collaboration time, "We used to do this more often, we haven't met quite as often this year. I think it's usually once a month or once every two months, all second grade teachers would meet at one school, all third grade teachers would meet at another school. We haven't done it as often, but that is something the district has set up and we have done before. We just haven't done as much of it recently, it is nice to be able to talk to them (other teachers of the same grade) to see how things are going."

**Item 48: "Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom." This item was rated 3.96 by administrators and 3.15 by teachers, the lowest rated item in the category for both administrators and teachers. This item also resulted in a significant difference between administrators and teachers ( $p=.001$ ).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item 3.22, the lowest rating in the category of Professional Development by both male and female educators.

**Table 1.55**

*Item 48 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*2.58	*3.24	*3.25	3.17	*3.25	2.93	*3.26	*3.28	2.96	*3.16	3.43

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female teacher shared how teacher mentoring programs allow for teacher growth, “I have been a mentor before so I was able to go in and observe my mentee and give feedback. I wish we did that more; I still love to go and watch other people and get ideas. I have a lot of people come to my classroom from the district that want to observe, which is a complement to me, but it’s just because I’ve been here a long time! I’m not saying I don’t do a good job, I’m proud that they want to come and watch if I can help some of these young teachers. I wish that was in place a little more sometimes because I would like to go to another school and observe how it is somewhere else. Sometimes I wish there was a little more collaboration, I’m not sure if it’s even possible.”

**Item 49: “Teachers in my school/I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.” This item was rated 4.09 by administrators and 3.85 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 4.00 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.85.

**Table 1.56**

*Item 49 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	*3.64	3.90	*3.79	3.92	3.57	3.90	3.93	3.58	3.88	3.82

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

A significant difference was revealed between responses from elementary level educators at 3.93 and secondary educators who rated it lower at 3.58 ( $p=.029$ ).

- A female principal explained different resources available to provide professional development, “I can lead it; our teacher leaders can lead it, as well as a learning facilitator. There has been two years of a learning facilitator; we all share a math coach, and so we can request for her to come over and assist in some learning. It’s the principal’s job to line up who is going to present. A lot of times principals and teachers will team together or school improvement teams or a strong teacher can show or model some ideas.”
- A female teacher shared how grade level teams collaborate at her school, “We have grade level teams, and our data teams collaborate. Within those teams we have our ELL, we have a special education person, and additional support that teaches those

grade levels that can come in so we're all teaching to the common goal and collaborating that way. One of the things I've done is some coaching and modeling for other teachers; we had a new teacher in the building, so we went and did some coaching or teaching to help improve math instruction. We share goals with ELL so when we work on improving an instructional strategy we're all doing it."

**Item 50: "Teachers in my school/I collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity." This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.67 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item between "undecided" and "agree" with male educators at 3.63 and female educators at 3.71.

**Table 1.57**

*Item 50 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.33	3.56	3.73	3.43	3.87	3.43	3.73	3.76	3.42	3.68	3.75

- A female principal shared how teachers collaborate through grade level teams, "Grade level is very strong. Like I said, we have five teams that are very strong, work well together, and go to each other first before approaching me or trying to go to RTI level. Right now, it's at a school level so whoever has the RTI child comes to the group with all of the trained professionals. Now, we're trying to go to a model where the grade level is responsible, so they can meet as a team as many times as they want and decide, these are some interventions we've done as a team in the classroom but we need a little more help; let's invite the coach and the principal in. Then, we can see if there are other interventions outside of the classroom. We're hoping they'll be more responsible."

## **Theme 6: Data/Monitoring**

**In the Data/Monitoring category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67), the average response of all administrators was 4.24. The average response of teachers was 3.70.**

Male educators rated this category 3.80 while female educators rated it 3.89. Educators from schools with a low FRL rated the category 3.76, those from schools with an average FRL rated it 3.70, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it 3.99. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated this 3.79 while schools with above 8% rated this 4.05. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as schools with lower student mobility rated it at 3.77 while schools with higher student mobility rated it higher at 3.97. Elementary school educators rated the category 4.01 and middle/secondary educators rated it slightly lower at 3.68. Rural school educators rated the Data/Monitoring category 3.94 while non-rural educators rated it similar at 3.98.

**Table 1.58***Data/Monitoring Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.83)	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.40)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	“Teachers examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.48)	“I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.14)

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Data/Monitoring was .915 for all participants in Group 1 for items 51-63. The four items answered by only teachers, items 64-67, had a reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) of .845.

### **Data/Monitoring Discussion**

#### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 51: “Data are essential to our school improvement process.” This item was rated 4.83 by administrators and 4.40 by teachers. There was a significant difference between administrators and teachers ratings for this item ( $p<.001$ ).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similar as males rated this 4.33 and females rated this 4.45.

**Table 1.59***Item 51 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*4.25	*4.20	*4.47	*4.25	*4.55	4.21	*4.46	*4.47	*4.29	*4.42	*4.47

Note. \*Highest in the category.

- A female teacher shared the importance of using data to impact student learning, “That’s all we do- data, data, data. You have to have data; it’s a simple little thing. . . . All of the state testing and we have schoolwide testing with our district benchmarks. That data, we share that with the children and set goals. We’re big goal setters too. This is where we need to get, this is where we are, how are we going to get there? The kids provide steps, or at least enlighten us on, ‘This is what I think I can do.’ In my classroom alone I do reading goals every month. They fill in a log. We have flashcard goals because they have to practice their facts (math), those don’t go away. We’re very goal oriented but then we take the data that we have. It reflects on our teaching too and in some things the data shows we haven’t done so well, but we haven’t taught that yet. When you take certain assessments at different times, if you haven’t taught it yet, they’re probably not going to do the best. That’s where we’re at now, really trying to get ready for the NeSA. When we do the practice they’ll (students) say, ‘We haven’t done that yet.’ I’ll say, ‘It’s coming!’ Data is used to do a lot.”



- A female Title I coordinator explained how data is used to support teachers daily in their instruction, “I think a lot of our teachers collect a lot of data which also helps when we need to see that data with the Response to Intervention (RTI) kids. As a whole school, I know for climate and culture, we’ve set three schoolwide rules and the teachers track that data daily. The principal also has a poster up front where she’s tracking each classroom. So, a lot of that visual charting to see not only for the teachers, but the students see the chart as well.”

**Item 52: “Data are used to monitor and focus our school/district’s Title I Improvement goals and other successes.” This item was rated 4.61 by administrators and 4.14 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 4.33 while female educators rated it lower at 4.16.

**Table 1.60**  
*Item 52 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	3.76	4.24	4.05	4.26	3.89	4.21	4.24	3.92	4.17	4.22

- A female ELL teacher discussed how she uses data, “I collect data daily. We have district interim benchmarks in fall, winter, and spring. We do that for writing, we do that for math. In reading it’s different because the series that we have uses themes so we take an assessment after each theme.”
- A female Title I coordinator explained how teachers utilize data to monitor goals, “The rules (be respectful, be responsible, and be safe), every teacher is expected to track their data. We have a few that are choosing not to, but that’s another thing we’re trying to brainstorm how to approach for next year. Otherwise, we ask that any time they come to an RTI meeting; they have to provide us with any sort of data. Kindergarten is doing kindergarten data where they track letter sounds and letter names. They have a lot of nice data from that.”

**Item 53: “The faculty and staff/teachers in my school monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.” This item was rated 4.39 by administrators and 4.03 by teachers.**

**Table 1.61**  
*Item 53 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	3.80	4.10	3.82	4.21	3.46	4.13	4.14	3.69	4.07	4.02

Male educators rated this item lower at 3.89 and female educators rated the item at 4.08. A significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) was revealed between responses from educators in schools

with a low student mobility rate (3.46) and educators in schools with a high student mobility rate (4.13).

- A female principal talked about monitoring goals through the use of data during walkthroughs in her school, “I have my own goals of what I’m going to monitor; it’s very difficult to keep that in the forefront every day. I’m going to watch for word walls every day and look for that. What I try to do on a weekly basis is send teachers emails of what I’ll be looking for when I come into their room and try to hit those instructional strategies. I want to see if they’re using the character education charts and are they up to date? I want to hear the language of respect, responsible, and safe. The next week I’ll be looking for word walls to see what kinds of words you’re using, giving them the research behind it and what I’m looking for to keep it in front of them, to remind them they are effective instructional practices.”
- A female principal shared the value of using data during walkthroughs, “When I go into the rooms, we use the McRel Power Walkthrough and documenting. Running those reports to see if I’m seeing the same thing, is it all of these teachers giving a lecture or am I seeing discussion? I use the data to monitor instruction.”

**Item 54: “Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated standardized test score data.” This item was rated 4.04 by administrators and 3.87 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 3.85 by male educators and 3.89 by female educators.

**Table 1.62**  
*Item 54 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/ Second	Rural	Non- Rural
Item Rating	3.83	3.76	3.90	3.78	3.96	3.79	3.90	3.94	3.65	3.92	3.77

- A male principal discussed the use of disaggregated test data, “We have an academic support plan that would be the protocol for support for students. We even have the goals for the program that 90% of the children will not be in the program. That’s public data; a first grade teacher can go in right now and see the fifth grade data. It’s on Google Docs and it’s a schoolwide public document. We have public documents; we created a public folder so we put our transition forms in there and how we track kid’s data.”
- A female elementary teacher talked about how they measure progress along the way through the use of their data, “We create formative assessments so we don’t have to wait until quarter or semester; we measure progress along the way.”

**Item 55: “Every classroom is implementing our Title I Goals.” This item was rated 4.35 by administrators and 3.54 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item lower at 3.37 compared to female educators who rated it higher at 3.67.

**Table 1.63***Item 55 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.42	3.08	3.68	3.43	3.72	3.25	3.65	3.69	3.27	3.56	3.77

- A female principal shared how goals are monitored, “They should be on our school improvement goals and if they’re not, then you’re not doing it. The principal has control of it, but it has to be tied to school improvement. . . . Our data shows that we need more on goal setting in math and doing some writing. So, we go through and try to have a plan ahead of time.”
- A female administrator shared how teachers are monitored for implementing Title I goals, “Just the walkthroughs, emails, and having them stand up and present, bring artifacts of what they’ve been doing. They also display work in the rooms and hallways; that’s an expectation. In some grades, they have a chart that says, ‘I can count to 100.’ ‘I can count to 25.’ They move those along so I can watch the data they are creating with their kids.”

**Item 56: “Teachers in my school/I adjust my instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals.”** This item was rated **4.22** by administrators and **3.85** by teachers.

**Educators from both genders** rated this item similarly at 3.81 by male educators and 3.89 by female educators.

**Table 1.64***Item 56 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.40	3.95	3.74	3.97	3.43	3.93	3.95	3.56	3.87	3.90

This item resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.010$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low student mobility rate (3.43) and educators in schools with a high mobility rate (3.93).

- A female teacher responded to how classroom instruction and student achievement is monitored, “By the teacher; I keep track of that data and monitor their (student) goals.”
- A female teacher explained how classroom instruction and classroom achievement are monitored, “The principal comes in quite a bit to our classrooms. She’ll drop in to check how things are going. I think, overall, as a staff we keep each other accountable for what we’re doing in terms of instruction and making sure we’re staying on our pacing guide.”

**Item 57: “Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school’s Title I Goals.”** This item was rated **4.22** by administrators and **3.74** by teachers.

Male educators rated this item at 3.85 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.77.

**Table 1.65**

*Item 57 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.83	3.36	3.83	3.66	3.86	3.61	3.80	3.84	3.54	3.79	3.75

- A female teacher stated what teachers understand about student achievement data in other classrooms relative to goals, “I know that some teachers have wall charts where they have students chart how they’re doing on a certain goal. A couple of teachers do different writing goals. The kindergarten team has students tracking their power standards on learning more of their letter sounds and high frequency words. The fourth grade team shares with students a lot about their writing since they’re tested. They have students work on a rubric with each other and on their own to improve their writing. They also do that for reading and math. The first grade team has students evaluate themselves and track their own target.”
- A female principal discussed the difficulty involved in holding teachers accountable for implementation and monitoring of Title I goals, “It’s very difficult and we’re going to try to do something different next year to see if we can impact that. It’s difficult to include a whole staff and I would think, for me, the longer I’m here, I keep taking one more step further. It’s a learning process; I feel like I’m getting better and better at some things. They become so natural you don’t even know you’re doing them. I look forward to getting to that better place where I’ve been here long enough where I feel I can involve more people in accountability and monitoring. But, I think that does take a principal, a leader, time in the system, just to understand the system and to create and monitor goals.”

**Item 58: “My teachers/I monitor students’ additional learning time to ensure success.” This item was rated 4.22 by administrators and 4.00 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item “agree” at 4.00 by male educators and 4.02 by female educators.

**Table 1.66**

*Item 58 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.00	4.00	4.02	3.92	4.08	4.00	4.02	4.06	3.83	4.02	4.02

- A female Title I coordinator explained, “I run an after school math program that came about with grant money. We provide the M-CAP which is concepts and applications. That helps us to track and see if the program is helping the kids to grow or not.”

**Item 59: “Changes in grade-level classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.” This item was rated 4.30 by administrators and 3.77 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.63 while female educators rated it at 3.84.

**Table 1.67**

*Item 59 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.32	3.88	3.64	3.92	3.57	3.84	3.88	3.52	3.79	3.90

- A female elementary teacher shared how classroom achievement is monitored in her classroom, “The principal comes in, quite a bit to our classrooms. I think, overall, as a staff, we keep each other accountable for what we’re doing in terms of instruction and making sure we’re staying on our pacing guide.”
- A female elementary teacher explained the extent they discuss specific classroom student achievement data with teachers, “We have instructional conferences where we meet as a grade level and look at what those levels are. We do that monthly as a grade level, quarterly report card data, and quarterly instructional conferences.”

**Item 60: “Changes in schoolwide performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.” This item was rated 4.35 by administrators and 3.83 by teachers.**

**Table 1.68**

*Item 60 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.48	3.93	3.75	3.95	3.68	3.90	3.91	3.69	3.87	3.87

**Educators of both gender** rated the item similar at 3.89 by males and 3.87 by females.

- A female elementary teacher shared her perspective on how the principal monitors schoolwide performance, “I think a lot of that is what the principal does; she makes sure that students are performing. We do have Infinite Campus, which is a place we record our district assessments and scores, so that’s one way. I think the principal does all of that.”
- A Title I coordinator explained how the principal monitors schoolwide performance, “I would say a lot of things are looked at from the assessment pieces, like DIBELS, or from the district benchmarks, or Acuity for the upper grades. I’m not sure if the principal sees anything else that she can monitor as she goes. Guided reading levels, teachers monitor how kids do over time. For my intervention kids, we use Aimsweb probes or DIBELS probes.”

**Item 61: “Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.” This item was rated 4.17 by administrators and 3.95 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item between “undecided” and “agree” with at 3.85 by male educators and 3.99 by female educators.

**Table 1.69**

*Item 61 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.92	3.80	4.00	3.79	4.09	3.96	3.97	4.02	3.77	4.07	3.87

- A female teacher shared how goals are reviewed and progress is monitored, “At the beginning of the year, when we get our goals, even in first quarter, it feels like every year we say, ‘We’ve got a long way to go.’ The great thing I feel is that when you get to third quarter, you see that progress, you see that students are meeting those reading levels. Some of the special education students are meeting goals; the ELL kids are coming up to grade level. I see the progress on my grade level throughout the year and the constant sharing of that is really helpful. I can only speak for my team, but we’re very open and supportive of each other. If my kids aren’t getting something, I can go to a team member and ask what I can do or what strategies are you using.”
- A female Title I coordinator explained how data is used to determine the achievement of goals with different levels of students, “We sat down (to review data) during professional development. We do Acuity, it’s diagnostic. At the lower grades we also do DIBELS. What we spent a lot of time doing was compiling all of that. We put teachers into groups and they went through and tracked the lowest three and top three. It was really nice; we then targeted those areas they needed to work on and created five minute activities to take back to their classroom. So, they were able to sit that whole afternoon and create those activities. At the end of the day, we did a gallery walk so we could see that the teachers actually worked and got something done.”

**Item 62: “Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” This item was rated 3.48 by administrators and 3.14 by teachers, the lowest rated items for both teachers and administrators in the Data/Monitoring category.**

**Table 1.70**

*Item 62 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*2.67	*3.04	*3.21	*3.09	*3.22	*3.07	*3.18	*3.20	*3.00	*3.14	*3.27

*Note.* \*Lowest rating in category.

**Educators of both genders** also rated this item the lowest in the category at 3.11 by male educators and 3.17 by female educators.

- A female teacher explained how outside factors impact attendance and learning time for some students, “Some of our kids, they speak English all day long and they do well, but then they go home and they speak Spanish. That’s a great thing- to be bilingual is awesome. But, it’s also very challenging at the same time for the kids. They get pulled out to interpret so they’re missing learning time to help a parent. But, that’s the reality, we’re used to that, it’s what we do. It’s frustrating sometimes because a lot of our families will go to Mexico at times when they shouldn’t be going. We try to make sure that they go on the breaks.”
- A female ELL teacher explained how outside challenges influence behaviors in school, “One of the things that we think about because we’re a Title I School is we work with students who come from a lot of poverty so they have a lot of stress. We do a lot of thinking about student needs as far as behavior, how can we help them change. We think about how their behavior affects their learning and achievement, what can we do to help them change so they can be more successful in both school and life. We have a system set up for that where we work together as a team and we meet to make plans for specific students who may be struggling with a certain skill that will help them be successful in life; we implement those plans and look at them again. We also have a system for when students are having a hard time being ok in the classroom, where do they go next and what are some of the strategies they can use to help them be okay and come back to their classroom so they can be involved in the learning there.”

**Item 63: “Teachers in my school are/I am engaged in early identification of at-risk behavior indicators impacting student performance (i.e., attendance, behavior, etc.).” This item was rated 3.96 by administrators and 3.79 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.44 while female educators rated it higher at 3.85.

**Table 1.71**  
*Item 63 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.83	3.84	3.80	3.66	3.90	3.93	3.79	3.84	3.65	3.82	3.77

- A female elementary teacher explained the process implemented to build the school’s capacity to support appropriate behavior, “We have our schoolwide behavior plan; we use BIST and positive behavior supports. In doing that schoolwide helps with consistent expectations. Throughout the day, in every part of the day, those standards for behavior and learning are there. In the classroom, this is what we expect; we really work hard to create an environment for learning.”
- A female teacher explained how early at risk behaviors are supported at their school, “As far as our philosophy of BIST and having all of those procedures in place, it goes throughout the day. The day is spelled out for kids; BIST is taught and practiced. The

other thing that is helpful with some of the families is the family literacy program that we have. Those families are in the building every day, they get the information in their class and they're in the classrooms throughout the day."

**Item 64 [Teacher Only]: "I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students." This item was rated 4.26 by teachers.**

Male teachers rated this item at 3.83 and female teachers rated it at 4.31.

**Table 1.72**  
*Item 64 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.89	4.12	4.30	4.05	4.40	4.19	4.27	4.34	3.93	4.24	4.33

- A female principal shared how data was discussed with teachers to set Title I goals and help determine student academic needs, "At the beginning of the year, we ask the teachers, on a scale of 1 to 5, how much they know about it: they don't know about it, they know about it and use it, they can implement it, or they can teach it. Every year we give them one of those on our school improvement strategies and we look at where we are low. The school improvement team takes that data and says, 'What areas have the teachers said they want some more work on?' What is really interesting are the areas that we really worked on, they wanted more information about that. So, I'm thinking they realize how much they really didn't know about some areas. I think the more information we gave them, the more they realized they didn't know and wanted more."
- A female principal revealed how not only do teachers understand data and goal setting but students are now goal setting and monitoring their progress, "We do a lot of goal setting with students so if you walk around to the classrooms, you could ask them about their goal and how they did on this or that. They'll say, 'I didn't meet my goal.' 'Well, why not?' 'I didn't practice.' 'What are you going to do different?' 'I'm going to practice.' So, they understand goal setting and they understand why they didn't do it and what they have to do."

**Item 65 [Teacher Only]: "I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students' performance based on data." This item was rated 4.29 by teachers.**

**Table 1.73**  
*Item 65 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.89	4.28	4.31	4.17	4.37	*4.31	4.29	4.38	3.93	4.26	4.39

Note. \*Highest in the category.



Male teachers rated this item at 3.87 while female teachers rated it much higher at 4.33.

- A Title I coordinator shared how data was used to determine the most effective instructional strategies, “I mentioned the professional development day when we looked at that stuff. We looked at the data and then picked strategies to support the skills we still need to work on.”
- A female principal shared how instructional strategies are determined, “Those strategies came about mainly from the district office. Let’s look at what we have focused on and what we haven’t focused on yet. So, student structured interactions was the focus last year, this is one we haven’t looked at, and we’re not seeing it in the classrooms. I don’t know that there’s any specific data that we’ve collected, probably more of a sense of we need to get the kids moving. We’re seeing lack of engagement, how can we give the teachers ideas to get the kids moving? Some teachers do it naturally, like everything. Some teachers need more ideas.”

**Item 66 [Teacher Only]: “I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students’ performance.” This item was rated 3.91 by teachers.**

Male teachers rated this item at 3.57 while female teachers rated it higher at 3.95.

**Table 1.74**

*Item 66 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/ Second	Rural	Non- Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.76	3.94	3.64	4.09	3.50	3.96	4.01	3.52	3.89	3.98

This item resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.001$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.64) and educators in schools with a high ELL student population (4.09). In addition, a statistical significance was found between responses from elementary level teachers at 4.01 and middle/secondary teachers who rated the item lower at 3.52 ( $p=.009$ ).

- A female principal discussed math goals and how they check for learning, “Our math goal in third, fourth, and fifth, we have Acuity that we use to check their learning and academic progress. [Do you feel that’s pretty accurate?] We do. We like it because it’s related to Nebraska standards and it shows each kid where their strengths and weaknesses are. It’s a pretty easy roadmap for teachers to say, we either need to do some small interventions or we need to make a system. We have grade level meetings. The school staff is really good about using that time to plan as a team; to talk about not only lessons and what’s going to happen, but which kids are learning, who is not learning and what should we do.”

**Item 67 [Teacher Only]: “I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data.” This item was rated 4.17 by teachers.**

Male teachers rated this item between “undecided” and “agree” at 3.83 while female teachers rated it between “agree” and “strongly agree” at 4.21.

**Table 1.75***Item 67 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	4.00	3.96	4.20	4.04	4.26	4.27	4.16	4.28	3.72	4.10	4.41

A significant difference was found between responses from elementary level teachers who rated the item 4.28 and middle/secondary teachers who rated it 3.72 ( $p=.001$ ).

- A female teacher discussed the use of data to determine interventions at her school, “We do have a lot of interventions going on. We have RTI and when a student is referred to RTI, it means they need some assistance and maybe some extra work in reading, writing, math, or behavior; those are the areas they can be referred for. The teacher, principal, and resource specialists meet to discuss the students. We meet and talk about what the student is struggling with; we bring in test scores and DIBELS, all sorts of things to decide where the student is lacking and where they need some extra help. We have a number of interventions in place.”
- A female principal shared an instructional strategy, Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), to be used with students in her school, “SIOP strategies are good for all kids, not just those who are English language learners. We have a very high free and reduced lunch rate this year.”

## Theme 7: Parent Involvement

**In the Parent Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-75, Teacher Survey Questions 68-79), the average response of all administrators was 3.82. The average response of teachers was 3.30.**

**Table 1.76***Parent Involvement Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	“There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.” (4.26)	“An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs.” (3.86)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	“Professional development opportunities have provided me with tools for successfully engaging parents in their child’s education.” (3.39)	“Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” (2.90)

Male educators rated this category 3.52 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.36. Educators from schools with a low FRL rated the category 3.48, those from schools with an average FRL rated it 3.35, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it 3.33. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated this 3.28 while schools with above 8% rated this 3.44. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as schools with lower mobility rated it at 3.24 and schools with higher student mobility rated it 3.40. Elementary school educators rated the category 3.40 and middle/secondary school educators

rated it slightly lower at 3.32. Rural educators rated the Parent Involvement category 3.42 while non-rural educators rated it lower at 3.25.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Parent Involvement was .862.

## Parent Involvement Discussion

### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 64 [Administrators]/Item 68 [Teachers]: “Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” This item was rated 3.48 by administrators and 2.90 by teachers, the lowest rating in the category for teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** also rated this item the lowest in the category at 3.15 by male educators and 2.93 by female educators.

**Table 1.77**

*Item 64/68 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.42	3.00	*2.92	3.01	*2.92	*2.75	*2.98	*2.97	*2.90	*3.02	*2.73

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female Title I coordinator shared the extent of a parent involved in the Title I process, “We have a meeting on Tuesday and the principal said a parent needs to be invited because it is part of the Needs Improvement plan. This will be the first time I’ve seen a parent involved.”
- A female principal shared the extent of parents and the community involved with identifying and monitoring the goals, “Not at all.”
- A female teacher explained a new strategy within their school to better involve parents and community members in the Title I process, “We have some parents who are involved. In the past, we’ve had a parent committee with staff members, myself, the principal, and we’ve pulled in parents to look at our school goals and what we can do to meet their needs. This year, they meshed that parent involvement with our PTO and neighborhood advisory committee meeting.”

**Item 65 [Administrators]/Item 69 [Teachers]: “Parents have high expectations for their children.” This item was rated 4.09 by administrators and 3.17 by teachers, resulting in a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ).**

Male educators rated this item at 2.96 while female educators rated it higher at 3.28.

