# Perceptions of Middle and High School Principals in Virginia on High-Stakes Testing

Jacqueline C. Coppage-Miller

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Carol S. Cash, Committee Chair

Travis W. Twiford

Ted S. Price

Jean A. Infantino

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature.

There were 22 findings emerging from this study. One of the findings revealed that principals perceived the necessity of instructional leadership as opposed to simply acting as school managers. The findings also revealed that middle and high school principals strongly agreed that high-stakes testing resulted in a loss of instructional time and that there has been a narrowing of the curriculum; however there now was a clearer alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Additionally, the findings revealed that less than 50% of middle and high school principals believed that high-stakes testing had helped close the achievement gap between minority and majority students. One of the most prevalent findings focused on the stress exhibited by students, teachers and administrators, all due to high-stakes testing.

One hundred and sixty-six Virginia middle and high school principals participated in this study. An electronic survey instrument was used to rate 31 statements derived from the scholarly literature regarding the unintended consequences and perceptions of high-stakes testing of middle and high school leaders in Virginia.

## Dedication

First I would like to thank God for without him this endeavor would not have been possible. Second, I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my loving husband who spent many days and nights encouraging me, feeding me, and being my source of strength when I thought I had no more to give, thanks for being my rock Mr. Keith Miller!

I would also like to thank all of my family members (Mom, Dad, Brian, Jr., Robin, and Fred, Jr.) for their unwavering support as I spent many days and nights tucked away working on this paper. You all never gave up on me and continued to encourage me to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Also an integral part of my support system is none other than Daisy, your unconditional love during those times that I just didn't want to go on, helped to sustain me.

To all of my younger relatives, I am completing this dissertation as a testament to what hard work and commitment can help you to accomplish. I hope I have paved the road to your destiny and achievable dreams.

I am forever grateful to my Committee Chair, Dr. Carol S. Cash for her unwavering patience as I worked my way through this process and bugged her along the way. Along with my Committee Chair, I would like to also thank those members of my committee that offered me suggestions and guidance as I came before them for recommendations. Thank you Dr. Travis W. Twiford, Dr. Ted S. Price, and Dr. Jean A. Infantino, your guidance proved to enhance my dissertation immensely and I am forever grateful!

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# Chapter 1
## Introduction

Our nation seeks to ensure accountability of student outcomes through significant educational reforms. School principals are tasked with leading the way; “there is a general belief that good school principals are the cornerstones of good schools and that without a principal’s leadership, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed” (DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 43). Due to accountability for high-stakes testing (HST) falling squarely on the principal’s shoulders, many school principals have engaged in unethical practices to ensure that their schools produce high-test results (Goldberg, 2004).

Dr. Beverly Hall, the 2009 American Association of School Administrators Superintendent of the Year, was heralded for high-test score gains in the Atlanta Public School system during her tenure. However, soon after her acclaimed recognition, a state investigation revealed that 44 of the district’s 100 schools were guilty of systematic and widespread cheating (Starnes, 2011). Starnes highlights the results of HST on the principal declaring, “creative people will always find ways to raise test scores. And we have lots of creative people in our school systems. And accept it: People cheat. They do. At least when expectations are unattainable and the consequences unreasonable” (p. 71). Starnes’ statement is profound; however more research is needed before conclusions can be made regarding the impact HST and educational accountability is having on school administrators. (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

This investigative