**Table 1.78***Item 65/69 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.58	3.52	3.20	3.02	3.39	3.39	3.23	3.28	3.13	3.24	3.28

- A female principal shared how parent expectations influence student aspirations, “A lot of our parents, when they come in, their child’s grade is the highest they’ve (the parents) been through. So, they’ve never been through high school, they’re just trying to get by. They don’t understand high school; they don’t understand the process of college. So, there’s not a high expectation. We talk about it, teachers talk about it all the time to the kids. I’ll say, ‘Oh, it’s your birthday and you’re going to be 21, right?’ They just look at me. ‘Pretty soon you’re going to be a teacher or a principal, which one?’ We always give them the ideas that we have expectations for them and it’s not out of the realm, you could be a teacher. They look at me as though it’s a new concept to them.”
- A female teacher discussed how she viewed parent expectations, “I just did a writing project with my kids. I would say that more kids now even from when I started four years ago, think about college more and see it as something that they can do. I think parents want them to have that opportunity. I see that our parents see that’s important that they go ahead and finish college.”

**Item 66 [Administrators]/Item 70 [Teachers]: “Parents want their children to attend college and share this with their children.” This item was rated 3.78 by administrators and 3.19 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 3.22 by males and 3.25 by females.

**Table 1.79***Item 66/70 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.75	3.60	3.18	3.13	3.32	3.36	3.23	3.20	3.42	3.26	3.20

- A male principal revealed how he knows parents in his school have high expectations for their children attending college, “I would say it’s very high; I even have videos of parents talking about. We do have family interviews, in the family literacy program, where parents come to school because they want their children to know that school is important so they will go to the university. I would say our parents want; probably 85% want them to go beyond to something. Some will say they just want them to graduate; you’ll hear that too. I think they all want that.”
- A female teacher on the other hand shared a different perspective regarding parent expectations for college, “That’s a hard question, I’m not sure I can give you a good answer. I would want 100% to want their kids to go, but realistically I know that’s not true. I would hope it’s in the 60-70%. I think that some of life’s hard experiences at

our school (for the families) make that positive expectation seem unreachable. Some of our parents may not have graduated themselves, so may not see it (college) as something that people do. I know that at our school, one of the things we do for kids, is we say, ‘When you go to college’ and ‘When you graduate high school.’ Not IF. I’m in college and I tell my kids now, ‘I’m in school and it’s a great thing.’ We try to instill that in our kids ourselves, I can’t speak for how it goes at home.”

**Item 67 [Administrators]/71 [Teachers]: “Professional development opportunities have provided me with tools for successfully engaging parents in their child’s education.” This item was rated 3.39 by administrators, their lowest rated item in the category, and 3.07 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.89 while female educators rated it lower at 3.23.

**Table 1.80**  
*Item 67/71 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.17	3.04	3.10	3.14	3.08	*2.75	3.14	3.06	3.29	3.17	2.87

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female principal shared how limited the professional development opportunities are for teachers to successfully engage parents in their child’s education, “It’s expected but there’s really nothing. There might be, ‘This is how you could work with an interpreter.’ But maybe there’s been a nugget here or there.”
- A male principal on the other hand, discussed various professional development opportunities offered at his school to prepare teachers to successfully engage parents in their child’s education, “We’ve had quite a bit of that. There have been grants down the line but Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) was a big part of that. . . Teachers had parent engagement nights. We talk with staff about how to talk to parents when they’re calling home with a behavior problem.”

**Item 68 [Administrators]/Item 72 [Teachers]: “Strategies have been shared with me on how to effectively communicate with parents.” This item was rated 3.61 by administrators and 3.38 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.74 while female educators rated it lower at 3.36 resulting in a significant difference between the two ( $p=.007$ ).

**Table 1.81**  
*Item 68/72 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*3.08	3.32	3.43	3.32	3.46	3.11	3.44	3.40	3.40	3.44	3.27

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female Title I coordinator discussed how professional development opportunities prepare teachers to communicate with parents, “I know that we talk about how to communicate with parents, especially around conference time. A lot of information is sent out about how to talk to them, especially on the translation side of things, such as looking at the parent even though it’s the translator that is talking. I don’t think we’ve had anything on our (professional development) days. I think a lot of information is sent out; whether teachers look at it or not is another question.”
- A female ELL teacher explained professional development opportunities for communicating with parents, “I would say the majority of the professional development has been to speak with parents about behavioral issues that are through BIST. We have talked about it; at the SIP team and at the professional development school meeting times. We have talked about how we can start sharing data with parents on the power standards that we’ve chosen. But, it hasn’t progressed to the point that we’re doing that the same way throughout the school.”

**Item 69 [Administrators]/Item 73 [Teachers]: “Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren).” This item was rated 4.13 by administrators and 3.75 by teachers, a significant difference (p=.006).**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item at 3.67 by males and 3.80 by females.

**Table 1.82**  
*Item 69/73 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/ Second	Rural	Non- Rural
Item Rating	3.17	*3.80	3.82	*3.67	3.86	3.86	3.78	3.84	3.56	3.79	3.77

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

- A female teacher explained what early childhood programs are doing at her school to educate parents, “What we’re trying to do is partner with families to show them it’s a partnership and we’ll have a higher rate of success if we work together. We did a project this year to show parents that they can teach at home. The early childhood program does a great job of partnering with families because they do home visits, which is a requirement. I know one of the main goals for that is just showing parents how you can be a teacher at home all of the time. The problem is we only have two Pre-K classes that (parents) get that strong message. There’s always homework, what we really want parents to see is that it’s a partnership, the kids may want you to sit with them and help them with their learning. It’s hard to know (if parents received grade level expectations).”
- A female teacher shared how parents are informed of their child’s progress and expectations, “I’m not really sure how the principal gets that data. A challenge that we have at our school is that a lot of our parents are non-English speaking so it’s hard for them to sometimes understand what the goals are, how they work, and test scores. I don’t work directly with the NeSA or the Acuity because I teach second grade. I know that papers are sent home trying to explain exactly what the students will be

doing and some of our goals. Also, messages are sent to try to inform parents. There are different ways that information is given to parents.”

**Item 70 [Administrators]/Item 74 [Teachers]: “There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.”**

**Table 1.83**

*Item 70/74 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.42	3.12	3.31	3.24	3.33	2.89	3.34	3.31	3.21	3.34	3.13

**This item was rated 4.26 by administrators, the highest rated item in the category, and 3.20 by teachers. This resulted in a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ).**

- A female elementary teacher shared how community partnerships work with schools to involve parents, “One of the things that we hope parents believe and know is that we’re here to partner with them, not just have the kids come in and go out. We invite parents in a lot. We really want them to feel as though we’re available to them. They do some English classes here; we have had in the past different types of programs to bring parents in.”
- A female ELL teacher shared how a school committee serves as a parent/school liaison, “I know that the (committee within the school) works with the parents and the parent leadership team, the principal and a couple of teachers share with them what we’re doing at the school level and work as a community together to problem solve. I think we work really hard when we communicate with parents to convey that academic optimism, that optimism with their child. We’re always thinking about how we can have positive interactions with parents that we may need to have negative interactions with. Making the parents feel like this is something we’re going to help with whether the child is struggling academically or behaviorally. One thing we’ll say to parents is that we’re here to help, you don’t have to punish your child at home, we’re here to help and bridge that.”

**Item 71 [Administrators]/Item 75 [Teachers]: “Parents provide input for the development of the school improvement plan.” This item was rated 3.65 by administrators and 3.14 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item higher at 3.56 compared to female educators at 3.15.

**Table 1.84**

*Item 71/75 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.50	3.24	3.17	3.13	3.23	3.04	3.21	3.20	3.15	3.25	2.98

- A female teacher shared the extent parents and community members are engaged in the Title I process, “We have some parents who are involved . . . The principal shares parts of the Title I plan with them, we also have a family program with the parents in the building every day. We have a lot of family events that we really try to get parents into the school to do family activities more than just concerts. We have a family math night, a family game night, a family craft night, just to get parents to come in and really enhance the schools culture as a good place to be and we want to partner with you.”
- A female principal discussed parent involvement on the School Improvement team, “Our School Improvement Team is the Academic Compact team and we do select parents to be on that; honestly, they are on there as a name. They’re welcome to come but it’s difficult to have them come and be a part of that. A lot of times they look at us like they don’t know what we’re talking about. They’re not used to the system. A lot of our students speak the language but our parents don’t.”

**Item 72 [Administrators]/Item 76 [Teachers]: “Parents are involved in the decision making process for our school/district such as: providing input for the development of a school safety plan, creating a behavior expectation plan.” This item was rated 3.52 by administrators and 3.08 by teachers, a significant difference (p=.003).**

Male educators rated this item at 3.22 compared to female educators who rated it lower at 3.10.

**Table 1.85**  
*Item 72/76 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.42	*2.96	3.12	*3.00	3.19	2.89	3.14	3.15	2.98	3.17	2.95

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category

- A female Title I coordinator explained parent involvement in her school, “We’re a Title I building, it kind of goes back to the whole idea that a lot of the parents don’t even understand what we’re doing here. They know their kids are coming to school and learning, but when you start throwing acronyms or start talking about curriculum, that doesn’t make sense to them. I’d say our parent involvement is very low. We did have a technology night this year where we did get parents to come in and see a little bit of what we’re doing. I can’t think of an RTI meeting we’ve had this year that a parent has been there. Of course, they come to those higher needs meetings where they need to sign documents but I don’t feel good about our parent involvement. At the same time, they don’t understand. I think if they did come, some of them, they wouldn’t understand what we’re doing. We don’t have a PTA here; I haven’t seen that in the other buildings that I’ve been in. I’m not saying it’s anyone’s fault, but it’s an area we could definitely look into and work on.”
- A female teacher explained challenges to involving parents, “Not a lot of our parents even have a high school education, so for them to understand this is even more challenging. It’s hard to understand what the numbers mean and where they go. One



of our school improvement goals is better communication with parents and to try to get them more involved with the school. That's been something I've seen grow; from when I first started until now. We try to have family nights, our last family night was technology so the parents could come in and learn about the web site, the librarian was here to try to get them library cards; somewhere they could access the internet. We're really trying to get those to become a regular thing, parent nights, because it's important to keep the parents educated on what is going on here at school."

**Item 73 [Administrators]/Item 77 [Teachers]: "An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs." This item was rated 4.22 by administrators and 3.86 by teachers, the highest item rating in the category of Parent Involvement for teachers.**

**Table 1.86**  
*Item 73/77 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*4.08	*3.80	*3.89	3.71	*4.00	*3.89	*3.89	*3.93	*3.69	*3.94	3.72

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

**Educators of both genders** also rated this item the highest in the category at 4.04 for male educators and 3.87 by female educators.

This item revealed a significant difference ( $p=.017$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.71) and educators in schools with a high ELL student population (4.00).

- A female principal shared both the friendly, kind environment as well as the difficulty with the language barrier when working with parents, "I think the students really feel loved by our staff; that support does help them be more successful. I think where we struggle is not necessarily homework, but that extra outside support. My biggest thing is reading, a lot of our parents cannot read or write the language which they speak whether English or Spanish. That creates another issue in itself. If these kids are trying to read at home, it becomes their own responsibility to be doing what they're doing. I think we help support our kids; it's the outside support they're not getting. Not all kids, but a big chunk of our kids."

**Item 74 [Administrators]/Item 78 [Teachers]: "Information gathered from the parent survey is shared and embraced by school personnel." This item was rated 3.91 by administrators and 3.51 by teachers, a significant difference ( $p=.033$ ).**

**Table 1.87**  
*Item 74/78 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.48	3.55	3.45	3.61	3.29	3.58	3.56	3.52	3.63	3.28

Male educators rated this item at 3.78 while female educators rated it lower at 3.52.

- A female principal shared her perceived community expectations, “Our community has high expectations. Our parents want the best for those kids; they may not know what that is. When you talk to them about student achievement or not succeeding, or your child is in danger of not learning, they do respond. Sometimes it maybe doesn’t feel like the whole community is up in arms, but I know the expectation is that all district schools will do well.”
- A female teacher discussed the community’s perception of the school and outside forces that impact these perceptions, “I would say, for sure they don’t understand. They just see, ‘Oh my goodness, they have a really high free and reduced lunch’ or ‘Oh my, all of the Hispanics that go to that school.’ There are just some negative ideas that, unfortunately, they don’t know because they haven’t invested any time or anything into the school. . . . I know the principal works very hard, she’s an awesome principal to work for, and she wants 100% what’s best for the kids and is working really hard at getting that idea changed. So are other teachers here.”

**Item 75 [Administrators]/Item 79 [Teachers]: “Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child (ren)’s education.” This item was rated 3.48 by administrators and 3.66 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item at 3.56 by males and 3.82 by females.

**Table 1.88**  
*Item 75/79 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/ Second	Rural	Non- Rural
Item Rating	3.87	3.62	3.81	3.55	3.95	3.65	3.81	3.84	3.58	3.79	*3.81

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

- A female teacher stated various challenges the students at her school are faced with, “Work, poverty, language sometimes scares people away. Past experiences, our parents sometimes talk about what a bad experience they had in school and there’s not a trust built because of their past.”
- A female ELL teacher discussed various factors that influence parent’s involvement in school, “Language is definitely one so we work really hard to provide translators to give them a voice. We also have liaisons provided through the district that are a great resource for us. Sometimes the schedule is a barrier, we have parents that cannot take off work or they’ll lose their jobs. We try to work around that as best we can, especially with parent teacher conferences, we make that a priority. I think some of the parents had really bad experiences at school so they’re coming in with that baggage, so we’re working with them to see school as a positive place. We also have families that have been in the cycle of poverty which can influence their own perception about how well they could do and their child can do at school.”
- A male principal shared his perception of the challenges of parent involvement, “Work schedules. You have your basic fear of school; some of them are fearful of

- school, but we have less of that than we did before. I think language is a barrier; it's quite the deal to have a PTO meeting with three languages in the room. Within that you have the culture of the PTO, you have the culture of our county, then the culture of this culture clashing with this culture, and they don't know whether to sell candy bars or whatever. It's this weird . . . It's hard, we've become better at it."
- A female principal explained the new age of technology presents problems for parents and schools, "I would say work conflict, and technology. How we can contact parents, we are used to texting, but they change their phone number and address every other week. Sometimes they tell us, sometimes they don't. It's very difficult, sometimes I'm not sure who did get the message. I cannot say that 100% of the time that all students got messages that we've sent home, either in book bags or on the phone. They move or change phone numbers or they can't pay their bill and it gets disconnected. They get another phone or so-and-so's phone. It's very difficult just to reach them because of their mobility."
  - A female principal continued on challenges parents are faced with, "I would say poverty and those family relationships where there's lots of divorce. There are things that they don't associate with school."
  - A female teacher acknowledged her 'traditional' misunderstandings regarding challenges of parents as ELL, "I think the biggest barrier is the language. Obviously we have translators here interpreting what is being said, but there's also a cultural barrier; things that we're used to are not things that they're used to, or the way things are handled in their culture may not be the same as some of ours. That is a huge barrier, finding a common ground and understanding of each other to get that communication across. I would say a fourth of my students, are reading below grade level. When I tell parents that at conferences, most of them are just so ecstatic that their kids are here, are learning, and are engaged in learning that they didn't necessarily have the opportunity. It's huge."
  - The female teacher continued, "I was blown away when the parents had to sign a paper, I was shocked. My first year of teaching when parents had to sign a permission form and I had maybe four parents who didn't know how to sign their names; that was an eye opener. Those are the barriers we have here when it comes to getting all of this data out to them, it can be overwhelming."

## **Theme 8: Community Involvement**

**In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 76-81, Teacher Survey Questions 80-85), the average response of all administrators was 3.52. The average response of teachers was 3.39.**

Male educators rated this category 3.56 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.39. Educators from schools with a low FRL rated this item 3.47, those from schools with an average FRL rated it 3.41, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it 3.40. Educators in schools with a lower ELL percentage rated this 3.39 while schools with above 8% ELL student population rated this category 3.41. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as schools with lower mobility rated it at 3.02 while schools with higher mobility rated it 3.45. Elementary school educators rated the category 3.39 and middle/secondary school educators rated it slightly higher at 3.47. Rural school educators

rated the Community Involvement category 3.50 while non-rural educators rated it similar at 3.10.

**Table 1.89**

*Community Involvement Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (4.26)	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (3.87)
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	“Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.” (3.22)	“Strategies have been shared with me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships.” (3.11)

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Community Involvement was .856.

### Community Involvement Discussion

#### *Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 76 [Administrators]/Item 80 [Teachers]: “The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” This item was rated 4.26 by administrators and 3.87 by teachers, the highest item rating by both teachers and administrators in the category of Community Involvement.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.56 while female educators rated this item the highest in the category at 3.95

**Table 1.90**

*Item 76/80 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*4.17	*4.08	*3.87	*3.68	*4.05	*3.89	*3.91	*3.92	*3.85	*3.92	*3.85

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

This item revealed a significant difference ( $p=.002$ ) between responses from educators in schools with a low ELL student population (3.68) and educators in schools with a high ELL student population (4.05).

- A female Title I coordinator shared new community involvement in her school, “We have a school leader who is really trying to reach out to the community, so I think that’s something that is really growing. I think a lot of the parents want our kids to succeed. We have another elementary and high school in town, so you get a lot of opinions through that. We’re getting there, in the right direction.”
- A female teacher shared how the school is building relationships with the community to support Title I goals, “I think we try to involve the community in different ways to bring them into the school. We do Boy Scouts here, Girl Scouts, we have a Kids

Club, and there are different organizations that we try to bring in for help with our kids to get them involved in our school.”

**Item 77 [Administrators]/Item 81 [Teachers]: “An annual survey is sent to community members to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs.” This item was rated 3.26 by administrators and 3.57 by teachers.**

**Table 1.91**

*Item 77/81 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.56	3.54	3.66	3.47	3.21	3.59	3.51	3.69	3.66	3.17

Male educators gave this item the highest in the category at 3.89 while female educators rated it lower at 3.51 resulting in a significant difference ( $p=.014$ ).

- A female Title I coordinator shared community and teacher survey perceptions, “I think we have a great staff, a lot of veteran teachers. We did a survey a while back; the question had something to do with, ‘How do you think the community sees your school?’ A lot of our teachers rated that really low, the principal has the specific statistics on that. I think a lot of people perceive it as very low-income, that sort of thing.”
- A female teacher shared expectations the community has for the success and expectations of the school, “I think, overall as a community, most communities want their students to do well and succeed. So, I think that the community recognizes the fact that our school needs maybe more after school programs, or we need more assistance in certain areas. I know there was a bank that did a program with some parents where if they did it for six weeks they would get something. So, I feel like the community sees there is a need and they have offered to help fill in that need and help us in various programs and activities.”

**Item 78 [Administrators]/Item 82 [Teachers]: “Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.” This item was rated 3.22 by administrators, the lowest item rating in the category, and 3.39 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.74 while female educators rated it lower at 3.33.

**Table 1.92**

*Item 78/82 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.25	3.16	3.41	3.44	3.34	2.82	3.44	3.38	3.35	3.51	2.95

- A male principal discussed “They want their kids to be in a safe environment. They want the best for their kids and they want us to be able to work with them on that. I think the key there is working with them; they’re willing partners, they really do want

to work with us. We've been working as a staff on parent trust a lot, especially in a high poverty school. The parents just want to go home and play video games; we've been working on that. When we have a family night, they see a lot of families there, or if we have parent impact time, that does increase the trust."

**Item 79 [Administrators]/Item 83 [Teachers]: "Strategies have been shared with me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships." This item was rated 3.35 by administrators and 3.11 by teachers, the lowest rating in the category by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item higher at 3.56 compared to female educators who rated the item lowest in the category of Community Involvement at 3.09.

**Table 1.93**

*Item 79/83 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.25	*3.04	*3.14	3.21	*3.09	*2.61	*3.20	*3.10	3.31	*3.25	*2.75

Note. \*Lowest in the category.

- A male principal discussed how a community program is making a difference in his school, "Adult Literacy has been to our school . . . I want to make connections for our where there's a mutual benefit. . . . Adult Literacy staff were in awe that they could talk to parents that they had never met before, their English has developed and they (parents) were able to answer all of their questions. They talked about what they do with their kids at school in the classroom."
- A female elementary teacher explained how community is connected to the students, "Since our school community is kind of separated, I feel like our community is our school kids. What we do and teach in school, filters out into our direct community because this is where they live and we hope to make a positive difference in how they interact in life. One of the things that we hope parents believe and know is that we're here to partner with them, not just have the kids come in and go out. We invite parents in a lot. We really want them to feel as though we're available to them."

**Item 80 [Administrators]/Item 84 [Teachers]: "Community members provide input for the development of the school improvement plan." This item was rated 3.39 by administrators and 3.17 by teachers.**

**Table 1.94**

*Item 80/84 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.33	3.32	3.16	*3.12	3.23	2.75	3.24	3.16	3.31	3.29	2.83

Note. \*Lowest in the category.

Male educators gave this item the lowest rating for the category at 3.26 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.18.

- A female Title I coordinator shared relationships in place to help community leaders support the school, “We had a deal where eight adults from the community came and did a tour of our building; I’m not sure they looked into any of our goals. I think the principal talked about them as they came around. For example, the rules; one of the adults saw something about the rules, so she talked about that. We walked into a room and they were doing Daily 5 so she talked about that.”
- A male principal shared climate survey information that could be used to inform the school improvement plan, “I go back to the climate survey, I would say that 80-90% of our staff is pretty mission oriented. One of the things that is frustrating, if you came to one of our data teams meetings or if you came to one of our kid planning meetings, you would be taken aback by how engaged they are in the process. Some of these processes that we do really well are not turning over into the student achievement realm. . . . The data does not show me that.”

**Item 81 [Administrators]/Item 85 [Teachers]: “Local businesses or service organizations are provided information from school administrators regarding the importance of parents attending school functions or being involved in their child’s education.” This item was rated 3.65 by administrators and 3.23 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.33 compared to female educators who rated it slightly lower at 3.26.

**Table 1.95**

*Item 81/85 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/ Second	Rural	Non- Rural
Item Rating	*3.17	3.28	3.27	3.22	3.30	2.86	3.32	3.26	*3.29	3.34	3.03

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A male principal shared how he works to communicate the importance of parent involvement, “We try to reach out to our community and our business community. Our neighborhood is not a very attractive site for businesses but for parents, I think those nights we have for parents, we communicate what we’re doing. We’ll have parents do activities with the kids; we’re trying to bring it all together.”
- A female Title I coordinator, shared ways they communicate with community and parents, “I know the whole improvement plan is on the website. We hired a communications person. He has done a lot this year where if we have something going on in our building targeting our goal, we get the paper involved and a lot more has been published. It has been very good. Some of our goals have been communicated more so this year than in the past.”

## Theme 9: Overall Improvement

**In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 82-88, Teacher Survey Questions 86-92), the average response of all administrators was 4.07. The average response of teachers was 3.69.**

Male educators rated this category 3.77 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.72. Educators from schools with a low FRL rated the category 3.55, those from schools with an average FRL rated it 3.60, and educators from schools with a high FRL rated it 3.75. Educators in schools with a lower ELL student percentage rated this category 3.64 while educators in schools with above 8% ELL population rated it 3.78. Schools that varied in mobility rated this category differently, as educators in schools with lower mobility rated it at 3.64 and educators in schools with higher mobility rated it 3.74. Elementary level educators rated the category 3.76 and middle/secondary educators rated it lower at 3.59. Rural school educators rated the Overall Improvement category 3.72 while non-rural educators rated it similar at 3.77.

**Table 1.96**

*Overall Improvement Highest and Lowest Mean Ratings*

	Administrators	Teachers
<b>Highest Mean Rating</b>	4.48 “Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement.”	4.26 “I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.”
<b>Lowest Mean Rating</b>	3.57 “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.”	3.20 “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.”

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Overall Improvement was .849.

### Overall Improvement Discussion

*Survey Items with Supporting Interview Quotes*

**Item 82 [Administrators]/Item 86 [Teachers]: “Data shows that progress is being made in implementing our Title I Goals.” This item was rated 4.22 by administrators and 3.79 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly with males at 3.81 and females at 3.83.

**Table 1.97**

*Item 82/86 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.75	3.48	3.87	3.73	3.89	3.57	3.86	3.86	3.67	3.83	3.80

- A female teacher indicated her classroom’s progress in meeting the Title I Goals, “It’s so hard because each year the students are so different. I feel like this year, even though there are some behavior issues going on with my class, I’ve really seen some



growth and progress toward some of those goals we have set for math fluency or reading comprehension. I have really seen some students take off which is always rewarding and exciting. That's why we teach, to see that progress and growth."

**Item 83 [Administrators]/Item 87 [Teachers]: "During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers/administrators discuss with me about the way I am helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals." This item was rated 4.00 by administrators and 3.53 by teachers, a significant difference (p=.005).**

Male educators rated this item at 3.67 while female educators rated it slightly lower at 3.56.

**Table 1.98**

*Item 83/87 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.33	3.24	3.62	3.45	3.65	3.43	3.59	3.61	3.40	3.57	3.58

- A female Title I coordinator shared information classroom observation, "This year, I took the approach with teachers differently. When I leave the observation, I'll email the teacher thanking them for letting me come in the classroom. Then, I'll say, 'I'd love to provide you with feedback if you'd like some.' Of course, those teachers who are gung ho about stuff and willing to try new things will ask for feedback. The ones who I would love to give feedback to don't ask. There are a few times that I've said things like, 'If you provide your kids with more preventative prompts, then you'll have less corrections. It does help in student success. If you would give them a reminder of how we sit in a circle when we do this activity, you may not have to correct and say sit down on your pockets so much.' I'm pondering whether I should just say, I have feedback."
- A female principal discussed how the administration focuses on Title I Goals during teacher evaluations, "We have a rubric for the district; there are four different areas that are aligned to effective teaching practices. I know I mentioned looking for things in the classroom, to keep mentioning them and encouraging them to keep using those. So, just keeping them in the forefront."
- A female principal discussed how the McRel Walkthrough model is used in her school, "I send an email, 'When I'm coming through I'm going to focus on this.' It does help focus me too, because there's so much to see. I have to say, 'I'm only looking for student structured interactions.' Sometimes I'm looking at your management, how many times you're using positive praise. I change that up to focus myself and to move along into those different classrooms. As far as other ways to monitor, just being in the classrooms and have those discussions with teachers about what they were learning, 'Why were the students here?' etc. It's those conversations with teachers."

**Item 84 [Administrators]/Item 88 [Teachers]: "Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap." This item was rated 4.09 by administrators and 3.77 by teachers, a significant difference (p=.026).**

Male educators rated this item higher at 3.93 compared to female educators who rated it at 3.78

**Table 1.99**

*Item 84/88 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.75	3.76	3.81	3.74	3.84	3.68	3.81	3.80	3.77	3.84	3.67

- A female teacher discussed current data and student achievement, “Since I’m on the SIP committee, I’m working with it all the time and as teachers, we meet with our administrators in quarterly instructional conferences where we talk about that data and how students are achieving. We do work with the data at our PLC meetings as we move through the Data Teams Process. I feel like it has impacted student achievement in the percentage of students who are on grade level in reading. With the NeSA we’ve had some fluctuations, but we did drop a little bit with our AYP. However, I feel like our instruction has improved so we’re looking at what else has affected it.”

**Item 85 [Administrators]/Item 89 [Teachers]: “The use of our research-based interventions is leading to the attainment of our Title I Goals.” This item was rated 4.26 by administrators and 3.75 by teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** rated this item similarly at 3.74 by males and 3.81 by females.

**Table 1.100**

*Item 85/89 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.67	3.52	3.84	3.61	3.92	3.54	3.83	3.87	3.50	3.77	3.88

- A female teacher shared how students are engaged in attaining Title I goals, “The kids get their data, they know what their NeSA scores were, and they track their progress. That would be our baseline. Each step that we take in the process of assessment then they can see, this is where I was and now look where I’m at.”

**Item 86 [Administrators]/Item 90 [Teachers]: “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.” This item was rated 3.57 by administrators and 3.20 by teachers, the lowest rated items for both administrators and teachers in the category.**

**Educators of both genders** also rated this item the lowest in the category of Overall Improvement with males at 3.37 and females at 3.22.

**Table 1.101***Item 86/90 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	3.25	*3.12	*3.25	*3.19	*3.27	*3.11	*3.25	*3.26	*3.15	*3.23	*3.27

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female principal discussed how her school can improve on communicating school improvement with the community, “This may not exactly correlate; I’ll be in public, in line at the store or something and I hear someone say something negative about the district. I always get that fight feeling that I want to stand up and find out why they think that. I don’t think we do our best at that. I think this year is helping. We have so many little things like an internet page; they’ve tried to go more globally on the internet to get it out there. . . . Those types of things.”
- A male principal shared how his school communicates school improvement, “Every month through the Community Learning Center we have a Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) committee that was initially a grant. What we found is that we didn’t have even close to a quorum for getting feedback from families. So, we combined it with another committee which was only in existence for about a year but then bridged to merging with our PTO. At monthly PTO meetings they give updates. The other times I communicate with parents is during parent information nights where we communicate the goals to parents, those nights are a requirement for No Child Left Behind. We also have a No Child Left Behind meeting, we have a parent meeting for Title I, sometimes we merge those meetings together.”

**Item 87 [Administrators]/Item 91 [Teachers]: “The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement.” This item was rated 3.91 by administrators and 3.56 by teachers.**

Male educators rated this item at 3.81 while female educators rated it lower at 3.57.

**Table 1.102***Item 87/91 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*3.08	3.80	3.60	3.61	3.58	3.75	3.57	3.58	3.67	3.54	3.77

*Note.* \*Lowest in the category.

- A female principal discussed how student achievement results are used, “I will use any state assessments, Acuity assessments, and I do look teacher by teacher to say, ‘Does this data support?’ I think they are strong teachers, is that what the student achievement data shows? So, I look teacher by teacher at grade level, looking at math, looking at reading.”
- A female ELL teacher explained the use of self-evaluation, “My experience has been when I do my end of the year evaluation, I’m recording how many of my students

made progress. As an ELL teacher, I'm looking at whether my students have moved up in their ELL levels. As a reading teacher, I also track how my students are doing on their reading levels and if they've gotten closer to grade level."

**Item 88 [Administrators]/Item 92 [Teachers]: "Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement." This item was rated 4.48 by administrators and 4.26 by teachers, the highest rated item in the category for administrators and teachers.**

**Educators of both genders** also rated this item the highest in the category with males at 4.04 and females at 4.30, a significant difference ( $p=.036$ ).

**Table 1.103**

*Item 88/92 Mean Ratings*

	Free/Reduced Lunch			ELL		Mobility		Level		Locale	
	Low	Avg	High	Low	High	Low	High	Elem	Mid/Second	Rural	Non-Rural
Item Rating	*4.00	*4.28	*4.29	*4.17	*4.34	*4.39	*4.26	*4.34	*4.00	*4.23	*4.42

*Note.* \*Highest in the category.

- A female teacher discussed how her administrator uses student achievement data to discuss teacher performance, "My administrator sits down with us after our evaluation; he/she comes in and evaluates an hour of our teaching; he/she'll talk about things we did well, things we need to improve on, how this lesson could have gone better, and what are some of the challenges. Sometimes when I meet with the administrator we've talked about how well the students are performing, or that I've seen growth or progress with these students in this area. So, we do talk about it."
- A female ELL teacher explains how she and administrators set goals for her teaching, "We set our own goals and we meet with the administrator about our goals. We're encouraged to have it tie in to student performance. When we are making our goals or thinking about what is going to impact student achievement within our classrooms, we have an evaluation rubric in teacher performance. We have to have one goal that is a building goal and one that is a district goal so when we meet with our administrator, who is the evaluator, and we talk about how that's going to impact student achievement."

### **Emergent Interview Themes**

Three new themes emerged in the interviews: (1) Behavior Monitoring; (2) Collaboration; and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs.

#### ***Behavior Monitoring***

Behavior Monitoring became apparent as an emerging theme during the interviews. Teachers and administrators stressed how behavior impacted instruction and learning therefore requiring implementation of research-based strategies and interventions. There are two prominent processes shared in this study for behavior monitoring: Response to Intervention (RTI) and Behavior Intervention Support Team (BIST). RTI was discussed as a model to contribute to more meaningful learning and improvement of behavioral problems for students to have opportunities to succeed. RTI can be defined as "an assessment and intervention

process for systematically monitoring student progress and making decisions about the need for instructional modifications or increasing intervention services” (Pool, Russell Carter, & Johnson, 2012, para. 2). The process “includes both academic and behavioral aspects of student performance and is based on a three-tiered model” (para. 2).

A female elementary teacher shared how instructional strategies embraced by RTI have changed the constant interruptions to instruction:

In my classroom, I have 21 students, 10 of them are receiving RTI services. That’s quite a few kids that are coming and going at different times throughout the day. I think those interventions and those instructional strategies that we have in place are beneficial for our kids, but we have to keep monitoring them and making sure that how they are working is also not negatively impacting the students in terms of how much time they’re out of the classroom versus in, and the time it takes them to walk down to one hallway and walk back.

BIST was also mentioned multiple times in participant interviews as a model for behavior management and is used in many Nebraska school districts. This model differs from RTI as it “permeates a school culture and promotes a positive, problem-solving mind-set” (Ozanam, n.d., Success Stories page). BIST “is a proactive school-wide behavior management plan for all students, emphasizing schools partnering with students and parents through caring relationships and high expectations. BIST strategies are person-centered and based on the core conditions of congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard” (Evidence Based Outcomes page) and “allows teachers to confront disruptive behavior with grace and accountability” (Philosophy page).

A non-rural female elementary teacher shared how BIST supports consistency for student, We use BIST and positive behavior supports. In doing that schoolwide helps with consistent expectations. Throughout the day, in every part of the day, those standards for behavior and learning are there. In the classroom, this is what we expect; we really work hard to create an environment for learning.

As students face an increasing number of barriers outside of school, they are expected to interact and engage appropriately in the classroom. Teachers are being challenged, as was evident in the interviews, to find quality means to extinguish negative behaviors and provide a safe, secure learning environment which fosters successful student achievement for every child.

There were fourteen quotes referencing behaviors from educators in Group 1. A female elementary administrator shared the extent to which data was used in the school to help students become more responsible, respectful, and safe:

Teachers chart and ask, “Were you respectful, yes or no?” “Were you responsible, yes or no?” “Were you safe, yes or no?” So they have a potential of six ‘yes’s’ per day; they chart that as a class and send it to me and I chart it for the whole school to see how we are doing. This is the first year we’ve been doing that. It’s right out in the front hallway. Some teachers really like it and embrace it, “It’s really helped my classroom management.” I’ve noticed this year, that no matter if you’re going to music or lunch or just in the hallway, I don’t have to teach it to kids, they already know it. I just have to

say, “What are we talking about today?” The kids will say, “We weren’t very respectful.” They can lead the conversation and they can go through the verbiage; it’s shortened up office time. It feels like it has lessened office referrals.

A female elementary teacher shared the intervention plan for behavior monitoring:

Certain students are on behavior plans. For example, I have a student who has a really, really hard time focusing and doing what he is asked to do. Every 15 minutes, he has a chart I have to fill out to make sure he’s staying on task at a 1, a 2, or a 3. I know there are plans like that in most of the classrooms. We’ve implemented this respect, responsibility, safe kind of schoolwide rule to keep it consistent. We’re trying to get a schoolwide language going. I think the more they hear that, the more they see that, hopefully it will change down the road.

### ***Collaboration***

Collaboration was another theme that emerged in the study. DuFour (2011) noted the conventional style of teachers working in isolation:

Teachers work in isolation from one another. They view their classrooms as their personal domains, have little access to the ideas or strategies of their colleagues, and prefer to be left alone rather than engage with their colleagues or principals. Their professional practice is shrouded in a veil of privacy and personal autonomy and is not a subject for collective discussion or analysis. (pp. 57-58)

However, DuFour (2011) explained the necessity for teachers to work together, “There is abundant research linking higher levels of student achievement to educators who work in a collaborative culture of a professional learning community” (p. 59).

Apparent in interview responses from this year’s study, collaboration is becoming a vital piece of the school improvement processes. “The belief underlying the use of teams in schools is that group decision-making and collaboration produce better outcomes than decision-making by individuals” (Pool et al., 2012, para. 5). These teams, instead of having one isolated individual, combine the plethora of experiences, knowledge, and abilities from every member of the group.

Working in collaboration also allows teachers “to be involved in planning and problem solving. By sharing responsibility as a team, teachers and staff are accountable for student progress and are more aware of the needs of individual students” (Pool et al., 2012, para. 36). With constantly increasing demands on teachers’ time and resources, it is no surprise that collaboration and teacher networking were referenced in interviews 53 times. A rural elementary principal shared how collaboration works to build the school’s capacity to improve:

We’ve developed an atmosphere of collaboration, I think that’s very important because our staff, hopefully and I believe this is true, and I think they would echo the same thing, that we are in this together. Its collaboration, we’re in this together. It’s not directives coming down from on high saying we have to do this and that. We get together with our staff and we really try to work with them saying, “Here’s our intent, how do we get there?” We collaborate on how we can get there. I’d say data and collaboration are really important.

### ***Meeting Individual Student Needs***

In the interviews, teachers and administrators discussed the importance of meeting individual student needs in order for student learning to transpire. Teachers shared strategies they had identified to meet individual student learning needs, in situations where students' learning needs were not met by classroom strategies. Recent research supports the importance of "personalizing learning for each student by using a variety of appropriate and targeted instructional strategies" (CCSSO, 2010, p. 10). Differentiation of instruction was mentioned 8 times by educators from Group 1. A female elementary administrator shared the school's focus as it relates to the improvement goals:

I think a big focus is individual student improvement. We look at every individual student; we've been doing this in reading for a long time. I'm happy to say that we're beginning this process now in math too. Seeing where each student is, what's their level, and determining how we can best serve that kid where they are and bring them along to hopefully grow them not only that one year (of grade level progress) in a year, but more than that one year (of progress) in a year. That would be a focus of ours.

A female elementary teacher shared how teachers in her school communicate with parents in order to best meet the academic and behavioral needs of every student:

At the beginning before we even talk about the kid, the parent fills out the form. We're getting a view from the parent of what they see as far as strengths and concerns in academics, language, behavior, and social skills. This is first before the teacher fills out the request. It's been amazing, parents know from the start.

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## **Study 2: Examining Educator Perceptions of the Title I and School Improvement Plans in Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools**



*“One thing that I love about my school is that we don’t give up on kids. You will never hear a teacher say, ‘That child is not going to get it’ or ‘I’ve given up on that child’ which I’ve heard at other schools. You won’t hear that here. I feel like we have academic optimism here; through effort, through hard work, both on our part and getting the student involved in their own learning, we can help them achieve.” (A Female ELL Teacher, 2013)*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

All Needs Improvement schools are required to develop a School Improvement Plan or Title I School Improvement plan. Title I School Improvement Plans are used interchangeably with School Improvement plans. Title I Schools are “required to formulate school improvement or development plans that focus on student learning outcomes” (Hallinger & Heck, 2011, p. 21) to help achieve results! Additionally, Title I schools receive Title I funding along with some flexibility to determine how they will use these funds in order to support change in ways individual schools determine are most important. “Title I School wide programs have an enormous amount of latitude to organize their operations and allocate the various funding sources available to them to help meet the challenge of academic achievement for all children” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013, para. 2). “Funds can be used to improve curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, increase staff and program improvement” (Malburg, 2012, p. 1).

Non-Title I schools are also required to develop a School Improvement Plan, however Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools receive no additional funding for their Needs Improvement status, unlike Title I Needs Improvement Schools.

A second study was conducted to explore the perceptions of the Title I and School Improvement Plans from educators in Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools. The survey categories investigated were: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. These survey categories aligned to the elements described by Malburg (2012), “curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and increase staff and program improvement” (p. 1).

### **Purpose of Study**

**The purpose of Study 2** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I and School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools compared to **Non-Title I Needs Improvement** Schools.

Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected in the winter and spring of 2013.

### **Research Design**

This mixed-methods research study focused upon the implementation of Title I and School Improvement Plans. Administrators and teachers across the state were surveyed using an online instrument regarding their perceptions about the Title I and School Improvement processes. Follow up interviews were conducted with a sample of participants from both groups during the spring and summer of 2013.

### **Survey Participants**

#### ***Group 1***

Twelve schools in Title I Needs Improvement status from 10 districts participated in the study as Group 1. From these participating schools, 235 teachers and 23 administrators took part in the survey. Nine (75%) of the schools were rural while three (25%) were non-rural. Survey participants who responded to the survey represented 9 elementary schools and 3 middle/secondary schools.

Three (25%) Group 1 schools had an English Language Learner (ELL) student population of 7% or less while nine (75%) of the schools had an ELL student population higher than 7%. The Nebraska state ELL average is 6.47% (NDE, 2012).

Nine schools from Group 1 had a 55% or higher Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate, two schools had a FRL rate between 40% and 55%, and one school had a FRL of 39% or lower. The Nebraska state average for FRL is 43.79% (NDE, 2012).

#### ***Group 2***

Fifteen schools from 12 districts in Non-Title I Needs Improvement status participated in the study as Group 2. From these 15 schools, 505 teachers and 45 administrators took part in the survey. Twelve (80%) participating schools were rural while 3 (20%) were non-rural. Survey participants who responded to the survey represented 1 elementary school and 14 middle/secondary schools.

Thirteen of the Group 2 schools had an English Language Learner (ELL) student population of 7% or less while two of the schools had an ELL student population higher than 7%. The Nebraska state ELL average is 6.47% (NDE, 2012).

One Group 2 school had a 55% or higher Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL); eight schools' FRL ranged from 40% to 55% and 6 had an FRL of 39% or lower. The Nebraska state average for FRL is 43.79% (NDE, 2012).

In comparing these numbers, it is important to take into account the fact that rural districts are likely to employ a smaller number of teachers and administrators than non-rural schools. Table 2.1 illustrates the demographic data for Group 1 and Group 2 participants.

**Table 2.1**  
*Group 1 and Group 2 Participant Demographic Data*

		<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
<b>Role</b>	<b>Administrator</b>	23	45
	<b>Teacher</b>	235	505
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	27	185
	<b>Female</b>	231	365
<b>Locale</b>	<b>Rural</b>	198	423
	<b>Non-Rural</b>	60	127
<b>ELL</b>	<b>Low</b>	100	463
	<b>High</b>	158	87
<b>FRL</b>	<b>Low</b>	12	154
	<b>Average</b>	25	259
	<b>High</b>	221	137
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>Low</b>	28	353
	<b>High</b>	230	197
<b>Level</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	210	28
	<b>Mid/Secondary</b>	48	522

Administrators from both Group 1 and Group 2 responded to an 89-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers from both groups responded to a 93-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored 9 themes: Title I/School Improvement Plan, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for this instrument was .975 for educators in Group 1 and .972 for all educators in Group 2.

## Interview Participants

Open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers in 14 public schools for a total of 47 interviews conducted statewide during the spring of 2013. From Group 1, four schools in three districts participated in interviews while Group 2 interviews were also conducted in four schools in three districts (see Table 2.2).

**Table 2.2**

*Distribution of Interview Schools and Districts by Group*

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Schools	4	4
Districts	3	3

Of these interviews, 11 were from Group 1 schools (Title I Needs Improvement) and 14 were from Group 2 schools (Non-Title I Needs Improvement); up to four interviews were conducted in each school. Table 2.4 illustrates the administrator and teacher distribution of interviews per Group.

**Table 2.3**

*Distribution of Administrator and Teacher Interviews by Group*

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
Administrator	5	5
Teacher	6	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>

Detailed perceptions were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix D) that gathered qualitative data. These schools were selected based on Title I Needs Improvement status, geographic area, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate, and ethnicity.

The interview protocol (Appendix D) asked for participants' demographic information and posed nine questions regarding their perceptions of their school's Title I or School Improvement Plan and were structured around the same nine themes used to structure the survey. Probes were identified for use with each question. Interviewers were provided a Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Manual and received training prior to conducting interviews.

## Findings

**Study 2** was conducted to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of their Title I and School Improvement plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** schools compared with **Non-Title I Needs Improvement** schools. Sum scores for all survey items of educator responses in Groups 1 and 2 were analyzed. When examining the mean survey rating for each group, a statically significant difference was evident between the groups.

Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement) participants had a survey mean rating of 290.78 while Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement) participants had a mean survey rating of 278.23, a significant difference between the two groups. This gives evidence that educator perceptions in Title I Needs Improvement schools (Group 1) were more positive about the

implementation of their Title I/School Improvement plan than educator perceptions in Non-Title I Needs Improvement schools (Group 2).

Further examination of Groups 1 and 2 indicated several demographic differences as illustrated in Table 2.4. The number of participants from elementary, middle, and secondary schools from each group differed as Group 1 consisted of 210 (81%) participants from nine elementary schools and 48 (19%) participants from 3 middle/secondary schools. In contrast, Group 2 consisted of 28 (5%) participants from 1 elementary school and 522 (95%) participants from 14 middle/secondary schools.

**Table 2.4**  
*Distribution of Participants by Level, Group 1 and Group 2*

	Group 1			Group 2		
	Schools	Participants	Participant Percentage	Schools	Participants	Participant Percentage
Elementary	9	210	81%	1	28	5%
Middle/ Secondary	3	48	19%	14	522	95%

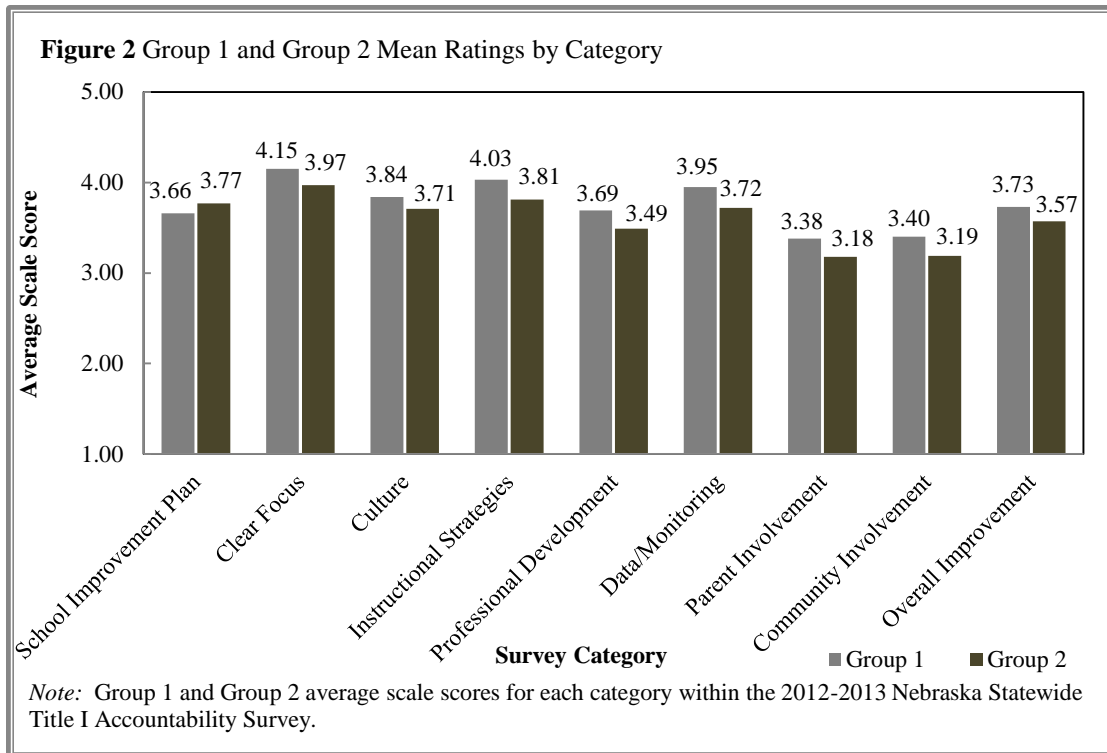
Additionally, the distribution of participants from schools with different levels of Free and Reduced Lunch rates is noted (see Table 2.5). Within Group 1 survey participants, 12 (4%) out of 258 were from schools with a 39% or lower FRL, 25 participants (10%) were from schools with a FRL rate of 40%-55%, and 221 participants (86%) of Group 1 participants were from schools with a 55% or higher FRL rate.

In comparison, 154 Group 2 participants (28%) out of 550 were from schools with a 39% or lower FRL, 259 participants (47%) were from schools with an FRL rate of 40%-55%, and 137 participants (25%) were from schools with a 55% or higher FRL rate.

**Table 2.5**  
*Distribution of Participants by FRL Rate, Group 1 and Group 2*

	Group 1			Group 2		
	Schools	Participants	Participant Percentage	Schools	Participants	Participant Percentage
Low	1	12	4%	6	154	28%
Average	2	25	10%	8	259	47%
High	9	221	86%	1	137	25%

Figure 2.1 illustrates the mean ratings within each survey category for Group 1 participants and Group 2 participants.



Mean scores were used to determine similarities and differences for each survey category. In both Groups 1 and 2, the highest rated item for each group was the same survey item in seven of the nine categories. In the category, Culture, the survey item, “I am passionate about student learning” was rated the highest by both Groups 1 and 2. In the category of Professional Development, the survey item, “Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices” was rated the highest (3.94) by participants in Group 1 in the category whereas the item, “Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning” was rated the highest by those from Group 2 (3.82).

The other category in which Group 1 and Group 2 participants did *not* rate the same item the highest was Parent Involvement. Participants in Group 1 rated the item, “An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs” the highest (3.89) while the item, “Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child (ren)’s education” was rated the highest by educators in Group 2 (3.70). Of note, the category Parent Involvement resulted in the lowest of the highest mean ratings for both Group 1 and Group 2. The items with the highest mean rating are displayed in Table 2.6.

There were three categories in which Group 1 and Group 2 educators did not rate the same item the lowest within the category. In the category Title I School Improvement Plan, the item, “I was involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals” was rated lowest by Group 1 (3.21) while the item, “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I/School Improvement Goals” was rated lowest by Group 2 educators (3.26).

**Table 2.6**  
*Group 1 and Group 2 Highest Mean Rating by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 2: Non-Title I Needs Improvement
<b>Title I/School Improvement Plan</b>	"The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement." (4.27)	"The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement." (4.10)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	"Teachers/I engage students in order to improve academic performance." (4.55)	"Teachers/I engage students in order to improve academic performance." (4.40)
<b>Culture</b>	"I am passionate about student learning." (4.76)	"I am passionate about student learning." (4.69)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	"I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences." (4.27)	"I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences." (4.08)
<b>Professional Development</b>	"Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices." (3.94)	"Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning." (3.82)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	"Data are essential to our school improvement process." (4.43)	"Data are essential to our school improvement process." (4.14)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	"An annual survey is sent to parents/ guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs." (3.89)	"Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child (ren)'s education." (3.70)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	"The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students." (3.91)	"The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students." (4.00)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	"Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement." (4.28)	"Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement." (4.03)

The second category, Clear Focus, also had different items that were rated the lowest. Group 1 rated the item, "The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels" the lowest at 3.92 while Group 2 rated the item, "There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need" the lowest (3.73). Lastly, within the category of Instructional Strategies, Group 1 rated the item, "Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance" the lowest at 3.67 while Group 2 educators rated the item, "Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities" the lowest at 3.37.

In the category of Parent Involvement the survey item, "Parents are involved in identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals" was rated the lowest by Group 1 (2.95) and Group 2 (2.79). This was the lowest rated category overall for both Groups. For Groups 1 and 2, the lowest rated item for each group was the same in six of the nine categories as depicted in Table 2.7.

T-Tests were used to determine the mean value of survey items with significant differences using an alpha level of .05 between Groups 1 and 2. These significant differences, where they occur, are discussed within each survey category.

**Table 2.7**  
*Group 1 and Group 2 Lowest Mean Ratings by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 2: Non-Title I Needs Improvement
<b>Title I/School Improvement Plan</b>	"I was involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals." (3.21)	"I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I/School Improvement Goals." (3.26)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	"The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels." (3.92)	"There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need." (3.73)
<b>Culture</b>	"The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty." (3.54) "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving." (3.54)	"The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty." (3.43)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	"Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance." (3.67)	"Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities." (3.37)
<b>Professional Development</b>	"I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom." (3.22)	"I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom." (3.07)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	"Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data." (3.17)	"Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data." (3.05)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	"Parents are involved in identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals." (2.95)	"Parents are involved in identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals." (2.79)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	"Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/ me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/ community partnerships." (3.14)	"Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/ me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/ community partnerships." (2.82)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	"Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I/ School Improvement Plan." (3.24)	"Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I/ School Improvement Plan." (3.13)

## Theme 1: Title I School Improvement Plan

### In the category of the Title I School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7):

The average response from educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.66 while the average response from educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.77. This was the only category that Group 2 rated some of the items higher than Group 1.

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Title I School Improvement plans.

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, four of the seven items (57%) resulted in significant differences as shown in Table 2.8.



**Table 2.8***Significant Differences for the Category Title I/School Improvement Plan*

Item	p-value
4: "I have consistently/Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I Goals to teachers in my school." (Group 1: 3.56; Group 2: 3.87)	p<.001
5: "Teachers in my school/ I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals." (Group 1: 3.57, Group 2: 3.76)	p=.010
6: "Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified." (Group 1: 3.73, Group 2: 3.89)	p=.020
7: "The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement." (Group 1: 4.27, Group 2: 4.10 )	p=.010

**Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses**

- A female elementary administrator talked about re-visiting the School Improvement plan annually, "We're meeting once a year to look at the plan, to review how we're doing, to look at and assess which areas are weaknesses for us and what we need to do to make that area stronger."
- A male secondary administrator shared the involvement of the committee in the development and monitoring of the Title I Improvement Plan, "We developed a committee that looked at the plan and we have staff members as part of that for sure. (Name of staff member) and I are going to get together at the beginning (of the year). We'll work with teachers and staff members, the reading coaches, Title I teachers, and go over that."
- A female elementary teacher discussed her role in the development and monitoring of the School Improvement goals, "During the whole year, my job as the reading coach is looking at the data and making decisions. My job is constantly monitoring assessments that we take and placing students in the right programs."
- A rural elementary teacher responded about the administrators' role with the Title I plan, "Administrators put it together, then myself and another teacher, with our administrator, we get together and review our notebook to make sure we are implementing the plan with fidelity."

**Non-Title Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses**

- A female secondary teacher shared her role on the School Improvement Team and monitoring the goals, "I'm with the group that takes data, and I'm also part of the RTI team, so we have data (broken up) in that way. We revisit it; lots of time that data is presented by teachers on our school improvement days; whenever we have a school improvement day, its school improvement that we're talking about. We're always addressing what our goals are. . . We have some (school improvement days) before the school year begins, one at the end, and about four throughout the school year."
- A male administrator shared the processes for building capacity to improve at his school, "One thing is how we set up our committee. It's not a four or eight person (committee). We've let anyone who wants to be a part of school improvement, as long as they will commit the time and energy to be leaders in the building, they have

- that opportunity to be a major voice in decisions made for what we do and how we do it.”
- A female secondary teacher discussed the extent the administration and teachers are involved in the development and monitoring of the Title I Improvement plan, “The newest goal, was that every school needed a climate goal. After we got that directive, our principal pulled in the teachers and he let us figure out what we wanted to do and how that’s going to work. . . . Everyone has to attend, but not everyone has a role on a committee. It seems like its four or five of us that do a lot of it.”
  - A female secondary teacher discussed the extent teachers are involved in monitoring the school improvement goals, “Teachers self-report; then we pull up the data. At a staff meeting, the principal pulls that data up and shows them. We have ‘Well Managed Schools’ for our behavior so they do data sweeps for that as far as the climate culture. Then, they look at those and set goals, what do we need to do next, so really, review the data with no meaning at first; they make their own meaning, then talk about next steps.”
  - A female secondary teacher talked about her principals’ engagement in the Title I planning process, “He’s extremely engaged, I think it’s a priority. He makes it seem like a priority that we meet those goals.”
  - A female secondary teacher explained her role on the School Improvement Team and monitoring the goal, “I think part of it is to try to be a leader to some of the other teachers who haven’t worked on incorporating reading strategies into their classroom. I think I’m willing to try new strategies; because I’ve been teaching for a little while, I have some reading strategies. I also think it’s important that students read and get content literacy from their book.”
  - A female secondary teacher discussed school improvement teams, “Each school has their own team, the way they compile that team and meet is different. Districtwide there is school improvement professional learning to make sure we’re following the NDE process.”

## Theme 2: Clear Focus

### In the category of the Clear Focus (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17):

The average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement schools) was 4.15 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.97.

**Table 2.9**  
*Significant Differences for the Category Clear Focus*

Item	p-value
10: “There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need.” (Group 1: 4.19, Group 2: 3.73)	p<.001
17: “Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students.” (Group 1: 4.06, Group 2: 3.94)	p=.050

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, only two of the ten items revealed significant differences as shown in Table 2.9.

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Clear Focus:

#### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:**

- A female elementary teacher discussed the processes which are implemented to build her school's capacity to improve, "We have coaches for the district. One of our school improvement goals is that we are required to have them (coaches) in our room each semester whether they are facilitating a lesson, collaborating, or just there to watch and give you feedback. A lot of times at our school, we don't have a say so in what school improvement is. It's a district thing that we're all doing, but we try to fit it just to us. So, if its math, we pick out from our math plan what we think we're low in and try to use that when we build the school improvement goals."
- A female elementary teacher shared the effect the school culture has had on instructional practices and school achievement, "I would like to think that it's (the culture that) helped. I just think it makes them realize that, as a staff, we are all on the same page, we all want the same things. We had a kick off last week when the NeSA window opened. We took pictures; a (make-believe character) came so we all had pictures with (the character). We had fun snacks; it's kind of like a pep rally for testing. They also understand the reality; we have to do this (testing) for a reason. It affects me personally, it affects my classroom, it affects our school, and it affects our town. We don't sugar coat it. We really let them know, this is what is expected, most of them work with that."
- A female elementary teacher discussed how their school's instructional strategies meet the individual needs of students, "All of the kids here speak the language but they're in different kinds of groupings based on their abilities or level. Kindergarten has a special group where part of their day is spent in this group; part of the day in the regular classroom. First grade does that too, second grade has a portion of it. Third, fourth, and fifth, my kids go out for 90 minutes . . . so they're getting instruction from the special resource teacher. Then, she and I can collaborate on 'This worked, this didn't work, try this, or help them with this.' In a smaller group setting, they get it a little better than a group with twenty some kids in their room. They are more comfortable in that smaller group setting."

#### **Non-Title Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses**

- A female secondary teacher shared their collective efforts to focus on meeting students' academic needs, "Our department sat with the curriculum director; we came up with what we wanted to do. She actually took care of presenting everything to the board and curriculum committee so we didn't have to. We looked at what we could be doing to make sure we are better preparing our kids because we felt our scores, math wise were low. Kids didn't know how to take an online math test, I honestly believe that is why our scores were low; that was new for them."
- A female secondary teacher discussed the school's focus on identified goals and areas of need, "We have reading, writing, math, and climate. Writing is one that, I think, was pushed very hard before I came and then the scores got to a point where they

- were ok so we're at a monitor status. Reading was the area that the kids were slipping in. A lot of that, I believe, is because what they read on their tests is non-fiction. In the language arts class, the focus is really on fiction. So as a school, we decided we needed to all be involved and I was relieved because it's nice to have help."
- A female secondary teacher shared the extent of a schoolwide focus on improvement, "It's what all of our meetings are driven around, so when we meet, that is our focus unless there's something really pressing we need to cover. It is supposed to be, and the principal works very hard to make it this way. Our whole focus, as a school, should be on these areas."
  - A female secondary teacher explained the extent data is used to determine the achievement of the goals, "We look at the NeSA data and we look at how we did overall, how we compared to state averages, where we're at in the district. We look at where we're proficient and where we're needs improvement as far as subcategories such as SPED and ELL."
  - A male secondary administrator discussed the district process for curriculum alignment to standards, "I think the district, the whole curriculum process, the content, selecting course outcomes, and also the textbooks and resources. I think there's a systematic process that's in place to be sure that we have what we need to meet the needs of the students and to tie in with alignment to state and national objectives."
  - A male secondary administrator shared how groups use data to focus on identified areas of need, "If Acuity SRI scores come back, the language arts teachers would be sharing. Acuity scores fit reading and math and we share those. That's really where they focus in on the scores and where the kids are struggling. Sometimes our other fear is that we focus so much on this end, the kids who have just made it, we don't want to lose them in the process, the ones on the bubble. Teachers are looking at the kids who maybe scored at an 85 or a little above, we want to make sure those kids are moving forward too. We don't want to just focus on the kids below."
  - A secondary administrator discussed how individual student needs are met, "With some of those bottom kids we just want growth. Maybe the kid who scores in the twenties is not going to get to an 85, that's ok. We want them to grow, and to be able to show the kids that. We want the kids to know where they're at, see what the goal is, and be able to show them the steps. . . . We have some teachers who are tremendous at that; our goal is to get all of our teachers to that level. I think that's part of the challenge."
  - A female secondary teacher explained how formative assessments are used to measure instructional practices for each content area, "I have the students assess themselves. After they've done a benchmark assessment from the reading curriculum, I've created a page of concepts that are assessed on the NeSA. (These concepts) are (rated) beginning, developing, proficient, and advanced levels. They'll take the test, and then I give them a test analysis with the three or four concepts and which number of the test it was. So they'll circle which numbers they missed and they can see under which concept that is. Then they have a good idea that they may have missed two drawing conclusions out of four. Then they go to that chart under drawing conclusions, and they can mark if they are beginning, developing, proficient, or advanced. They have a good idea of where they're at and I do too. I take those test analysis and I have an assessment binder with a page for each student; I glue it in

there. The students who I'm concerned about, I can easily see which concepts they're still struggling with."

### Theme 3: Culture

#### In the category of Culture (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31):

Educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) had an average response of 3.84 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.71.

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, only two of the fourteen items were significant as shown in Table 2.10.

**Table 2.10**  
*Significant Differences for the Category of Culture*

Item	p-value
19: "Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school." (Group 1: 3.83, Group 2: 3.65)	p=.010
22: "The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning." (Group 1: 3.84, Group 2: 3.59)	p<.001

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Culture:

#### Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:

- A female elementary administrator shared how school values and beliefs impact the community, "I think what we do in the school filters out into the community. I think they feel the enthusiasm we have in the school because the kids leave with that enthusiasm and are bragging about it, or they are getting excited about doing things well, that filters out into the community."
- A male secondary administrator responded to how he sees the schools shared values and beliefs impacting the community, "From what parents say to me, yes. I've had a number of parents tell me how impressed they are with the rigor and that they think the school is a good school. They're very glad their kids are here."
- A female secondary teacher discussed how the schools' shared values and beliefs impact the community, "I think we do a better job in this building. We were just talking about this the other day. Sometimes, our older population is really worried about the changes and we'd like to invite them into our school to see that our students are mixing very well. We'd like to have our students say that to the community. Sometimes, the older generation, we get comments made by people that are negative, that we as school members don't see. We have to express to them how it's a great school and invite them in to see how it is here. Some people on the outside just have the wrong perspective."

- A female secondary teacher discussed communicating the ‘specialness’ of their school, “Communication is really big. We need to have more of it, especially from our teachers who work and live here (in the town), we need to be expressing what’s going on in our schools. Unfortunately, there are more and more teachers who are driving in from out of town, but we have to make sure those who live here are inviting people into our schools. Showing them these scores, even showing our writing scores and showing that we beat a nearby school. People here sometimes think, ‘Should we take our kids to (nearby district)?’ You’ve got it right here, this school is out performing schools that don’t have as many challenges as we do.”

### **Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses:**

- A female secondary teacher shared how culture impacts school improvement, “I think as with any staff, you have the ones who refuse to change. Unfortunately, we have people that need to retire because they don’t want to change. They see the alignment and stuff as a waste of time. The majority of our teachers, they know we’re here for the kids and they’re going to do the things they can.”
- A secondary administrator explained the processes in place in the school that are used to share school beliefs, values and understandings related to the Title I program, “One piece of communication we use is that parents will get a phone call and an email from me. The other piece is, along with our parent night, orientation night where we’re going to share things with them. At conferences, usually in the fall, we have the goals on the bulletin board. Now (the bulletin board) has pictures of kids, but in the fall we usually post our goals so when parents come in, they see our goals and strategies. We have it up in our conference room where we have our parent meetings.”
- A female secondary teacher shared her perception of the processes implemented to build her school’s capacity to improve, “We are very supported and encouraged by the administration to do what we need to do to help kids improve. We have some teachers who use their lunches or their planning period to do a small group. Those kinds of things; I know the principal has a small group that he works with.”
- A male secondary administrator shared his perception on the school’s shared values and beliefs impacting the community, “I guess two things come to mind. One is that our school has a very strong reputation in the community and I think that’s from what we do. I think that’s pretty evident in the survey we get from our parents and also from past families. The other one is that I think the feeling that- this came from a mom who moved here she said, ‘I was talking at work and they said the best middle school in the city is here. If you want to go to a place where they are going to be good academically, they can enjoy sports, they’ll be well coached, and they’ll be well taught, the whole piece- this is where to go.’ That was really nice, it not only made me feel good, but that’s the feeling she got when she was working. She was looking for a place to live so she wanted to buy in our school’s part of town as opposed to one of the others. Sometimes we need to hear that.”
- A female secondary teacher explained the principal’s engagement with students, “He is very engaged; the kids have enjoyed him too. He does our daily announcements, he starts the day with music, and he’s the one telling everyone what’s going on. The kids really like that too, it sets a nice tone for the day.”

## Theme 4: Instructional Strategies

### In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42):

In Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools), the average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) for the category of Instructional Strategies was 4.03 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.81.

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, four of the eleven items were significantly different as shown in Table 2.11.

**Table 2.11**

*Significant Differences for the Category of Instructional Strategies*

Item	p-value
32: "Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works." (Group 1: 4.21, Group 2: 4.01)	p<.001
35: "Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems." (Group 1: 4.00, Group 2: 3.81)	p<.001
37: "Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, race, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities." (Group 1: 3.78, Group 2: 3.37)	p<.001
38: "Teachers in my school/ I reflect and compare their/my actual teaching practice to what they/ I had planned and hoped to achieve." (Group 1: 3.94, Group 2: 3.74)	p<.001

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Instructional Strategies:

#### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:**

- A middle school principal discussed grade level team meetings, "Those meetings were times where teachers could get together, sit down, and discuss individual students that were having difficulty. 'This kid's having problems in my room.' 'That kid is having trouble in my room too.' We focus in on this kid and find out what's going on."
- A female reading teacher discussed how teachers use specific instructional strategies to meet improvement goals, "That's where our support has come in. We've added a lot of instructional strategies this year that we got from ERI. A lot of them have to do with fluency. I would say those are some of the best that we've gotten this year. Some of those include: echo reading, snake reading, sometimes even just getting the kids eyes to move faster, we do every other word, teacher-student. That lacks comprehension, but we're not going for comprehension on that one. Some kids, it's just getting their eye movement faster, we've found a lot of little strategies that, depending on what the deficit is, have really worked with our kids. Teachers are starting to figure out which strategies work for which kid instead of this is a strategy, use it. We've really begun to manage which are effective for which kids."

### **Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses**

- A female middle school teacher discussed how teaming is used as a form of teacher collaboration in her school, “We have team teaching so one math, one English, one social studies, and one science teacher. They have pretty much the same kids. There are three teams. What we found is that a few years ago, one teacher would see all of these different kids and another teacher would see a different random group of kids. So the teachers really didn’t know much about their students because they saw so many of them and it was widespread.”
- A male high school teacher talked about collaboration in his school, “Teacher collaboration is pretty good amongst departments, that comes from the PLC. Even outside PLC time, teachers are always planning together. They’re trying to get it more geared to larger school collaboration. We do that every quarter; math PLC groups will meet with English PLC groups and share what they are doing to try to see commonalities across the school. That’s worked well, to be honest, math is a little ahead of most subjects being that we already have common assessments, we already have district common assessments, we already have objective cards and all that, so we get more time in our PLC group to focus on strategies, data, where a lot of other subject matter areas are still in the infancy of creating common assessments.”
- A female science teacher discussed how data is used in her school to determine student achievement toward improvement goals, “We are pretty data driven, we’ve made a lot of common formative assessments and we have some new teachers teaching material they haven’t taught before. If you have content like biology, there are so many things you can teach so we’ve made a lot of common formative assessments with five questions. Then, we analyze that data and put it into a spread sheet. We look at some goals we have for the students in terms of skills, we’re really conscious about the 21st Century Skills in the science department and the next generation science standards coming out. We’re all going to do that for the year to make sure everybody is on the same page. That helps the students if they need help, they can go into another teacher, although it might not be their teacher, it should be the same ideas that they are working on and they can get help from anybody. Or, if their schedule changed, it makes it easier on the students.”
- A high school teacher, when asked if the instructional strategies helped students, responded, “I think it would come out on the summative and when they are asking questions about it. If they actually ask you and they make those connections, they understand it a bit more if they are able to ask a question about it. That’s been a conscious thing we’ve worked on this year, we’ve even talked about how we have a big ELL population that is coming in with no science, but they’re responsible for having all of these science skills: reading data, being able to measure, and knowing what units of measurement are. Instead of the content being the main focus with the skills as they fit in, actually graphing, this unit is on graphing and teaches the content to that.”



## Theme 5: Professional Development

### In the category of the Professional Development (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50):

The average response from educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.69 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.49. There was a significant difference between Group 1 and Group 2 educators for this category ( $p < .001$ ).

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, one of the eight items was significant as shown in Table 2.12.

**Table 2.12**

*Significant Differences for the Category of Professional Development*

Item	p-value
49: "Teachers in my school/I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data." (Group 1: 3.87, Group 2: 3.54)	$p < .001$

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Professional Development:

#### Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses

- A rural middle school administrator identified teacher collaboration opportunities, "All of our teachers have common planning time so they have team time every week. They have some kind of agenda given to them by the administration either they're reviewing data, which is every other week, or on the off week, they're doing student centered planning."
- A female reading teacher explained how teachers are encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom as a form of professional development, "They'll watch the teacher teach the whole lesson. Not the coaching where I do it, you do it, I do it, you do it. I usually give them items they're looking for so they know specifically. One of them (model teachers) is our ELL teacher; if they're from her team, they go to watch her teach."
- A rural teacher shared how professional development has changed, "We have come so far in the last four or five years. When we first got this, we had trainers come in. Four years ago the assistant principal and I became trainers, so we can train our own staff. Now, what we taught them we can go into the classroom and follow up on. Not only are we providing professional development here, we're going to another district to train their whole staff in that area. When we do that, we gain things too because we get to work with teachers from other places and see what they're doing with this program. It's beneficial both ways. I feel like we're taking our expertise to help other kids, but we're also learning from their teachers."

### **Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses**

- A rural curriculum coordinator, when asked to clarify how to tell the areas the coaches were working on responded while pointing to a graph, “These are the highest levels of interaction with coaches (same three levels that were highest for implementation). Especially these two- it was nice that it matched up. The ones that didn’t, we know that we need to rework that for next year. Why should cooperative learning just be in math? Teachers take ahold of those learning days; otherwise they wouldn’t have sought out those coaches for the exact same thing.”
- A middle school principal shared how teacher perceptions of instructional coaches in the school have changed, “It is a 180 degree difference. When we first started, I think the directions were to come in and find what was wrong and hammer our teachers. That was the feeling. Now it’s more of a collaboration piece and they do goal setting with them (the teachers). It’s changed because there was a lot of resistance. The job of the administrators was to smooth out the waters. It seemed like we were putting out those fires all the time trying to put the focus on it being a learning opportunity where you can get feedback; think of it as feedback. It was really felt as an evaluation tool even though it had nothing to do with their evaluations. We’ve got that out of the way and we don’t hear that anymore. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. We’re still working in a couple of areas, but I’ll tell you, it is night and day difference even from what it was three or four years ago.”

## **Theme 6: Data/Monitoring**

### **In the Data/Monitoring category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67):**

Educators (Administrators and Teachers) from schools in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) had an average response of 3.95 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.72. Significant differences within the category are displayed in Table 2.13.

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, seven of the thirteen (administrator survey)/seventeen (teacher survey) items resulted in significant differences. Items 64-67 were exclusive to the Teacher survey, reflecting a significant difference between the responses of teachers in Group 1 and teachers in Group 2 for items 64, 65, and 66.

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category Data/Monitoring.

### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses**

- A male principal explained processes in his school which work to build the school’s capacity to improve, “One of the things we do is look at data continually. In our reading program, for instance, the reading teacher will sit down with teachers and then the teachers themselves will sit down together and look at student data to figure out how we can target instruction to help kids get better. We also are continually looking for how to refine our instruction. We had NIFDI come in and help us with our adoption which was wonderful. It gave us this program that we are sure we were

- implementing with fidelity. There were some things we could do better, so we brought in ERI last year to help us further refine and further grow our teachers. I think we have good staff development, good processes in place, look at data in reading. We're going to copy some of those same ways of looking at data with reading into our math program next year also because you really see some growth. People can say, 'Look, here's why, here's where this kid or this group isn't understanding. How do we bring them along and how do we teach that?'"
- A rural principal described the extent to which data is used to determine the achievement of goals, "I think that a number of years ago as we were developing this, looking at NRT's, looking at CRT's, at that time seeing that reading was an area we were struggling in. That we are now improving on and we have a lot of data that shows that."

**Table 2.13**  
*Significant Differences for the Category of Data/Monitoring*

Item	p-value
51: "Data are essential to our school improvement process." (Group 1: 4.43, Group 2: 4.14)	p<.001
52: "Data are used to monitor and focus our school/district's Title I Improvement goals and other successes." (Group 1: 4.18, Group 2: 4.03)	p=.010
54: "Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated standardized test score data." (Group 1: 3.89, Group 2: 3.59)	p<.001
61: "Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations." (Group 1: 3.97, Group 2: 3.68)	p<.001
64: [Teacher Only]: "I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students." (Group 1: 4.26, Group 2: 4.00)	p<.001
65: [Teacher Only]: "I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students' performance based on data." (Group 1: 4.29, Group 2: 4.03)	p<.001
66: [Teacher Only]: "I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students' performance." (Group 1: 3.91, Group 2: 3.53)	p<.001

### **Non-Title Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses**

- A high school math teacher spoke about the extent to which specific classroom student achievement is discussed with teachers, "I can't speak as much for other subjects, in math we talk about it a lot. Part of that is because the whole administration team gets all of that information also. For example, my evaluator would get the information for how my courses did. We also have a reflection form that we fill out about our data. We talk about it a lot, my hunch is in other subjects not so much. I'm not saying they don't talk about student achievement, but not as structured with as much information as we have."
- A rural middle school teacher, when asked about the student achievement data of each classroom responded, "I look at the building data. I do break it down or have it disaggregated in several different ways. As far as one particular teacher how that

class is doing, I don't know that I do. I do if I have to or if something draws attention to it. I have done that, but to say that I do, I don't know that I'd have that kind of time. If the data warrants it or how many kids you're failing and why are they failing. That's my deal. I look at a lot of different stuff and it just depends on the situation how deep I dig."

- A female teacher shared the extent to which teachers are monitored to see that specific instructional strategies are being implemented on a daily basis, "I think the biggest process is observation. We do goals at the beginning of the year and we also sit down and review the goals at the end of the year. We do a self-evaluation and a summary to keep track of where we're at and if we're in line with the thinking and thought processes. Having that trust and accountability with your staff and keeping the conversations alive between staff members so it doesn't get put on the back burner."
- A high school science teacher discussed the level of awareness of student achievement data within the science department, "I guess what I hear in our department, when we get together as a department, we really have this focus between keeping the rigor up and getting the students to pass. Some of the teachers are under pressure because they're failure rates are too high. So, a constant conversation in our PLC's, in our science department is, we're trying to keep the class rigorous, we're trying to hold all students to a high expectation, and if we're doing that, some of them, if they don't come in for that help are not going to pass. We have some students who are failing but they're not doing anything, they're not showing up for help with the teacher, they're not taking notes, and they're not doing the reading outside of class. I think that has been a struggle for some of our teachers."

## **Theme 7: Parent Involvement**

**In the Parent Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-75, Teacher Survey Questions 68-79),**

The average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.38 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.18.

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, five of the twelve items were significantly different as displayed in Table 2.14.

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Parent Involvement:

### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses**

- An elementary principal indicated the extent parents in the school expect their children to attend college, "I would say we're on the lower side of that. A lot of our parents probably didn't make it past elementary school. It's low."
- A rural administrator, when asked to what extent parents and community members are engaged in using data to make decisions about student performance responded, "They're not."

- An elementary principal discussed outside influences which may impact parent involvement, “I know that a lot of people say that it’s interesting to see parents come here for conferences and other things. There’s nowhere in the community for them to just go to hang out, so to speak. It’s like when they come here, it’s a very social event. One thing brought up at our SIP meeting, is to do a carnival because the parents could then get together. So, I think we could provide more influence. There is a parent who is trying to teach some English classes. They bring their kids and there are some toys for them. I think there are little attempts.”

**Table 2.14**  
*Significant Differences for the Category of Parent Involvement*

Item	p-value
70: “Parents want their children to attend college and share this with their children.” (Group 1: 3.24, Group 2: 3.41)	p=.010
74: “There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.” (Group 1: 3.29, Group 2: 3.06)	p<.001
75: “Parents provide input for the development of the school improvement plan.” (Group 1: 3.19, Group 2: 2.90)	p<.001
76: “Parents are involved in the decision making process for our school/district such as: providing input for the development of a school safety plan, creating a behavior expectation plan.” (Group 1: 3.12, Group 2: 2.91)	p<.001
78: “Information gathered from the parent survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.” (Group 1: 3.55, Group 2: 3.03)	p<.001

### **Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses**

- A high school math teacher indicated a good amount of parents in the school expect their children to attend college, “Probably 2/3 expect their kids to go to college; anywhere from (a local community college) to a four year (school).”
- A high school science teacher shared a similar sense of parent expectation for college attendance in the school, “Based on the parents I’ve met last year and this year, for the most part they all want their kids to go on to college. I have one student who I just met with his mom in an IEP meeting and she was talking to him, ‘You are going to go to college.’ I don’t know how his grades are but he’s in applied classes, right now I don’t think she’s talking to him about going to a university, but she expects he’s going to go on to school. I think most parents plan on their kids going on in their education, not just stopping here.”
- A middle school teacher discussed the extent parents expect their students to attend college, “I think more of our parents do. I don’t know if college, per se, but an education path beyond high school. I think a lot of our parents realize that flipping burgers is all you’re going to get and a lot of parents realize that. In parent teacher conferences you can hear, ‘You’ve got to be able to do this to succeed in life and go on.’”
- A female middle school teacher depicted the breadth in parental expectation to go to college in her school, “Our demographic is very split. We have a high end and a low

end; we don't have a lot of middle. The students in the high end, yes, their parents are very supportive, they're very involved. They really expect their kids to do well and keep up that communication. Our students that are low socioeconomic (status) or in poverty, lots of single mothers, homes with multiple kids, they struggle; they can't keep a job whether because they don't have transportation to get to and from, can't afford day care, things like that. There's a big gap. Those parents are involved with what they can be. We've had to have our counselor go and get a parent just so they could come up to the school."

- A high school principal voiced his perspective on how engaged parents and community members are in the Title I process, "Not as much as they could or should be. As we speak, there's an AdvancED survey that was sent out via email and we gathered a bunch of people. We had parent teacher conferences a week ago tonight and went around handing out forms to them stating they could go into the lab and do it or take it at home. Hopefully that personal connection will help. We'll send a follow up email and school messenger out. I think we were hoping for 300 and we've barely broken 100. We get a lot of feedback when we do have parent teacher conferences. We have a parent advisory committee that meets four times a year. It probably isn't the best cross section of our students."
- A math teacher shared ways the school tries to engage parents, "We try to encourage kids, in math, to communicate with having a parent signature on a study guide, show us that you talked to them. Like I said, we try to really explain what NeSA is, what the range of scores were, and what SRI means, is relative to grade level through conferences. I would say parents are very encouraged to contact us, but ideally it would be us initiating that communication with them."

## **Theme 8: Community Involvement**

### **In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 76-81, Teacher Survey Questions 80-85):**

The average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.40 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.19.

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, three out of the six items (50%) resulted in significant differences as displayed in Table 2.15. Additionally, the category of Community Involvement proved significant ( $p < .001$ ) when examining the mean scores of Group 1 with the mean scores of Group 2.

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Community Involvement:

### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses**

- A female teacher explained parent and community perceptions of her school, "I think, we have a reputation for being a rough school, that's what most community members feel about our school. The thing that's frustrating is yes, we have students that have behavior problems and we have our fair share of issues. At the same time, it's like

that's all they see. I think the school has a negative feeling from the community but we're working hard at trying to change that to make sure these kids are seen not as just a mass of naughty kids, but as individuals. There are some students here that really care and really try; we're more than just that."

- A male administrator shared, "This is an area that is being improved as the district works to develop an updated strategic plan. Community involvement occurs at some levels but not at a level as comprehensive as the survey questions would indicate."

**Table 2.15**

*Significant Differences for the Category of Community Involvement*

Item	p-value
81: "An annual survey is sent to community members to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs." (Group 1: 3.55, Group 2: 3.11)	p<.001
82: "Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel." (Group 1: 3.38, Group 2: 3.01)	p<.001
85: "Local businesses or service organizations are provided information from school administrators regarding the importance of parents attending school functions or being involved in their child's education." (Group 1: 3.27, Group 2: 3.12)	p=.030

### **Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses:**

- A high school administrator explained the community expectations and attitude toward the students and school, "There's a pride or passion for the community that is pretty deep for some people. We've had a Saturday morning when we invited sixth, seventh, and eighth grade kids that are gifted from all over the city. We've had 200 or 250 people come to those. I've had more and more people say, 'My neighbor is a sixth grader who's really bright, he's going to (the school).' So, it's kind of starting to catch on. If you want the best academic preparation in the city, that's where you go. It's pretty cool."
- A female middle school teacher described the partnerships currently in place in the school, "I know we have some partnerships with businesses; our SPED kiddos who need a lot of help, and they do things within the community. We let the businesses know they are coming to shop in their store that day. I think there are a lot of things that go on that I probably don't know about because I'm not involved with the (high ability learners) program, and I think they do some things with that."
- A seventh grade teacher indicated relationships are in place to help community leaders to support Title I Improvement goals and/or the school, "As far as our school, in particular, I don't know that we have a lot of connection to businesses; I know as a district we do. The goal is that by the time they are freshmen and go to high school, they'll have a really good idea of what avenue they'll want to pursue. In high school, we have a whole program for welding, drafting, and things like that. It starts in the middle school but takes place in the high school. There are different career clusters and each grade and each subject area is assigned to a specific cluster."
- A rural middle school teacher illustrated how the values shared by the school impact the surrounding community, "I think unfortunately our community doesn't know a lot of what happens in our school. I don't know how, other than when we have direct

teacher to parent contact, I don't think our community is aware of a lot of things that happen. They'll complain about things even though they don't know. I know they sent out a survey questionnaire and they had no response. Then, there was an event and only five parents came. I don't know what we need to do to make them feel involved. I guess if they don't feel a part, they aren't going to take part."

## Theme 9: Overall Improvement

### In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 82-88, Teacher Survey Questions 86-92):

The average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.73 while the average response from all educators in Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.57.

When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 2 in this category, one item of the seven in the category revealed a significant difference as displayed in Table 2.16.

**Table 2.16**  
*Significant Differences for the Category Overall Improvement*

Item	p-value
92: "Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement." (Group 1: 4.28, Group 2: 4.03)	p<.001

Interview responses from administrators and teachers helped to clarify the items which yielded significant differences in the category of Overall Improvement:

#### Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses

- A middle school principal described the effect the school culture has had on school achievement, "I think it helps a great deal. I look at our eighth grade state writing test, it went very well. Our teacher in eighth grade, like many others, taught with intensity, taught with tenacity, and taught with an attitude of, 'You're going to pass this test.' Well, we did pretty well on the state writing test. Which was (the score) over the state average- we're very proud of that. But, I think the teachers working with that intensity rubs off on the students. The students see teachers working very hard and say, 'This must be really important because this teacher is trying to get this through to me.' Then, the students themselves start to work harder."

#### Non-Title I Needs Improvement (Group 2) Responses

- A middle school math teacher illustrated how the overall school improvement process has changed teachers' perspectives; "Overall, I think it has because it makes teachers more intentional about what they're doing. It makes us more aware. We know that our administration is serious about us wanting to improve and it helps us to get all on the same page."



- A female middle school teacher talked about the impact on student achievement as a result of the school improvement process, “It’s been a positive thing and I think the kids have improved. The teachers, when they know what those goals are, they make a very good effort to make sure that is being worked on. I don’t know how much each teacher does, but I think it has been a good thing.”
- A non-rural principal discussed the impact seen in student achievement as a result of changes resulting from school improvement, “I think the focus on collaboration is huge. I think that has had a big impact on student achievement. I’m trying to separate district from our specific school. After teachers get their failure rate data at the end of the semester then they meet with their administrator to go over that and reflect, I think some of those reflection questions are even connected to SIP. Failure rate, of course is related to graduation rate. There are even questions that ask about what interventions have taken place, that’s related to the achievement gap in making sure that all students have had opportunities like that.”

## Discussion and Conclusions

**Study 2** was conducted to examine administrator and teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of their School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools compared with **Non-Title I Needs Improvement** Schools.

When examining the mean survey rating for each group, there was a significant difference between them sum survey score of Group 1 and Group 2. Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement) participants had a survey mean rating of 290.78 while Group 2 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement) participants had a mean survey rating of 278.23 ( $p < .001$ ). This significant difference indicates educator perceptions in Title I Needs Improvement schools (Group 1) were more positive about the implementation of their Title I/School Improvement plan than educator perceptions in Non-Title I Needs Improvement schools (Group 2).

The category of School Improvement Plan showed the most difference for any of the nine categories with four of the seven items revealing a significant difference between the two groups. These items focused on the planning process, and communicating the Title I/School Improvement Plan. Furthermore, this was the only category where Group 2 participants overall rating was higher than that of Group 1. Mean scores were used to determine similarities and differences for each survey category.

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## Study 3: Examining Educator Perceptions of the Title I Improvement Plans in Title I Needs Improvement Schools and Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools



*“I really, for the first time, believe that these teachers believe that all students can learn. I don’t hear so many excuses, I think there’s still some frustrations with parenting; feeling like the parents aren’t doing their part at times, but I think that’s a behavioral piece. They would really like to have more support from parents in terms of behavior. I think you have to believe that or you get up every day thinking your job is a futile attempt at nothing. These young people that are going into teaching, staying in teaching, and pouring their hearts into it, I think it’s that need to believe!” (A Title I Non-Needs Improvement Principal, 2013)*

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### INTRODUCTION

A third study was conducted to examine the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement Schools** compared with **Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools** in Nebraska. Nationwide, all Title I schools receive additional Title I funding along with some flexibility to determine how they will use these funds in order to support change in ways individual schools determine are most important and increase student performance. “Title I Schoolwide programs have an enormous amount of latitude to organize their operations and allocate the various funding sources available to them to help meet the challenge of academic achievement for all children” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013, para. 2). “Funds can be used to improve curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, increase staff and program improvement” (Malburg, 2012, p. 1).

Title I Schools are required to develop a Title I School Improvement Plan. These Plans are used interchangeably with School Improvement Plans in Nebraska. Title I schools are “required to formulate school improvement or development plans that focus on student learning outcomes” (Hallinger & Heck, 2011, p. 21) to help achieve results!

Categories explored in this study included those in which schools have flexibility to use their funding based on the needs of their school. The survey categories investigated were: Title

I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. These survey categories are aligned to the elements described by Malburg (2012), “curriculum, instructional activities, counseling, parental involvement, and increase staff and program improvement” (p. 1).

### **Purpose of Study**

**The purpose of Study 3** was to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions about the implementation of their Title I School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** Schools compared to **Title I Non-Needs Improvement** Schools.

Quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data were collected in the winter and spring of 2013.

### **Research Design**

This mixed-methods research study focused upon the implementation of Title I School Improvement Plans. Administrators and teachers across the state were surveyed using an online instrument regarding their perceptions about the Title I School Improvement Plan and process. Follow up interviews were conducted with a sample of participants from both groups during the spring and summer of 2013.

### **Survey Participants**

#### ***Group 1***

Twelve schools in Title I Needs Improvement status from 10 districts participated in the study as Group 1. From these participating schools, 235 teachers and 23 administrators took part in the survey. Nine (75%) of the schools were rural while three (25%) were non-rural. Survey participants who responded to the survey represented nine elementary schools and three middle/secondary schools.

Three (25%) Group 1 schools had an English Language Learner (ELL) student population of seven percent (7%) or less while nine (75%) of the schools had an ELL student population higher than seven percent (7%). The Nebraska state ELL average is 6.47% (NDE, 2012).

Nine schools had a fifty-five percent (55%) or higher Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate, two schools had a FRL rate between 40% and 55%, and one school had a FRL of 39% or lower. The Nebraska state average for FRL is 43.79% (NDE, 2012).

#### ***Group 3***

Fifty-three schools in Title I Non-Needs Improvement status from 37 districts participated in the study as Group 3. Table 3.2 illustrates the demographics of participants from schools in Group 3. From these participating schools, 648 teachers and 90 administrators took part in the survey. Forty-seven (90%) of the schools were rural while 6 (10%) were non-rural. Survey participants who responded to the survey represented 45 elementary schools and 8 middle/secondary schools.

Forty-two (79%) Group 3 schools had an English Language Learner (ELL) student population of 7% or less while 11 (21%) reported an ELL student population higher than 7%. The average ELL student population rate is 6.47 % (NDE, 2012) for the State of Nebraska.

Nine (21%) schools from Group 3 had a FRL rate of 39% or lower, 15 schools (33%) had a FRL rate between 40% and 55%, and 29 schools (46%) had a 55% or higher Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate. The Nebraska state average for FRL is 43.79% (NDE, 2012).

Table 3.1 depicts the demographic data for educators in both Group 1 and Group 3.

**Table 3.1**  
*Group 1 and Group 3 Participant Demographic Data*

		<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
<b>Role</b>	<b>Administrator</b>	23	90
	<b>Teacher</b>	235	648
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	27	118
	<b>Female</b>	231	620
<b>Locale</b>	<b>Rural</b>	198	667
	<b>Non-Rural</b>	60	71
<b>ELL</b>	<b>Low</b>	100	582
	<b>High</b>	158	156
<b>FRL</b>	<b>Low</b>	12	158
	<b>Average</b>	25	243
	<b>High</b>	221	337
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>Low</b>	28	402
	<b>High</b>	230	336
<b>Level</b>	<b>Elementary</b>	210	614
	<b>Mid/Secondary</b>	48	124

In comparing these numbers, it is important to take into account the fact that rural districts are likely to employ a smaller number of teachers and administrators.

Administrators from both groups responded to an 89-item survey (Appendix C), while teachers from both groups responded to a 93-item survey (Appendix C). Both surveys explored 9 themes: Title I/School Improvement Plans, Clear Focus, Culture, Instructional Strategies, Professional Development, Data/Monitoring, Parent Involvement, Community Involvement, and Overall Improvement. Participants responded using a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 5 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*). Analysis of variance was used to compare mean scores of the survey data. The reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for this instrument was .975 for all participants in Group 1 and .975 for all participants in Group 3.

### ***Interview Participants***

Open-ended interviews were conducted with administrators and teachers to enhance the data gathered from the survey. From Group 1, 4 schools in 3 districts participated in interviews as well as 6 schools in 5 districts from Group 3 (see Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2**  
*Distribution of Interview Schools and Districts by Group*

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
Schools	4	6
Districts	3	5

Eleven interviews were conducted from Group 1 schools (Title I Needs Improvement) and 22 were from Group 3 schools (Title I Non-Needs Improvement); up to 4 interviews were conducted in each school. Table 3.3 illustrates the administrator and teacher distribution of interviews per Group.

**Table 3.3**  
*Distribution of Administrator and Teacher Interviews by Group*

	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
Administrator	5	7
Teacher	6	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>

Detailed perceptions were collected using an interview protocol (Appendix D) that gathered qualitative data. These schools were selected based on Title I Needs Improvement status, geographic area, Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) rate, and ethnicity.

The interview protocol (Appendix D) asked for participants' demographic information and posed nine questions regarding their perceptions of their school's Title I or School Improvement Plan and were structured around the same nine themes used to structure the survey. Probes were identified for use with each question. Interviewers were provided a Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Manual and received training prior to conducting interviews.

### **Findings**

**Study 3** was conducted to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of their Title I and School Improvement plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** schools compared with **Title I Non-Needs Improvement** schools. Sum scores for all survey items of educator responses in Groups 1 and 3 were analyzed.

When examining the mean survey rating for each group, a statically significant difference was evident between the groups. Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement) schools had a survey mean rating of 290.78 while Group 3 (Non-Title I Needs Improvement) schools had a mean survey rating of 294.97. There was no significant difference observed between these two groups.

The distribution of participants from each group within the three levels of Free and Reduced Lunch rate was very different (see Table 3.4). Within Group 1 survey participants, 12

participants (4%) out of 258 were from schools with a 39% or lower FRL, 25 participants (10%) were from schools with an FRL rate of 40%-55%, and 221 participants (86%) of Group 1 participants were from schools with a 55% or higher FRL rate.

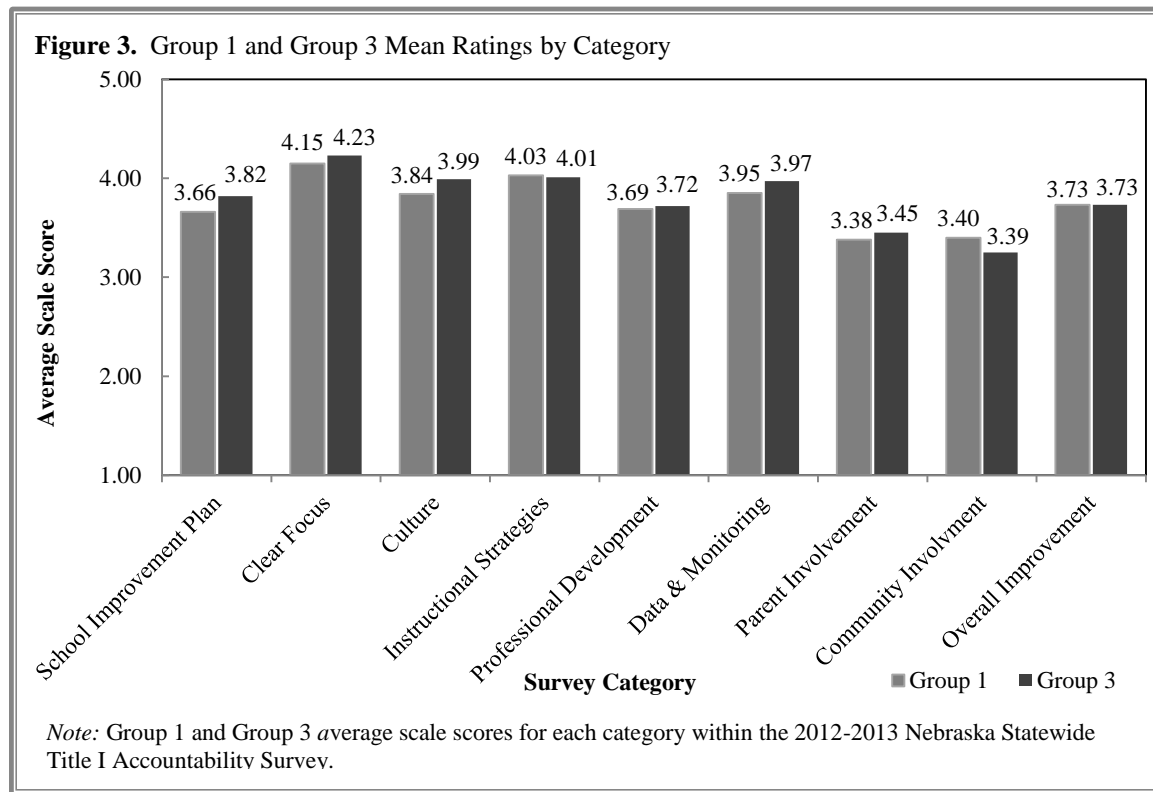
**Table 3.4**

*Group 1 and Group 3 Distribution of Participants by FRL Rate*

	Group 1			Group 3		
	Schools	Participants	Participant Percentage	Schools	Participants	Participant Percentage
Low 39% and less	1	12	4%	9	158	21%
Average 40-55%	2	25	10%	15	243	33%
High 55% and up	9	221	86%	29	337	46%

In comparison, educators in Group 3 were more evenly distributed in the three FRL classifications. Within Group 3 survey participants, 158 participants (21%) out of 738 were from schools with a 39% or lower FRL, 243 participants (33%) were from schools with an FRL rate of 40%-55%, and 337 participants (46%) were from schools with a 55% or higher FRL rate.

Figure 3 displays the mean ratings for educators in Group 1 and Group 3 for the nine survey categories.



Mean scores were used to determine similarities and differences for each survey category. In both Group 1 and Group 3, the highest rated item for each group was the same survey item in eight of the nine categories. In the category of Parent Involvement, the survey item, “An annual survey is sent to parents/ guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs” was rated the highest by educators in Group 1 at 3.89. In comparison, educators in Group 3 rated the item, “Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren)” the highest in the category at 3.96.

In Table 3.5, the highest mean ratings for each category are noted for Groups 1 and 3.

**Table 3.5**  
*Group 1 and Group 3 Highest Mean Ratings by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 3: Title I Non-Needs Improvement
<b>Title I School Improvement Plan</b>	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.27)	“The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.” (4.39)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	“Teachers/ I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” (4.55)	“Teachers/ I engage students in order to improve academic performance.” (4.53)
<b>Culture</b>	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.76)	“I am passionate about student learning.” (4.74)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	“I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.27)	“I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.” (4.24)
<b>Professional Development</b>	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (3.94)	“Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.” (4.09)
<b>Data/ Monitoring</b>	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.43)	“Data are essential to our school improvement process.” (4.41)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	“An annual survey is sent to parents/ guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs.” (3.89)	“Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren).” (3.96)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (3.91)	“The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.” (4.07)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	“Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.28)	“Teachers/I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (4.19)

For Groups 1 and 3, the lowest rated item for each group was the same in seven of the nine categories. In the category Title I School Improvement Plan, the item, “I was involved in the identification of the Title I/School Improvement Goals” was rated lowest by Group 1 (3.21) while item, “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I/School Improvement Goals” was rated lowest by Group 3 educators (3.37).

In the category of Culture, the item, “The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving” was rated the lowest by Group 1 at 3.54 and Group 3 at 3.77. Group 1 also gave the same lowest rating (3.54) to the item, “The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty.” In the category of Professional Development, Group 1 educators rated the item, “I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom” the lowest at 3.22 while Group 3 educators gave their lowest rating (3.23)



to the item, “Teachers in my school/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.”

Finally, educators in Group 1 (2.95) and Group 3 (3.17) rated the item, “Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals” the lowest. In addition, Group 3 educators gave the same lowest rating (3.17) to the item, “There is a designated person in our school/ district that serves as a liaison/ advocate for parents.”

Table 3.6 depicts the lowest rated items for Group 1 and Group 3 by category.

**Table 3.6**  
*Group 1 and Group 3 Lowest Mean Ratings by Survey Category*

	Group 1: Title I Needs Improvement	Group 3: Title I Non-Needs Improvement
<b>Title I School Improvement Plan</b>	“I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.” (3.21)	“Teachers were/I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Goals.” (3.37)
<b>Clear Focus</b>	“The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” (3.92)	“The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.” (4.02)
<b>Culture</b>	“The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” (3.54) “The culture of our school is based on respect, trust, and shared power among faculty.” (3.54)	“The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” (3.77)
<b>Instructional Strategies</b>	“Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” (3.67)	“Teachers in my school/I use peer coaching and peer review to improve their performance.” (3.56)
<b>Professional Development</b>	“I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.” (3.22)	“Teachers in my school/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.” (3.23)
<b>Data/Monitoring</b>	“Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.17)	“Teachers in my school/I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.” (3.14)
<b>Parent Involvement</b>	“Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” (2.95)	“Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.” (3.17) “There is a designated person in our school/ district that serves as a liaison/ advocate for parents.” (3.17)
<b>Community Involvement</b>	“Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships.” (3.14)	“Strategies have been shared with teachers in my school/me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/ community partnerships.” (3.07)
<b>Overall Improvement</b>	“Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Plan.” (3.24)	“Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I plan.” (3.24)

T-Tests were used to determine the mean value of survey items with significant differences using an alpha level of .05 for Groups 1 and 3. These significant differences are discussed within each survey category.

## Theme 1: Title I School Improvement Plan

### In the category of the Title I School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 1-7):

The average response of educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.66 while the average response from educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.82. These category means resulted in a significant difference ( $p=.008$ ).

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Title I School Improvement Plan was .901 for all Group 1 participants and .878 for all Group 3 participants. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, differences in three of the seven items were significant as shown in Table 3.7.

**Table 3.7**

*Significant Differences for the Category of Title I School Improvement Plan*

Item	p-value
4: I have consistently/Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I Goals to teachers in my school. (Group 1: 3.56; Group 3: 3.80)	$p=.002$
5: Teachers in my school/ I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals. (Group 1: 3.57, Group 3: 3.76)	$p=.012$
6: Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified. (Group 1: 3.73, Group 3: 3.87)	$p=.044$

### Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:

- A rural teacher identified how progress of Title I Goals has been communicated in varied ways, "Every week we get together with the reading teachers, so I have three different groups I meet with. I'm the reading coach then I have three other coaches that are the next level. I meet with each of those and we talk about our goals. When we have our staff meetings, we're able to look at our data and show the rest of the staff. Especially when you're talking about reading, science, math, and social studies, teachers need to be included on that. I also make sure I send out to those teachers the reading levels of the kids; I make sure they have access to that."
- A rural middle school administrator shared ways that they communicated with the community while questioning its value, "With my parent groups, I would say we'll put articles on our website again. This is an area that I think we can improve in, I won't deny that. We have a lot of means of communication, I'm not sure how effective they all are, and I'm not sure how to measure that. We do open houses and discuss at our fall open house, which is very well attended. I take the time to meet with the parent groups that come. We do a special one just for fifth graders as they transition in, they have their own special time and their parents have a special time with just fifth grade parents. There are a lot of nervous parents when their kids come to middle school, so we decided it was a good thing so they have their own small group and they have the building to themselves for an hour and a half or so. We

communicate and talk about some of the things we do at those meetings, how important it is for the students to work, and to be here and engaged when they are here, that school is a big deal. We take it very seriously. That's an opportunity I use there for sure."

- An administrator shared how the Title I Plan is shared with parents although they do not do as good of a job sharing the plan with their teachers, "I think we do a better job with parents than we do with teachers especially when it comes to Title I. We meet with our parent advisory groups and share what we've been doing, what the plan is for the following year, and we talk about the compact at least once a year; we have it on the agenda. I don't feel like we've done a great job with that, as far as our teachers go. I think if you went to a teacher and said, 'Tell me about your Title I plan,' they wouldn't necessarily know what we were talking about. If I said, 'Tell me about your school improvement plan,' they could tell you. It's all completely based off of the school improvement plan."
- A female teacher shared that they are currently targeting reading but they will soon implement a new math curriculum so the goals will target reading and math, "This year we have changed our data meetings, they're focused on reading but with our new math curriculum coming, they're also going to focus on math during those team meetings. I know at staff meetings our principal has presented data overall for students, their grade level and also where we need to be. There is built in intervention time next year so students can work on either reading or math."
- A teacher from a non-rural elementary school identified how their teachers work together on the Title I Plan, "The Title I plan has a lot of different pieces to it as you well know. There are a lot of people on our school improvement team and we look at it as a positive because there are people that can address different areas, not just academic but parent involvement and others."
- A rural elementary school teacher discussed accountability of teachers in progress toward Title I goals, "We do various things to hold teachers accountable; we have bulletin boards they're responsible for posting things on. In terms of making sure that we meet our goals and are doing professional development, we have a checklist to go through to make sure we're hitting each of the components that we need to."
- A male administrator from a non-rural elementary school reported that data teams are the means by which they address progress toward Title I goals, "Our goals are to increase academic achievement across all areas; our strategy for that is to do that through our data teams."

### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses:**

- A female rural elementary teacher discussed her role in the school improvement team and monitoring of goals, "Schoolwide we have regular meetings every month where we discuss these individual students and what we need to keep doing. The high school teachers I know work together on those monthly meetings and the elementary work together. Administrators are involved in both and fluctuate back and forth. We work toward the goals we have for the students and try to brainstorm, come up with the things we can work towards to help with improvement in our school goals."
- Another female elementary teacher identified her role on improvement, "It has changed dramatically in the last two or three years. We have moved more toward a data driven plan and program. Right now we hold our monthly reading data meetings

after our initial meeting in the fall when we have our current reading DIBELS scores. What I usually do with that information is compile it and share it with our reading coach who is here once a month. At the data meetings, the reading coach and I run each student who is on our progress monitor list. Right now, about 33% of our population is being progress monitored in the area of reading. I'm guessing about 15% of our population are receiving Title I services and I'm thinking about the same percent of our population K-12 are receiving special education services. As far as the data that we receive from the reading, we are charting it weekly through progress monitoring. The classroom teachers are involved in that. I progress monitor the students that I see in Title I and any students that are in resource, ELL, or special education are progress monitored by that specialist. Anyone on staff who has any contact with elementary students who are being progress monitored is very aware of the process."

- An elementary teacher discussed the extent to which data is used to determine achievement of Title I goals, "At the time that we wrote our plan, we moved from a Targeted Assisted program to a Schoolwide Program. That particular year, they offered a small window of opportunity for schools that were at the 40% poverty level for free and reduced lunch to go through a very quick qualification process to move from Targeted Assisted to Schoolwide. We fit that window because at that time, this is what is amazing; at that time about 35% of our students were in Title I. Our numbers were so large that we were not meeting their needs. By the time we had our external visit last spring that number was down to 22% of our students being in Title I. Now we're down to about 15%. But, we adopted a new core reading program in that time, we implemented the data meetings, we implemented the 90 minute reading block, and our collaboration takes place more than just at monthly reading data meetings. There is no opportunity to forget what you're supposed to be doing in the classroom for interventions or Title I or resource or ELL. We all work together to make it happen."
- A female rural elementary teacher discussed her role in school improvement and the monitoring of goals, "My role, as a classroom teacher, is just monitoring my own class. I am also a reading coach so I work with the data of all the reading kids in this building and some kids who are in Reading Mastery at the junior high. That is a driving force in constantly monitoring and adjusting reading programming, groupings, and interventions. I served on an external team several years ago, which I think was very beneficial. I think if every teacher had that opportunity to serve on the School Improvement Team; it makes it so much more meaningful. It's not just about the day of review, it's an ongoing process."
- A rural high school teacher reported how data teams are utilized to monitor progress, "Primarily the data teams are looking at data to see where students are performing and what students need to help them. It seems as though I've been involved in this for a while but our data that we are getting from testing is becoming so much more refined."
- A rural elementary administrator identified a multitude of changes which have occurred and how they have affected the Title I plan, "I would say my involvement with it has been first very involved with the writing of the plan and then each year making note of the changes and revisions as they occur. Some new legislation comes down the pipe, Response to Intervention, those types of things so we make sure that

the plan itself has the updated components that it needs. We've changed reading series, for example, since we started; we've changed math series. When we have those changes, the core program changes, your intervention changes, so keeping it updated and also monitoring the success of the plan and benchmarking to see how it's working and what's needed."

## **Theme 2: Clear Focus**

### **In the category of the Title I School Improvement Plan (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 8-17):**

The average response of educators in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 4.15 while the average response from all educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was slightly higher at 4.23.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Clear Focus was .895 for participants in Group 1 and .908 for participants in Group 3. When analyzing the mean responses for Groups 1 and 3 in the Clear Focus category, there were NO significance differences. The following quotes from educators in Group 1 and Group 3 illustrate the perceptions gathered regarding a Clear Focus.

#### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:**

- A female elementary teacher explained some instructional strategies outside of the district curriculum, "We had journal topics, so they wrote different things for the days that they were gone. For math, they had a dice game where they could play and use multiplication facts and they got their own little dice. Reading was poetry; it was like a poetry café where they read poems over and over again to build their fluency. It worked really well. Local community businesses donated food snacks. They received a writing utensil too to tie in with that. It was cool."
- A female elementary teacher discussed how the Title I plan is focused on identified areas of need, "The Title I plan is all of that but in addition we have the other pieces; the after school program that ties into that, we have the parent involvement with our Family Literacy, and different family nights where we really try to get parents involved. We have a great system in place, a team, so it's not all of these separate entities working together. We really try to mesh so that we're always looking at the Title I plan; we're always looking at school improvement. That way, we know that work is being done by all of us."

#### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses:**

- A female high school teacher described how teachers are going above and beyond to ensure that students get the extra support they need, "I think our staff supports it (the improvement plan). They all have an interest in the kids and most are already giving extra time and effort. We have extended learning time every day from 3:30 to 3:50, if you have a student that needs extra help, that's the time they come to you. That's not part of our contract day, we're contracted to be here at that time, but we're giving our time to those kids. We have a very dedicated staff, they're willing to give time, donate time, work hard, and they're willing to help each other. I think that's a really

good thing. I think if you don't have all of the teachers or at least a strong majority of the teachers that are willing to be a part of the team, then you can't accomplish the things we've been able to accomplish here."

### Theme 3: Culture

#### In the Culture category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 18-31):

The average response of educators in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.84 and the average response from all educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.99.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Culture was .941 for Group 1 participants and .944 for Group 3 participants. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, seven of the eleven items produced significant differences as shown in Table 3.8.

**Table 3.8**  
*Significant Differences for the Category of Culture*

Item	p-value
20: "Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together." (Group 1: 3.61, Group 3: 3.78)	p=.011
21: "Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning." (Group 1: 3.81, Group 3: 3.93)	p=.043
24: "The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas." (Group 1: 3.75, Group 3: 3.92)	p=.016
27: "The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity." (Group 1: 3.79, Group 3: 3.98)	p=.003
28: "The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration." (Group 1: 3.64, Group 3: 3.88)	p=.001
29: "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving." (Group 1: 3.54, Group 3: 3.77)	p=.001
30: "The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts." (Group 1: 3.74, Group 3: 3.95)	p=.001

#### Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:

- A rural elementary school administrator reported how the culture of the school has an effect on teacher instruction, "I think, again, it has a huge impact. I think the culture in our building is such that everybody has to do their part. If one isn't doing their part, we've got a gap all of a sudden. You can't have a clear continuum if you've got a gap; everybody has to pull their weight."
- A female teacher from a non-rural elementary school identified the efforts in her school to engage parents and community members in a positive manner, "I know that

through the (parent) committee, they work with the parents, the parent leadership team, the principal, and a couple of teachers to share with them what we're doing at the school level and work as a community to problem solve. I think we work really hard when we communicate with parents to convey that academic optimism, that optimism with their child. We're always thinking about how we can have positive interactions with parents that we may need to have negative interactions with. Making the parents feel like this is something we're going to help with whether it's academically the child is struggling in an area or behaviorally the child is struggling in an area. One thing we'll say to parents is that we're here to help, you don't have to punish your child at home, we're here to help and bridge that."

- An elementary ELL teacher discussed how the schools values and beliefs are impacting the community beyond the physical school building, "I see parents coming in to talk to teachers more. I see when we go to parent teacher conferences, the parents want to know what they can do to help, and that's common. We have also opened up the school, through Family Literacy, so parents can come in and learn English alongside their child. That has given greater knowledge of what happens in our school to the parents; especially to parents who are not from the United States. They don't have the same experience with school. As an ELL teacher, I sometimes have to explain to parents that there's a difference between their experience of school and what we have here."
- A teacher from a rural middle school shared how the staff has worked hard to overcome challenge and collaborate for the benefit of the students, "I think we have the best staff. I think the reason we have the best staff is that we know we have challenges but we don't make excuses. We look at our challenges and we all try to set a goal. As a staff, we set our goals and work toward them together. There's unity in our staff. Little things too, it's not just our teachers. Even our janitor and our Para's, our janitor meets our kids in the morning. He chose to be on duty and meet the kids once a week, he used to ask a trivia question and they couldn't come in the building until they answered. The kids all know him and if they make a mess in the cafeteria we'll say, 'You just made (the janitor's) job hard.' You can see in their face that they don't want to make his job harder. We have that atmosphere here, all the way to the janitor and Para's."
- A rural elementary school administrator, when asked to describe their school culture responded, "I think our culture is very positive, it is success oriented. Again, I don't think it's about hitting targets all of the time, but it's about seeing growth toward the target; seeing improvement toward the target. Our culture is about not letting anybody fall through the cracks, not giving up on any child. Our culture is about being able to think outside the box."
- A female reading teacher discussed how her school's culture of respect affects students, "I think because they feel safe and they do respect each other, they have the ability to be here to learn. If they're worried about those things: not being accepted, being treated poorly, or bullied, then we can't go on to the next step of educating them. We have to get that step first and I think we do a really good job of that."
- A male middle school principal shared how teachers collaborate in his building and the challenges in ensuring time is allotted for them to meet, "We had team time, but with the new schedule and the number of students, we're going to lose our team time. I do want to make sure that we are able to have collaboration from teachers. I was

able to make sure that we kept a common plan time, so teachers will be able to meet together on a grade level basis.”

### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses**

- A female elementary principal shared her efforts at ensuring every student feels they are an important piece of the school culture, “I hope the kids feel safe and cared for, it’s a little bit smaller environment, and so we try to create a family. I think we’ve done an OK job with that, I know it’s not perfect. We have two busses and they come from all over. Most of our students are bussed, very few people deliver them. I stand outside every morning and greet them. I call it my meet and greet time in the morning, then at the end of the day we all go outside and walk them across to a vehicle because of the driveway. We really try to create a warm, caring environment.”
- A principal from a rural school added the effect that school culture has had in the classroom, “You want your staff to buy into your culture and be a part of it. I believe that everyone is here, to their own degree, and they create their own cultures in their own classroom.”
- Another rural elementary principal reflected on the impact of teacher expectations on the achievement of students, “I would say that our culture impacts student achievement because of our expectations. We’re not going to change the school because it is what it is. Our expectation is that when kids leave here, they go on to college. That’s the expectation, even if it’s a two year college and if they’re going to come home and farm, those farming people still want their kids going to the two year or four year program to get their degree then come back and run the farm. That’s the expectation.
- A female elementary administrator shared how their values are promoted in their culture, “I would say that we promote equity; fair is not the same, fair is getting what you need. We are policy driven however we all realize that giving the same kid everything whether it’s a discipline, a writing plan, or instructional strategy.”
- An administrator from a rural school indicated the primary focus of every decision that is made in the school, “I think, once again, the culture is one that we care and we’re going to find ways to help you out. Every time we make a decision on an initiative, the number one question it has to answer is this right here, ‘Is it the best thing to do to help students?’ If that answer is yes, it becomes very easy to sell it to the school board, parents, students, or staff. I just have to say, ‘Here’s what we’re doing, we have the opportunity to help our students learn.’ If it passes that test, then it has a chance of becoming important, so just that we’re trying to work to improve student learning and give them a chance.”
- A rural elementary teacher described how culture has resulted in visible changes in students and eased communication with parents, “It has a positive impact. When you can contact a parent and say, ‘I’ve noticed a change in your child’ and they can say, ‘I have too.’ Then you work together to work the child through whatever the problem is so their grades can continue to go up, it’s nice. It’s not a fear when you call them. They’re glad to hear from you.”



## **Theme 4: Instructional Strategies**

### **In the Instructional Strategies category (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 32-42):**

In Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools), the average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) for the category of Instructional Strategies was 4.03 while the average response from all educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was similar at 4.01.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Instructional Strategies was .849 for participants in Group 1 and .860 for all participants in Group 3. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, there were NO significant differences between the two groups in this category. The following quotes from qualitative interviews illustrate the perceptions of educators in Group 1 and Group 3 in regards to Instructional Strategies.

#### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:**

- A male principal discussed the impact of research-based instructional strategies, "They're impacting student learning, we've only been doing them for a year, but we have had better growth in the past year than we had seen in the years prior to implementation. We've had more kids on grade level; more kids above grade level this past year than the three before that. Our percentages are up in every grade level, it's amazing and we're really excited about it."
- A rural middle school principal clarified how data is used to determine the effectiveness of instructional strategies being used in the classroom, "I would say that, again, we look at data and see where the student is. That tells us what the student needs: more work on phonics decoding or more work on comprehension? Does this student need more writing than they do with reading? Based on that information, we can better determine what program fits the students; are we going to put them into 'Decoding C' are we going to put them in 'Sig 4' (levels of intervention) where are we going to put them, with which teacher, and for how long? Those decisions all get made. For a seventh or eighth grader who the data tells us is behind, perhaps they need to be in corrective. We'll give them an extra period and pull them from an exploratory class to give them the extra time that they need."
- A rural middle school teacher shared that teachers may not connect their schoolwide reading goals to the Title I goals, "With our program, Reading Mastery, I think the teachers really know the goals. I'm not sure that they make the connection as much that they're the Title I goals and our reading achievement goals. Maybe that's where we need to bridge that gap a little bit more, they're not just our goals, and they're connected. I'm not sure that we talk very often that they are our Title I goals, as much as they are reading goals for our kids."
- A Title I reading teacher from a rural elementary school identified how teachers are supported in the classroom, "I coach them on how to do the strategies, there are specific strategies focusing on pace or errors. In the classroom, I do side by side coaching, so it's a preventive measure. I'm trying to teach the strategies to the whole group and we can see by the data if that didn't work for certain students."

- A rural assistant principal shared ways that teachers receive professional development in order to support research-based interventions and strategies, “The only other thing I would say is that we’re sending people to PBIS kinds of things regularly. We also looked at some webinars and doing some webinars within the building because sometimes we can’t get a trainer in or we can’t send somebody out, but we might be able to make this available to people on their own time.”

### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses:**

- A female administrator illustrated collaboration efforts in her school and the challenges of getting all of the staff on board, “The collaborative time is for those teachers to discuss results in their curriculum cadres. When we went to the Doug Reeves training and got the data teams training, it was great but we felt that all we did was look at it and never really got to the point of, ‘We know this, but what do we do about it? What are you doing in tenth grade? What are you doing in sixth grade?’ Since I’ve been in this position, we’ve hired a lot of new teachers in this district. When you think about the turnover, it was a natural time for those people and then we did have a few teachers that just didn’t want to get on the bus and it was a little stressful for them so they found other means to make a living. We’ve had a lot of young and new teachers to the district, but we also have more teachers with masters degree’s than we’ve ever had too. We have a really highly capable staff, but they still are new to the area and system.”
- A female teacher shared how the focus has changed with the implementation of research based interventions and strategies, “This is my second year in the district and we are working on changing the culture. We are focusing on student achievement and research-based instruction. These changes are moving forward but we still have a ways to go.”
- A male elementary administrator described how teachers evaluate student data to meet instructional needs, “This year we built in a collaboration (PLC) time into our weekly (meet every other week) schedule. This is a time when we assess student work, evaluate student needs through analysis of data, and much more. We will continue to build this time into our schedule and improve the structure of the meetings.”
- A rural elementary administrator shared how professional development aimed at specific instructional concerns to aid in increasing student achievement for every child, “This particular presenter asked us what our concerns were when we started the class and we shared that. Most of our concerns were with fluency, we find a lot of issues with this curriculum in going back and correcting errors and starting again, how do we get the kids to read more fluently? One of the ideas she gave us was a different method of presentation, there’s this section called word attack in this curriculum where we learn individual words. One thing that I use every day is a goodbye list, with words that we had trouble with. I put them on index cards and I have a pocket that I move them from day to day. If they can say them correctly in a row without problem, then we get to say goodbye to them. Strategies like that are fun for the kids and really do help with word recognition and retention.”
- Another female teacher, when asked if she has seen changes in student learning from the use of research based strategies responded, “Oh yes. They (students) are learning a lot. It’s amazing, the first week we tried the Marzano strategies, they’re trying to get

the hang of it, but each teacher is doing it. The kids seem to know what's going on now. It's amazing the vocabulary, at the least the kids I've been working with, 'Oh yea, we learned that word in science, we know what that means.' It's important to have that cross curricular part of it."

## Theme 5: Professional Development

### In the category of the Professional Development (Administrator and Teacher Survey Questions 43-50):

In Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools), the average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) for the category of Professional Development was 3.69 while the average response from all educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.72.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Professional Development was .869 for participants in Group 1 and .844 for participants in Group 3. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, one of the eight items was significantly different (Table 3.9).

**Table 3.9**

*Significant Differences for the Category of Professional Development*

Item	p-value
44: "Professional development was provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies." (Group 1: 3.80, Group 3: 3.93)	p=.038

### Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:

- An elementary principal acknowledged the impact professional development practices have had on classroom instruction, "They're huge, I don't think we'd be where we are if we didn't have it (professional development). We'd be out there floundering around not sure what we were supposed to do and having everybody doing it their own way. It's been huge to have the training and then have follow-ups throughout the school year. Plus, while we're doing follow-up, we're training someone to do that within the district so we can continue to do follow-ups regularly throughout the year."
- A female Title I teacher shared how teachers ensure they're using the most effective strategies in their classroom, "We've been given a handful of these strategies that then as the coach I can say, 'If this is the area they're struggling with try this on.' My goal is, eventually, to help those teachers on their own say, 'I picked this one because of this result.'"
- A male middle school administrator discussed instructional strategies that are used in the classroom to support differentiation, "The vocabulary instruction we had has been very good. Reading has been a big focus for a long time and now we're beginning to look at what we can do outside of that. We're looking into some differentiated instruction, this coming school year; instruction on how to differentiate in the

classroom so that I can make sure I'm reaching all students with the curriculum. I think that will have a big impact. I'm looking forward to having that as a part of it."

### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses**

- A rural elementary principal shared how professional development focuses on the instructional strategies being used and promotes important conversations, "With instructional strategies, we partner with the ESU. On those early out inservice days, the staff from ESU come and I usually help them as well where we are working on engagement. One time this year we had a conversation where we said, 'In walk throughs here's what I've noticed, is that true? I'm only in there five minutes so I don't know.' That's how the conversation starts and then it goes into how we engage our students. So, there's professional development with engagement or there's professional development with feedback. We do the same thing, 'We're going to work on feedback today, how does feedback make us better in our classrooms?'"
- A female teacher stated how professional development has focused on specific needs of teachers relating to instructional strategies, "That has been the main focus. We had some new staff members in this building this year. They just did their final session on the APL. Everybody had Holloway, everybody had the vocabulary, that's the professional development that they send us to or that we can go to. If there's any correlation to school improvement or the Title I Goals, then it's usually a yes."
- A high school educator indicated how professional development has directly impacted student learning, "I think so, I can't believe that you can prepare your teachers better and give them better discipline strategies and better organizational tools. APL is a lot about being very organized and it's got good strategies for teaching. If you're buying into that and you have someone coming in to check on that and to reinforce what you're doing, how can you help but be a better teacher?"
- An elementary teacher indicated that having access to electronic resources and communities aid in implementing research-based interventions, "We usually, with our PLC's have done a little research on strategies. Then, as you attend these things, you get the research. The school provides us a computer, so a lot of us have done online research. You get that whole online community too as part of curriculum; a lot of us really use our online grade level groups."
- A secondary administrator indicated the extent that teachers use specific strategies in efforts to meet Title I goals, "100% are going to have to. That's why we spend the time teaching. There's Marzano and one other one, research shows they're both really successful. What I'm going to say is, 'You have a choice to do one of two or three ways that are research based, but this is what it's going to be.' They don't mind that. It's going to be something that has to be done daily or at least 3 times a week. We haven't made those decisions yet, as far as how often, but the research says it has to almost be daily, four to five times a week. So, 100% of them are going to do it and it's going to be monitored by administration by walk through observations, visits to classrooms. I have a walk through form that I use and just make checks, I'll try to be there at the beginning of class and I'll know whether or not they're doing that. I try to do everybody at least once a week, but it doesn't always happen. That's one of my own personal goals, to get better because in order to get it done right you have to monitor."

- A female teacher shared how she knows that she is using the most effective research-based strategies in her classroom, “Well, the inservices that we’re given at school are all research based so we know when we go into them that the things that are offered to us there are going to be successful research based strategies to be used with students. I think that’s been an important criteria in our school for quite a while and we’re always reviewing that we are using what works.”

## **Theme 6: Data/Monitoring**

### **In the Data/Monitoring category (Administrator Survey Questions 51-63, Teacher Survey Questions 51-67):**

Administrators and teachers in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) had an average response of 3.95 while the average response from educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was similar 3.97.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for items 51-63 in the category of Data/Monitoring was .915 for all participants in Group 1 and .908 for all participants in Group 3. The survey reliability for items 64-67 (Teachers only) was .845 for Group 1 and .824 for Group 3. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, there were NO significance differences between the two groups in this category. The following responses illustrate educator perceptions in the use of and monitoring of data.

#### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:**

- A reading teacher described how much she knows about the student achievement data in other classrooms, “We’re getting a lot better at that. Even on those data forms that we have, I’ve added columns to put DIBELS fall and DIBELS winter so they can see how those things relate to what they’re doing in the classroom. If we test the kids with DIBELS, we have a testing team that comes in and does that, the classroom teachers don’t do that. If they don’t get to see those results, then what they’re doing in the classroom, they don’t even get to see that achievement. We’ve added the previous year’s NeSA on there so they can see if what they are doing is correlating to testing results. I think because we’ve added those on, it’s right in front of them every day. I also have a spreadsheet that everybody can access. During our data meetings early in the year, I’ll show them. The kids that are below level are in red, mid-level are in yellow, and the top are in green. You can get a quick glance at what kids are struggling and what are above level. I think a lot of them really do look at that.”
- A rural elementary reading coach, when asked how she was involved in monitoring goals responded, “As a reading coach, one of my specific jobs is to analyze the data. I look at our lower groups, how are they making progress, what more can we give them, and what are we going to use during that intervention time.”
- An elementary teacher talked about what the principal is doing for schoolwide performance monitoring, “Specifically, how many students meet the target, how many finished on grade level or not, and then I know for state reading tests, that data is shared with the whole school. More specifically our DIBELS scores were very good this school year. The reports are given to the teachers, but I hope that next year,

- when we look at that as a grade level, what did we do and let's keep going with that to see how much more we can get. Like I said, I don't know for sure if that will happen or not, but I think that would be needed."
- An elementary administrator, when asked if an impact on special education students is apparent indicated, "It's amazing to me. I have kids that I used to look at and think, I wonder if that kid is ever going to really be able to read. One of these little girls brought me a book and read to me a whole page. It was absolutely amazing to me. I honestly was not sure what she would actually be able to read. It's amazing."

**Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses:**

- A male elementary administrator shared how staff are working to monitor student data, "The staff in this school monitor data, work collaboratively and constantly strive to improve academic progress for all students. However, I do not believe they would articulate this work as a part of the Title I process and/or goals. I believe they would say that their instruction is ultimately for all students to become successful students (academically) and ultimately successful adults."
- A female elementary teacher shared the protocol for data monitoring at her school, "We have a data meeting protocol which has streamlined that process. Before, when the teachers would come to that data meeting, they would speak to this data quite well, but every teacher approached it in a different way. So, to help the Title I teacher and myself understand the data, we've done two things: we project the students graph on the wall so everybody can see what it looks like then the teacher briefly goes through this protocol. Such and such student is being progress monitored with and identifies the assessment, using either personal or a benchmark goal, states the goal, then looking at their last three data points from left to right."
- A female elementary teacher shared the extent data is used to monitor the implementation of Title I Goals, "With reading, we look at their reading test, their check outs. We see what students are doing well, which ones need some intervention or a little help."
- A female elementary teacher explained how the principal is monitoring schoolwide performance, "We have done a lot of that when we get our NES data, we also give MAPS tests. This is the first year our K-1 has done MAP tests. As a K-12 district, they always try to have some type of data meeting where we all look at scores. We looked at our scores, trends, and which classes are struggling. We look at the same class over years. Is it a class trend or an instructional trend? It's pretty obvious sometimes. We've had a couple of classes that all the way through have struggled, and it's just that class. Then you have some that are very high achieving. We look at the data to see if there's something that we're missing instructionally that we need to beef up to help them."
- A female elementary teacher shared her knowledge of student achievement data of each classroom, "I know more than most because of my position on the assessment team. Our newer teachers haven't had the opportunity to look at it (data) because we always do that in the spring. I don't know how they'll interpret it at this point because they haven't been exposed."

## Theme 7: Parent Involvement

### In the Parent Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 64-75, Teacher Survey Questions 68-79),

The average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) in Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.38 while the average response from all educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.45.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach's Alpha) for the category of Parent Involvement was .862 for all participants in Group 1 and .845 for all participants in Group 3. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, 5 of the 12 items were significantly different as shown in Table 3.10.

**Table 3.10**  
*Significant Differences for the Category of Parent Involvement*

Item	p-value
69: "Parents have high expectations for their children." (Group 1: 3.25, Group 3: 3.43)	p=.015
70: "Parents want their children to attend college and share this with their children." (Group 1: 3.24, Group 3: 3.39)	p=.019
72: "Strategies have been shared with me on how to effectively communicate with parents." (Group 1: 3.40, Group 3: 3.58)	p=.013
73: "Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren)." (Group 1: 3.79, Group 3: 3.96)	p=.005
75: "Parents provide input for the development of the school improvement plan." (Group 1: 3.19, Group 3: 3.34)	p=.040

### Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses

- A rural elementary teacher described how parents and community members are engaged in the Title I process, "There is a survey that goes out, a climate survey and even a parent survey. At conferences, randomly selected families are handed the survey and they return it. I know from that we look at what areas do they even feel we need improvement on."
- A Title I teacher, when asked how much parents and community members understand why their school is in Title I responded, "Do they understand that? I would guess not. I guess more along the lines of the reports or things that report out or communicate with 'your child is at this level in reading.' We specifically state on the report card that they are above, on, or below grade level. I think we've really tried to communicate those pieces about where their child is."
- A middle school teacher shared how success in reaching goals is celebrated, "Our eighth grade writers did fabulous this year, they worked so hard but we weren't allowed to let them know their scores before they left (for summer break). We're working on the letter right now to send home to the kids. We've known for the last

three weeks, it was so hard not to share with the kids and their parents because the kids had set goals. We had talked and talked and talked to them about beating their scores from last year.”

- A middle school teacher indicated the most important people to share test scores and goals with, “To me, the most important is students. They are assessed so much now and often they don’t even know what that assessment score means or why they’re doing it. I think one of the biggest things this year, is that I’ve tried to get together with each kid to tell them what they scored before, what that score meant, and what their goal should be for the next time. I think that gave them purpose when they went to take the test. They weren’t feeling like it was just another assessment. That writing test was big. Eighth graders are finally getting to the age where they’re old enough to really understand that concept. They took it on and they worked so hard.”

### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses**

- A teacher from a rural elementary discussed how parents are involved, “I know we have a parent committee which they use as a resource often. What are your opinions on this? When we were setting up our homework policy, we wanted to know what they (parents) thought first, to take their opinions on it.”
- An elementary teacher shared how parents are involved in and support the school and the Title I process, “You have your nay-sayers. In a small town you have negative opinions and positive. One thing we did this year that we haven’t in a long time, is have a parent committee that comes in and basically they helped the superintendent plan the drop off and pick up with the new front of our school, they plan parties for our students, they put on a Christmas party, a Valentines party, and they’re doing an Easter party. That gets parents into the school so they can see how things function and work. We’ve had a couple of parent volunteers who came into help, one was in kindergarten, and one was in second. So, those people get our values.”
- Another elementary teacher commented on the feedback they receive from parents regarding the success of their students, “You don’t hear a lot of the positives, you only hear the negatives. If there are complaints we definitely hear about it! We’ve had a couple of incidents where we’ve had parents post things on Facebook that weren’t great things to be putting out there. So, we met with the parents and discussed what we could do to make it better. I don’t think you hear a lot of positives, as long as nothing’s being said, it’s positive. If they’re not complaining, then it’s a good thing.”
- An elementary Title I Coordinator discussed the extent parents have been involved in the school, “Other than our round table talks when they have been brought in to discuss concerns and strengths, the survey’s that we’ve done, we do have a very active parents club that has been involved. I’m not sure if you’re thinking of the physical attributes of the school, but they have been really involved in that; what we want to do with the playground and the physical structure of the building, the parents group has been very involved in that.”
- A female principal identified the challenges in engaging families and communicating Title I goals and progress, “Engaged is a tricky word there. They (parents) know what they (Title I goals) are, I believe. We have a steering committee; we just don’t meet regularly because everyone is busy. We do things throughout the year that tie to our school improvement goals.”



- A rural administrator shared how they work to get families involved in the learning of their children, “One thing we started last year was One School One Book. That’s been huge to try to get them to try to read at home. We don’t do the book reading here at school, we do it at home. I buy every family a copy of the book. I don’t personally, the booster club helps us, but they buy the book so they can add it to their family library. Each morning I ask a trivia question and then we do a culminating activity. That’s where we try to get that home connection that as you can guess, there are still a few kiddos that won’t do it at home. What do we do? We have the Title I teacher read it to them on the side.”
- A first grade teacher discussed communication and expectations as they related to parents and their child’s future, “Even as we share information at parent conferences, they share their thoughts and feelings about where they think it should all be going and how we’re doing, how their child is doing. If there’s a problem, we’ll get a call; we get them for the good and the bad. We’re always getting calls for the bad. I think they’re expectations are pretty high, they want their kids to do well. The guidance counselor sends out a survey to see how our graduates are doing. That’s an indication too. We have a pretty high number going to college, or we used to, are they staying in college? Getting good jobs? And also, the college kids, the adults, we also send out surveys. At our open house, the parents get surveys, but the guidance department also, or they used to, send out surveys to college kids or graduated kids. They send it out. They give some interesting responses.”

## **Theme 8: Community Involvement**

### **In the Community Involvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 76-81, Teacher Survey Questions 80-85):**

In Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools), the average response of all educators (Administrators and Teachers) for the category of Community Involvement was 3.40 while the average response from all educators in Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) was 3.39.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Community Involvement was .856 for Group 1 and .831 for Group 3. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, one of the six items resulted in a significant difference (Table 3.11).

**Table 3.11**

*Significant Differences for the Category of Community Involvement*

<b>Item</b>	<b>p-value</b>
80: “Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.” (Group 1: 3.91, Group 3: 4.07)	p=.011

### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses**

- An elementary principal discussed how community members are involved in the school improvement process, “The school improvement process, however, as I sort of

- see as two different things right now, but we're working to put those two pieces together. The school improvement process, we do a really great job of including a board member, some community members, some teachers, we do a much better job there than we do with the Title I. This year, because we're reviewing our Title I plan, I'd like to see us using that same group of people because it really should be all one."
- A female reading teacher shared the extent parents are involved with the Title I process, "I know there is a president for our Title I (committee) and I know that we're in the process of redoing that. I know that there's a big push to make sure that the president is involved in the process so that will extend to bigger parent involvement too. Once you get that leader involved, that will pull in more parents too. I know we have a really good parent willing to be the president. I feel like that's really going to be helping us in the future."
  - A middle school teacher added how socio-economic status of families in the school may affect community and parent involvement, "I think they think because we're low income. I think they think because the poverty level is going up we're getting more Title, I think that's probably the extent of it."

### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses**

- An elementary principal described how families are educated about the Title I process in the school, "When we had our Reading Night, the Title I teacher does it at least three times a year where she has a meeting for parents. She has one at parent teacher conferences, that's twice a year, and then at the Reading Night she had an informational packet about what Title is and how it works. She has a flyer that's on my desk right now that she's going to hand out to parents that is information about the Title program."
- A rural female teacher shared about the level of volunteerism in her school, "We don't have a lot of volunteers, that's one area I need to ask more about. We just don't, we have volunteers that come in for specific occasions. For example, today we have volunteers coming in because we have a tree planting. We do something for Veterans Day and the Legion supports that. I guess, as for individual or classroom help, we don't have volunteers that come in."
- A female elementary teacher described the challenges of engaging parents and community members in the school and Title I process, "I always invite them to come when we're having meetings. I would say that they don't initiate that contact but they're not afraid to be engaged in the conversation. I've reflected on that through the years and I wonder if that's because we provide so much information to them that they don't have a question about what we're doing or why. That's a hard one."
- A rural elementary teacher spoke about relationships in place with community members, "The lady from the library is involved with our team. Also, our school librarian who is also a community member is part of our team. So, I collaborate with her as well, she runs the summer reading camp in this building. She coordinates with the library downtown so there's that connection there. We do tap into some college student assistants to help carry out interventions if they're in the building. We have had grand parents often come in, that doesn't happen very often."
- An elementary administrator indicated how stakeholders are involved in school improvement, "We're such a small district that we don't have a data team over here looking and reviewing the data on math and reading over here and then school

- improvement. We have a school improvement steering committee schoolwide and on that committee there are stakeholders.”
- A female principal, when asked if parents know that the school is in Title I Needs Improvement responded, “Yes, they know as well because of the annual meeting, but a lot of times they’ll say the same thing, ‘Why do we have a Title I annual meeting?’ Well, we do get Title I funds and in our annual reports as well as our welcome back to school we always state that our teachers meet the highly qualified requirement, Para’s meet it, and we share what their endorsements are. Sometimes I think it’s just a language piece. But, it does take a bit of explanation at that annual meeting saying, ‘We receive these funds, this is what we use the funds for, and this is it.’”
  - A female elementary teacher shared how community members are involved in the Title I process, “Community members are invited to be part of the school improvement process when we’re having the meetings, looking at how we’re doing with our goals, where are we at with professional development, are we seeing growth. Community is not (engaged) on a day to day basis, but they’re part of the planning process.”
  - An elementary teacher shared, when asked if the community is involved in the school and the Title I program, “Definitely! We are constantly trying to form and build new partnerships. I partner with the (local non-profit); they have some counseling, food pantry, and health things. We have a small hospital and we’re trying partner with the hospital to provide more health things. The (local non-profit) also does a health class for all of our kids, monthly learning about nutrition, healthy choices, and exercise. They are also providing some social/emotional training for kids and also a parenting class.”
  - An elementary school administrator identified the involvement of the school board, “I can’t think of any community leaders, beside the school board and they know what the school improvement goal is. Every month at the board meeting, my school improvement person comes and gives a report on school improvement. So, as a school board they’re well informed.”

## **Theme 9: Overall Improvement**

### **In the Overall Improvement category (Administrator Survey Questions 82-88, Teacher Survey Questions 86-92):**

Educators (Administrators and Teachers) from Group 1 (Title I Needs Improvement Schools) and Group 3 (Title I Non-Needs Improvement Schools) had the same average response for this category at 3.73.

The survey reliability statistic (Cronbach’s Alpha) for the category of Overall Improvement was .849 for Group 1 and .823 for Group 3. When analyzing the ratings for Groups 1 and 3 in this category, there were NO significance differences between the two groups.

### **Title I Needs Improvement (Group 1) Responses:**

- A male rural administrator talked about the extent the overall Title I Improvement process has improved student performance so far, “It’s what has driven the decisions that we’ve made. Choosing a good curriculum, implementing it with fidelity, and

- having professional development. The people that were determined to become trainers, all have driven us to make good decisions to get this accomplished.”
- A rural reading teacher shared how the administration focuses on Title I goals during teacher evaluations, “We would talk about it more as reading goals, I don’t know if we would use Title I as much as reading achievement and reading goals even though they’re one in the same. At mine especially, since I’m the reading coach that would be much of our discussion.”
  - A male principal indicated, “Teacher evaluation is indirectly involved in student achievement. We don’t evaluate according to grades or NeSA scores, but we do expect our teachers to utilize and implement strategies that will have an indirect correlation to student achievement.”
  - A non-rural female administrator discussed goals, “Long term SMART goals and short term objectives help teachers establish learning targets for students.”

### **Title I Non-Needs Improvement (Group 3) Responses:**

- A female administrator shared the types of programs used at her school, “Utilization of research based, evidence based, and peer reviewed programs. Direct instruction in reading/language arts (Reading Mastery) and mathematics (Saxon Math).”
- A rural female administrator indicated her school’s current focus by stating, “At this time, we are focusing on strengthening our core reading program. We are in the third year of implementation of this program and are seeing an increase in our data. We are now focusing on finding research-based interventions that will meet the needs of our students.”

### **Emerging Themes**

Three new themes emerged in the interviews: (1) Behavior Monitoring; (2) Collaboration; and (3) Meeting Individual Student Needs.

#### ***Behavior Monitoring***

A female elementary teacher discussed the processes for building her school’s capacity to improve:

One of the things that we think about being a Title I School is we work with students who come from a lot of poverty so they have a lot of stress. We do a lot of thinking about student needs as far as behavior, how can we help them change. We have BIST; we think about how their behaviors are affecting their learning and achievement, what can we do to help them change so they can be more successful in both school and life. We have a system set up for that where we work together as a team and we have a consultant who comes in once a month to help us as well. We meet as a team to make plans for specific students who may be struggling with a certain skill that will help them be successful in life; we implement those plans and look at them again. We also have a system for when students are having a hard time being ok in the classroom, where do they go next and what are some of the strategies they can use to help them be ok and come back to their classroom so they can be involved in the learning there?

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement female elementary administrator shared how data on behavior is monitored for successful student achievement:

We have three goals. One is a behavior, one is reading, and one is math. Our behavior goal has to do with our BIST, Behavior Intervention Strategies, so we monitor that weekly, we monitor how many people get safe seats, buddy rooms, office referrals, we do not have a recovery room. So, we monitor that weekly and meet monthly as a BIST team to come up with interventions, modifications and strategies as to how we can reduce the number of office referrals, etc. Plus, the BIST consultant comes quarterly and talks with us about what else we can do.

### ***Collaboration***

A Title I Needs Improvement female elementary administrator discussed various forms of teacher collaboration which are in place at her school:

Once a week the students get out early. They (teachers) don't get plan time embedded in the week, so this is the plan time. So, all of kindergarten are in a group, on up to fifth. What's cool about it is that I will sometimes go to K, 1, 2 and another administrator will go to 3, 4, 5, and we'll have a certain thing we ask or talk about. Our media specialist might go around, to SPED teachers, and ELL teachers. It's a set time for everybody to meet with each of the teams.

A Title I Needs Improvement male elementary administrator discussed collaboration to meet parent needs:

On the other hand, a parent just walked in and had a meeting with ten people to help one kid. So, you have all of that going on but I think we've come a long ways. We have to do it at a higher level because we're a Title I School. I have trained the staff on using adaptive schools. It's a great sign when I stand in front of the staff and ask, 'What norm is going to be tough in the activity we're doing today? Tell me one.' Someone will yell it out. 'Tell me another one.' Someone else yells it out. They know that; one teacher summarized a training video, 'He taught us how to talk to each other.' So, we need to keep going with this. That's how it is, you learn from each other, you work with each other.

A Title I Non-Needs Improvement male elementary administrator discussed the processes implemented to build the school's capacity to improve:

There are a couple that come to mind. Number one, we are really data driven, that is important to us. A lot of times it's easy to say, we just had a conversation three days ago and we were trying to figure out who was going to come to reading and math camp. We talked about the teachers who know this student, this student, and this student. That's not good enough, we need to have this data based so we have something to fall back on, this is why the students are here. We are very much data driven with student achievement, we're tearing apart the table of specs; we're tearing apart the MAP test looking for that data and trying to improve our instruction. We're very much data driven. . . . Number two, we've developed an atmosphere of collaboration, I think that's very important because our staff, hopefully and I believe this is true and I think they would echo the same thing, that we are in this together. It's a collaboration, we're in this together. It's not directives coming down from on high saying we have to do this and that. We get together with our staff and we really try to work with them saying, "Here's our intent, how do we get there?" We collaborate on how we can get there.

A female elementary teacher discussed forms of teacher collaboration in her school:

The staff operates like a family at the elementary. Lots of collaboration, very strong informal collaboration to seeing them constantly talking in the hallway about what they're doing, what's going on next, what time does this happen, clear down to the formal collaboration at data meetings. When we sit down at data meetings, they're collaborating and talking about interventions, things that have worked with students and then also I know administration will consistently hold staff meetings to inform the staff on what's going on, get their input and then to work as a team.

### ***Meeting Individual Student Needs***

A Title I Needs Improvement female elementary teacher shared how non-English speaking students' individual needs are being met:

All of the kids here speak the language but they're in different kinds of groupings based on their abilities or levels. We have kindergarten with a special ELA (English Language Arts) group where part of their day is spent in ELA, part of the day in the regular classroom. First grade does that too, second grade has a portion of it. Third, fourth, and fifth, my kids go out for 90 minutes, so they're getting instruction from the ELA teacher. Then, she and I can collaborate on how this worked, this didn't work, try this, help them with this. In a smaller group setting, they get it a little better than a group with twenty some kids in their room. Right now with their NeSA testing, they haven't had ELA so they're stuck with me, if you will. The kids are saying, "When are we going back to (the ELA teacher)?" They are more comfortable in that smaller group setting.

A female elementary administrator outlined processes used to meet individual student needs at her school:

They briefly go over (data) while we're all looking at the graph on the screen. Then, we go to our decision rules and say, "Based upon the data, here's what we need to do with this student." We get through a lot of students in our short 30 minutes that I have with teachers because of this process that we've identified that works. Those are the kinds of processes that we use. This last one, the Title I teacher keeps a spreadsheet of every intervention that all of the students in the school are receiving and which teacher is progress monitoring that student, where they are either in the SAP process, if they've qualified for resource; so we constantly keep that student need list updated. We run our data meetings based on this information, we go through each column and talk about every individual student.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

**Study 3** was conducted to *examine* administrator and teacher perceptions regarding the implementation of their School Improvement Plans in **Title I Needs Improvement** schools compared with **Title I Non-Needs Improvement** schools.

Perceptions of educators in Title I Non-Needs Improvement schools (Group 3) had the greatest (most positive) mean survey score at 294.97, followed by educators' perceptions from Title I Needs Improvement Schools (Group 1) whose mean survey score was 290.78.

The category of Culture showed the greatest difference in responses from Group 1 and Group 3 out of the nine categories. Seven of the eleven items in this category (64%) revealed a significant difference. These items focused on the overall school culture and the impact school culture has on the school community.

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## **Section IV: Appendices**



## **Appendix A**

### **IRB Approval Letter**



January 10, 2013

Jody Isernhagen  
Department of Educational Administration  
132 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

Jackie Florendo  
Department of Educational Administration  
900 Dundee Ct Crete, NE 68333-2634

IRB Number: 20130113057 EX  
Project ID: 13057  
Project Title: 2013 Title I Needs Assessment

Dear Jody:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Exemption Determination: 01/10/2013.

1. Your project has received conditional approval. Final approval will be given once school approval letters are submitted. You may email the approval letters to me as they are received.
2. The approved informed consent documents have been uploaded to NUgrant (files with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use these documents to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the documents, please submit the revised documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to using them.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:

- \* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
- \* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
- \* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
- \* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
- \* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,



Becky R. Freeman, CIP  
for the IRB



## **Appendix B**

### **Researchers for the Project**





## **Researchers for the Project 2012-2013**

### ***Principal Investigator***

**Jody C. Isernhagen, Ed.D.**, is an Associate Professor in Educational Administration at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She received her doctoral degree from Virginia Tech and has been a teacher, assistant principal, principal, supervisor of elementary education, and superintendent in pre-K through 12 schools. Dr. Isernhagen served as the primary investigator for the STARS Process and is the primary instructor for the School Improvement Specialist Program and the Professional Development Leadership Certificate Program. Dr. Isernhagen serves on the AdvancED State Board. She was awarded the College of Education and Human Sciences Distinguished Teaching Award, the Charman Outstanding Professor Award, and the NASCD Al Kilgore Award of Excellence.

### ***Secondary Investigator***

**Jackie Florendo, Ed.D.**, has a doctoral degree in Educational Administration from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, along with a School Improvement Specialist Certificate and a Nebraska Leadership for Learning Assessment Endorsement. She was an instructor for Doane College in Crete, Nebraska through the spring of 2013 for early childhood education and recently began as the Early Childhood Council Coordinator for El Paso County in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Jackie has served as the secondary investigator for the Title I project since 2011 and worked as a graduate student on the STARS project with Dr. Isernhagen from 2007-2010.

### ***Project Assistant***

**Nicole A. Effle, M.A.**, received her Master's degree in Counseling from Doane College, Lincoln. This is her third year working on the Statewide Title I Project.



## **Appendix C**

### **Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Survey**



## Nebraska Statewide School Improvement Project - Administrator Survey

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please provide the following demographic information by responding to the questions or selecting the appropriate category for each area.

**1. Mark all the position(s) below that you hold in your school district:**

Level: ☐ Elementary ☐ Middle School ☐ High School ☐ District ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Job: ☐ Principal ☐ Title I Coordinator ☐ Other

**2. My Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

**3. Highest Degree Earned:** ☐ B.A. ☐ M.A. ☐ Ed.D. ☐ Ph.D.

**4. Total Years of Experience in Education:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Total Years of Experience in my School:** \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please click on the circle that best describes your response to each statement.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN</b>					
1. I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Teachers were involved in the identification of the School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
3. All teachers in my school were involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have consistently communicated the School Improvement Goals to teachers in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teachers in my school understand the School Improvement Goals and how to achieve these goals.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the School Improvement Goals have been identified.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>CLEAR FOCUS</b>					
8. My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My school engages in continuous school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
10. There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need.	1	2	3	4	5
11. There is a clear articulation of standards in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Teachers in my school engage students in order to improve academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The curriculum in my school is supportive of the academic needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The curriculum in my school is aligned with the state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments are used to support instruction and enhance student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
Directions: Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>CULTURE</b>					
18. The culture of our school plays a dominant role in exemplary student performance.	1	2	3	4	5

19. Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
22. The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The culture of our school initiates caring, sharing, and mutual help among faculty and students.	1	2	3	4	5
26. The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among faculty.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.	1	2	3	4	5
28. The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
29. The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am passionate about student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES</b>					
32. Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers in my school collectively reflect on instructional strategies used daily in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Teachers in my school use peer coaching to improve their performance.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Teachers in my school search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Teachers in my school break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Teachers in my school reflect and compare their actual teaching practice to what they had planned and hoped to achieve.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Teachers in my school are implementing research-based interventions and strategies to meet School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help students improve in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my School's Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>					
43. Professional development needs at my school are based on analysis of data.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Professional development is provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Groups of teachers in my school have shared planning periods for professional growth.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Teachers are encouraged to observe each other in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Teachers in my school seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Teachers in my school collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>DATA/MONITORING</b>					
51. Data are essential to our school improvement process.	1	2	3	4	5
52. Data are used to monitor and focus our School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
53. The faculty monitors classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.	1	2	3	4	5
54. Teachers in my school examine disaggregated standardized test score data.	1	2	3	4	5

55. Every classroom is implementing our School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
56. Teachers in my school adjust their instruction in order to attain our School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
57. Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my School's Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
58. Teachers in my school monitor students' additional learning time to ensure success.	1	2	3	4	5
59. Changes in <i>grade-level</i> classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the School Improvement Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
60. Changes in <i>school-wide</i> performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the School Improvement Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.	1	2	3	4	5
62. Teachers in my school examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.	1	2	3	4	5
63. Teachers in my school are engaged in early identification of at-risk behavior indicators impacting student performance (i.e., attendance, behavior, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.					
	Strongly	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly
<b>PARENT INVOLVEMENT</b>					
64. Parents are involved in identification of the School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
65. Parents have high expectations for their children.	1	2	3	4	5
66. Parents want their children to attend college and share this with their children.	1	2	3	4	5
67. Professional development opportunities have provided teachers tools for successfully engaging parents in their child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
68. Strategies have been shared with faculty on how to effectively communicate with parents.	1	2	3	4	5
69. Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child(ren).	1	2	3	4	5
70. There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.	1	2	3	4	5
71. Parents provide input for the development of the school improvement plan.	1	2	3	4	5
72. Parents are involved in the decision making process for our school/district (for example: providing input for the development of a school safety plan, creating a behavior expectation plan).	1	2	3	4	5
73. An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs.	1	2	3	4	5
74. Information gathered from the parent survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
75. Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child(ren)'s education. Rate the impact of the following items on parental involvement in your school.					
a. Child Care	1	2	3	4	5
b. Language differences	1	2	3	4	5
c. Parents don't know how to contribute	1	2	3	4	5
d. Parents educational level	1	2	3	4	5
e. Poverty	1	2	3	4	5
f. School-home cultural differences	1	2	3	4	5
g. Transportation	1	2	3	4	5
h. Work schedules	1	2	3	4	5
i. Other _____	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b>					



76. The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.	1	2	3	4	5
77. An annual survey is sent to community members to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs.	1	2	3	4	5
78. Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
79. Strategies have been shared with educators on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships.	1	2	3	4	5
80. Community members provide input for the development of the school improvement plan.	1	2	3	4	5
81. Local businesses or service organizations are provided information from school administrators regarding the importance of parents attending school functions or being involved in their child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>OVERALL IMPROVEMENT</b>					
82. Data shows that progress is being made in meeting our School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
83. During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers about the way they are helping students in order to meet our School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
84. Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap.	1	2	3	4	5
85. The use of our research-based interventions is leading to the attainment of our School Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
86. Community members recognize improvement as a result of our School Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
87. The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement.					
88. Teachers set specific goals for increasing student achievement.					
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>MODEL OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN</b>					
<b>Directions:</b> <b>For Question 89 please use the area provided to respond to the question.</b>					
89. Describe the most prevalent instructional strategy or intervention being used in your school.					

On behalf of the Nebraska Statewide School Improvement Project, thank you for sharing your knowledge and thoughts.

## Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability - Teacher Survey

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please provide the following demographic information by responding to the questions or marking the appropriate category for each area.

**1. Primary Position: Please mark the primary position you hold in your school**

Level: ☐ Elementary ☐ Middle School ☐ High School ☐ Other  
 Grade: ☐  
 Focus: ☐ SPED ☐ Language Arts ☐ Math ☐ Science  
☐ ELL ☐ Other

**2. My Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

**3. Highest Degree Earned:** ☐ B.A. ☐ M.A. ☐ Ed.D. ☐ Ph.D.

**4. Total Years of Experience in Education:** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Total Years of Experience in my School:** \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN</b>					
1. Administrators in my school were involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I Goals to teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I understand the Title I Goals and how to achieve these goals.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Specific areas of need that must be met to achieve the Title I Goals have been identified.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The planning process in my school is focused on improving student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>CLEAR FOCUS</b>					
8. My school has a strongly focused and cohesive instructional program.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My school engages in continuous school improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
10. There is a clear focus by teachers in my school on the identified areas of need.	1	2	3	4	5
11. There is a clear articulation of standards in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I engage students in order to improve academic performance.	1	2	3	4	5
13. The curriculum in my school is supportive of the academic needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The curriculum in my school is aligned both between grade levels and among grade levels.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The curriculum in my school is aligned with the state standards.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Criterion-referenced and norm-referenced assessments in my school are used to support instruction and enhance student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Instructional practices and materials in my school are supportive of the academic needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b>Directions:</b> Please circle the number that best describes your response to each statement.					
<b>CULTURE</b>					
18. The culture of our school plays a dominant role in exemplary student performance.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.	1	2	3	4	5
22. The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
23. The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The culture of our school encourages innovation, dialogue and the search for new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The culture of our school initiates caring, sharing, and mutual help among faculty and students.	1	2	3	4	5
26. The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among faculty.	1	2	3	4	5
27. The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.	1	2	3	4	5
28. The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.	1	2	3	4	5
29. The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.	1	2	3	4	5
30. The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am passionate about student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES</b>					
32. Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works.	1	2	3	4	5
33. Teachers in my school collectively reflect on instructional strategies used daily in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I use peer coaching to improve my performance.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
36. I search for strategies by using the internet, visiting other schools, and attending conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I reflect and compare my actual teaching practice to what I had planned and hoped to achieve.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I am implementing research-based interventions and strategies to meet Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
40. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help my students to improve in my school.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Research-based interventions and instructional strategies are implemented based on the data analyzed for my school's Title I Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>					
43. Professional development needs at my school are based on analysis of data.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Professional development is provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Professional development experiences have led to new classroom practices.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Teachers in my school collaboratively assess student work as a professional development activity.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>COMMENTS:</b>					
<b>DATA/MONITORING</b>					
51. Data are essential to our school improvement process.	1	2	3	4	5

52. Data are used to monitor and focus our Title I Improvement Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
53. I monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.	1	2	3	4	5
54. I examine disaggregated standardized test score data.	1	2	3	4	5
55. My classroom is implementing our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
56. I adjust my instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
57. Classroom instruction is monitored to ensure implementation of my school's Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
58. I monitor students' additional learning time to ensure success.	1	2	3	4	5
59. Changes in <i>grade-level</i> classroom performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
60. Changes in <i>school-wide</i> performance are monitored on a continuous basis as the Title I Goals are implemented.	1	2	3	4	5
61. Data are used to monitor the closing of the achievement gap between student subpopulations.	1	2	3	4	5
62. I examine disaggregated school attendance, suspension, and expulsion data.	1	2	3	4	5
63. I am engaged in early identification of at-risk behavior indicators impacting student performance (i.e., attendance, behavior, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
64. I use individual student data to understand the academic needs of my students.	1	2	3	4	5
65. I make decisions about what I can do instructionally to improve my students' performance based on data.	1	2	3	4	5
66. I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students' performance.	1	2	3	4	5
67. I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data.	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					
<b>PARENT INVOLVEMENT</b>					
68. Parents are involved in identification of the Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
69. Parents have high expectations for their children.	1	2	3	4	5
70. Parents want their children to attend college and share this with their children.	1	2	3	4	5
71. Professional development opportunities have provided me with tools for successfully engaging parents in their child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
72. Strategies have been shared with me on how to effectively communicate with parents.	1	2	3	4	5
73. Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child(ren).	1	2	3	4	5
74. There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.	1	2	3	4	5
75. Parents provide input for the development of the school improvement plan.	1	2	3	4	5
76. Parents are involved in the decision making process for our school/district such as: providing input for the development of a school safety plan, creating a behavior expectation plan.	1	2	3	4	5
77. An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs.	1	2	3	4	5
78. Information gathered from the parent survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
79. Outside influences provide challenges preventing many parents from becoming involved in their child(ren)'s education. Rate the impact of the following items on parental involvement in your school.					
a. Child care	1	2	3	4	5
b. Language differences	1	2	3	4	5
c. Parents don't know how to contribute	1	2	3	4	5
d. Parents educational level	1	2	3	4	5
e. Poverty	1	2	3	4	5
f. School-home cultural differences	1	2	3	4	5
g. Transportation	1	2	3	4	5
h. Work schedules	1	2	3	4	5
i. Other _____	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT					
80. The community has high expectations for the school and the academic success of students.	1	2	3	4	5
81. An annual survey is sent to community members to gather information and perceptions regarding the school's unique strengths and needs.	1	2	3	4	5
82. Information gathered from the community survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.	1	2	3	4	5
83. Strategies have been shared with me on how to engage in effective dialogue with community members to help develop school/community partnerships.	1	2	3	4	5
84. Community members provide input for the development of the school improvement plan.	1	2	3	4	5
85. Local businesses or service organizations are provided information from school administrators regarding the importance of parents attending school functions or being involved in their child's education.	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					
OVERALL IMPROVEMENT					
86. Data shows that progress is being made in meeting our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
87. During teacher evaluations, administrators discuss with me about the way I am helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
88. Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap.	1	2	3	4	5
89. The use of our research-based interventions is leading to the attainment of our Title I Goals.	1	2	3	4	5
90. Community members recognize improvement as a result of our Title I Improvement Plan.	1	2	3	4	5
91. The teacher evaluation process in my school is tied to student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
92. I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
COMMENTS:					
MODEL OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN					
<b>Directions:</b> For Question 93, please use the area provided to respond to the question.					
93. Describe the most prevalent instructional strategy or intervention being used in your school.					

On behalf of the Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Project, thank you for sharing your knowledge and thoughts.

## **Appendix D**

### **Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Interview Protocol**



**NEBRASKA STATEWIDE TITLE I ACCOUNTABILITY  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL  
2012-2013**

**Qualitative Research Purpose:** *Examine the success of the implementation of Nebraska Title I School Improvement Plans to improve student achievement in identified schools.*

1. Thank you for taking the time to visit with me today.
2. I am serving as an interviewer for the Nebraska Statewide Title I Accountability Project conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This research is being conducted so that the Nebraska Department of Education has a better understanding of how Title I Improvement Plans are developed and implemented in identified Nebraska Title I Schools.
3. First, I want to assure you that this interview is strictly confidential. Information provided by school and district staff is reported or released in aggregated form only. Districts, schools, and individuals are not identified.
4. I have an Informed Consent form outlining your rights as a research participant. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw from the study at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or the Nebraska Department of Education. Contact persons for the project and the Institutional Review Board are provided on the Informed Consent Form in case you have questions or concerns. I have a copy for you to sign and one for you to keep for your use.
5. It is important that educators participating in this research be willing participants. You are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw from the interview at any time without harming your relationship with your district, this project, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or the Nebraska Department of Education. Should you decide not to participate you may either return to your normal activities or sit with me for the interview period. Are you willing to participate in this interview?
6. I am going to record this interview so that the interview can be transcribed (a typed copy of the interview will be made) and we have an accurate rendering of your responses.
7. It is important that I maintain the integrity of your words and intentions; therefore, I may ask you to review the transcription if I have any difficulties with the interpretation.
8. We are interested in finding out about the perceptions that you hold regarding the development and implementation of your Title I Improvement Plan relative to the focus of the plan, classroom interventions used, professional development, data monitoring, community involvement, and overall improvement.
9. Please feel free to discuss your views openly. From time to time, I may have additional questions to further understand a concept that you have shared.
10. Let's begin. Please state your name, school, district, and give verbal permission to record this interview by repeating this statement, "I (your name) at (school/district name) willingly give my permission to record this interview."



## Interview Questions

**DIRECTIONS:** *Place a check when the participant mentions each probe so that you do not repeat the probe.*

1. To what extent are the administration and teachers involved in the development and monitoring of the Title I Improvement Plan?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. What is the role of your Academic Compact Team in monitoring the goals for the Title I Improvement Plan?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. To what extent are you involved in monitoring the Title I Improvement Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. To what extent are teachers involved in monitoring the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. To what extent is data used to determine the achievement of the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. In what ways have you communicated the progress of your Title I Goals to teachers, staff, and parents?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

2. What is your school's focus, and how does it relate to your identified areas of need?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. To what extent is there a schoolwide focus on improvement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. What processes are implemented to build your school's capacity to improve?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. How is curriculum aligned to state standards? How is curriculum aligned between and among grade levels?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

3. To what extent is your school culture conducive to successful school improvement?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. How would you describe your school culture and the values it promotes?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. What effect has the school culture had on student achievement and teacher instruction?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. What processes do you use to share your school beliefs, values, and understandings related to Title I within the school community? How do you ensure that your teachers have embraced it?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. How do the school's shared values and beliefs affect the community?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

4. To what extent do your teachers use instructional strategies to meet your school's Title I Goals?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. What instructional strategies are teachers in your school using?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. How do teachers make sure they are using the most effective strategies for student improvement in their classrooms?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Where can teachers get assistance or training for their instructional strategies?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. How was data used to select instructional strategies?
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. How have changes in instructional strategies affected student learning?
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. To what extent has professional development been provided to address the instructional strategies being used?

Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes

5. To what extent is professional development provided to support your school's Title I Goals?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. How is data used to determine the professional development needs of teachers in your school?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. What forms of teacher collaboration are in place in your school?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. In what way does professional development support the implementation of research-based interventions and instructional strategies?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. How have new professional development experiences impacted classroom instruction?

**Descriptive Notes:****Reflective Notes**

6. To what extent is data used to monitor the implementation of the Title I Improvement Goals in your school?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. What data is analyzed? How are the results of the analysis used?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. How is classroom instruction and student achievement monitored?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. How is schoolwide performance monitored?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. What processes are used to ensure that every classroom teacher is implementing the Title I Goals?

**Descriptive Notes:****Reflective Notes**

7. To what extent are parents and community members engaged in the Title I Improvement process?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. To what extent are parents and community members engaged in identifying and monitoring the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. To what extent are parents and community members involved in using data to make decisions about student performance?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. To what extent do parents and community members understand why the school is in Title I Improvement?

**Descriptive Notes:****Reflective Notes**

8. To what extent has the overall Title I Improvement process improved student performance so far?

**Probes**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. How do you as an administrator focus on the Title I Goals during teacher evaluations?
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. To what extent do you discuss specific classroom student achievement data with teachers?
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. How much do you know about the student achievement data of each classroom?
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. What does your current data indicate about your school's progress in meeting the Title I Goals?
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. What strategies, interventions, or other changes have been most important in improving student achievement for your school?

**Descriptive Notes:****Reflective Notes**

9. What comments, recommendations, or final observations would you like to make about your Title I Improvement Plan or student performance that we have not discussed?

**Descriptive Notes:****Reflective Notes**



## **Appendix E**

### **Study 1: Summary of Significant Differences**



## **Summary of Statistical Differences**

Quantitative data was disaggregated into free and reduced lunch rate, percentage of English Language Learners, student mobility, and level of school using the Nebraska Department of Education State of the Schools Report for 2011-2012 (NDE, 2012), the most current information available. In addition, quantitative data was disaggregated by each schools locale code using the Urban-Centric Locale Codes as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010). For these categories, teacher and administrator responses are combined and referred to as “educator.”

### **Free Reduced Lunch (FRL)**

The average rate of Free and Reduced Price meals for the State of Nebraska is 43.79% (NDE, 2012) while the average for Group 1 is 67%. Data has been disaggregated based upon each school’s reported rate of FRL into low, average, and high. Of those educators in Group 1, twelve participants (4%) were from schools with a FRL rate of 39% and lower (low), 25 participants (10%) were from those schools between 40% and 55% (average), and 221 participants (86%) were from schools with a FRL rate of higher than 55% (high).

### **ELL**

Within the State of Nebraska, the average ELL student population is 6.47% (NDE, 2012) while the average for schools in Group 1 is 21%. For the purpose of this study, schools were divided into two groups: high ELL student population and low ELL student population. Within Group 1, one hundred (100) participants (39%) were from schools with an ELL population of 7% and lower while 158 participants (61%) were from schools with an ELL student population higher than 7%.

### **Mobility**

The average rate of student mobility across the State of Nebraska dropped from 12.22% to 11.84% (NDE, 2012); the average rate for Group 1 was higher at 18%. Data has been disaggregated based upon the rate of student mobility reported by each school and categorized as low or high. Of the educators in Group 1, 28 participants (11%) were from schools with a mobility rate of 12% or less (low) while 230 participants (89%) were from those schools with a rate of 13% or higher (high).

### **Level**

Lastly, data from Study 1 was disaggregated by the grade levels in the school. Educators who primarily work in schools grades PK-6 are categorized as “elementary” while educators who work primarily in middle or secondary schools were referred to as “middle/secondary.” In Group 1, 210 participants (81%) were from elementary schools while 48 (19%) were from middle/secondary schools.

### **Locale**

For the purpose of this research, participating Nebraska public school districts were divided into rural and non-rural categories using Urban-Centric Locale Codes as defined by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2010). These locale codes are based on proximity to an urbanized area; definitions of each locale code can be found on page 25.

Schools were divided into Rural and Non-Rural based upon their locale code. In Group 1, two schools (17%) were classified as “32- Town, Distant,” three schools (25%) were classified as “33- Town, Remote,” two schools (17%) were classified as “42- Rural, Distant,” two schools (17%) were classified as “43 - Rural, Remote,” and three schools (25%) were classified as “11 - City, Large.”

### Study 1

The significant differences between the aforementioned subgroups are displayed in Tables 1.104 through 1.109.

**Table 1.104**

*Group 1 Significant Differences between Responses from Administrators and Teachers*

<b>Administrators and Teachers</b>	
Item	p-value
2: “I was involved in the identification of the Title I Goal.” (Administrators 3.91, Teachers 3.14)	p=.004
4: “Administrators in my school have effectively communicated the Title I goals to teachers.” (Administrators 4.13, Teachers 3.50)	p=.003
5: “Teachers/I understand the Title I goals and how to achieve these goals.” (Administrators 4.30, Teachers 3.50)	p<.001
19: “Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school.” (Administrators 4.13, Teachers 3.80)	p=.014
20: “Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together.” (Administrators 4.00, Teachers 3.57)	p=.002
21: “Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning.” (Administrators 4.17, Teachers 3.77)	p<.001
26: “The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among faculty.” (Administrators 4.00, Teachers 3.50)	p<.001
27: “The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity.” (Administrators 4.17, Teachers 3.76)	p=.001
28: “The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration.” (Administrators 4.13, Teachers 3.59)	p=.001
29: “The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” (Administrators 4.04, Teachers 3.49)	p=.001
37: “Teachers in my school/I break down and examine student performance data by grade, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and disabilities.” (Administrators 4.22, Teachers 3.74)	p=.002
47: “Teachers/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth.” (Administrators 4.30, Teachers 3.37)	p<.001
48: “Teachers are/I am encouraged to observe other teachers in the classroom.” (Administrators 3.96, Teachers 3.15)	p=.001
51: “Data are essential to our school improvement process.”(Administrators 4.83, Teachers 4.40)	p<.001

65/69: [Administrators/Teachers] “Parents have high expectations for their children.” (Administrators 4.09, Teachers 3.17)	p<.001
69/73: [Administrators/Teachers] “Parents receive information on grade level expectations for their child (ren).” (Administrators 4.13, Teachers 3.75)	p=.006
70/74: [Administrators/Teachers] “There is a designated person in our school/district that serves as a liaison/advocate for parents.” (Administrators 4.26, Teachers 3.20)	p<.001
72/76: [Administrators/Teachers] “Parents are involved in the decision making process for our school/district such as: providing input for the development of a school safety plan, creating a behavior expectation plan.” (Administrators 3.52, Teachers 3.08)	p=.003
74/78: [Administrators/Teachers] “Information gathered from the parent survey is shared and embraced by school personnel.” (Administrators 3.91, Teachers 3.51)	p=.033
83/87: [Administrators/Teachers] “During teacher evaluations, I discuss with teachers/administrators discuss with me about the way I am helping students in order to meet our Title I Goals.” (Administrators 4.00, Teachers 3.53)	p=.005
84/88: [Administrators/Teachers] “Data indicates progress toward closing the achievement gap.” (Administrators 4.09, Teachers 3.77)	p=.026

**Table 1.105**

*Group 1 Significant Differences Between Responses from Male and Female Educators*

<b>Group 1 Male Educators and Female Educators</b>	
Item	p-value
3: “I was involved in the disaggregation of student data to identify Title I Improvement Goals.” (Male 3.67, Female 3.20)	p=.030
29: “The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving.” (Male 3.85, Female 3.50)	p=.040
31: “I am passionate about student learning.” (Male 4.52, Female 4.78)	p=.014
68/72 [Administrator/Teacher]: “Strategies have been shared with me on how to effectively communicate with parents.” (Male 3.74, Female 3.36)	p=.007
77/81 [Administrator/Teacher]: “An annual survey is sent to community members to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs.” (Male 3.89, Female 3.51)	p=.014
88/92 [Administrator/Teacher]: “I set specific goals for increasing student achievement.” (Male 4.04, Female 4.30)	p=.036



**Table 1.106***Group 1 Significant Differences Between Rates of English Language Learner Student Population*

<b>Group 1 Low and High ELL Student Populations</b>		
Item		p-value
12: "Teachers/I engage students in order to improve academic performance."	(Low 4.43, High 4.62)	p=.010
19: "Parents, teachers, the principal, and students sense something special about our school."	(Low 3.49, High 4.04)	p<.001
20: "Our school has shared beliefs and values that clearly knit our community together."	(Low 3.27, High 3.82)	p<.001
21: "Our organizational culture is conducive to the successful improvement of teaching and learning."	(Low 3.61, High 3.93)	p=.008
23: "The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation."	(Low 3.63, High 4.24)	p<.001
25: "The culture of our school initiates caring, sharing, and mutual help among faculty and students."	(Low 3.66, High 4.17)	p<.001
26: "The culture of our school is based on respect, trust and shared power among faculty."	(Low 3.12, High 3.81)	p<.001
27: "The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity."	(Low 3.44, High 4.02)	p<.001
28: "The culture of our school improves collegiality and collaboration."	(Low 3.34, High 3.83)	p<.001
29: "The culture of our school fosters better communication and problem-solving."	(Low 3.34, High 3.66)	p=.016
30: "The culture of our school fosters successful change and improvement efforts."	(Low 3.48, High 3.90)	p=.001
31: "I am passionate about student learning."	(Low 4.66, High 4.82)	p=.010
32: "Teachers in my school collectively focus on how they can better reach their students in a way that works."	(Low 3.99, High 4.34)	p<.001
40: "Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help my students to improve in my school."	(Low 4.02, High 4.34)	p<.001
44: "Professional development is provided to support the implementation of research-based interventions and strategies."	(Low 3.62, High 3.91)	p=.016
46: "Teacher collaboration in my school is a form of professional development used to enhance student learning."	(Low 3.50, High 4.06)	p<.001
47: "Teachers/I share planning periods with other teachers for professional growth."	(Low 3.10, High 3.68)	p=.001
66 [Teacher only]: "I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students' performance."	(Low 3.64, High 4.09)	p=.001

73/77 [Administrator/Teacher]: “An annual survey is sent to parents/guardians to gather information and perceptions regarding the school’s unique strengths and needs.”	p=.017
(Low 3.71, High 4.00)	

**Table 1.107**

*Group 1 Significant Differences Between Rates of Student Mobility*

<b>Group 1 Low and High Student Mobility Percentage</b>		
Item		p-value
34: “Teachers/I use peer coaching to improve their/my performance.”	(Low 3.14, High 3.73)	p=.022
35: “Teachers in my school act collectively to identify and solve problems.”	(Low 3.61, High 4.04)	p=.038
39: “Teachers in my school are/I am implementing research-based interventions and strategies to meet Title I Goals.”	(Low 3.64, High 4.15)	p=.014
53: “Teachers/I monitor classroom instruction and student achievement collaboratively.”	(Low 3.46, High 4.13)	p=.008
56: “Teachers adjust their/I adjust my instruction in order to attain our Title I Goals.”	(Low 3.43, High 3.93)	p=.012

**Table 1.108***Group 1 Significant Differences Between Elementary and Middle/Secondary Educators*

<b>Group 1 Elementary Schools and Middle/Secondary Schools</b>	
Item	p-value
11: "There is a clear articulation of standards in my school." (Elementary 4.21, Non-Elementary 3.69)	p=.002
22: "The culture of our school is totally focused on student learning." (Elementary 3.97, Non-Elementary 3.31)	p<.001
23: "The culture of our school and our teachers includes commitment to high expectation." (Elementary 4.11, Non-Elementary 3.52)	p=.001
27: "The culture of our school fosters school effectiveness and productivity." (Elementary 3.86, Non-Elementary 3.52)	p=.039
31: "I am passionate about student learning." (Elementary 4.80, Non-Elementary 4.54)	p=.003
34: "Teachers/I use peer coaching to improve my performance." (Elementary 3.76, Non-Elementary 3.27)	p=.010
40: "Research-based interventions and instructional strategies help my students to improve in my school." (Elementary 4.28, Non-Elementary 3.94)	p=.001
49: "I seek technical assistance to develop new skills for examining data." (Elementary 3.93, Non-Elementary 3.58)	p=.029
66 [Teachers Only]: "I examine data with my grade-level team to discuss what I can do to improve my students' performance." (Elementary 4.01, Non-Elementary 3.52)	p=.009
67 [Teachers Only]: "I plan and implement interventions for specific students based on their achievement data." (Elementary 4.28, Non-Elementary 3.72)	p=.001

**Table 1.109***Group 1 Significant Differences Between Rural and Non-Rural Educators*

<b>Group 1 Rural and Non-Rural</b>	
Item	p-value
31: "I am passionate about student learning." (Rural 4.72, Non-Rural 4.87)	p=.010
34: "I use peer coaching to improve my performance." (Rural 3.60, Non-Rural 3.90)	p=.037
41: "Our school provides additional learning time for students who need it." (Rural 4.23, Non-Rural 3.85)	p=.009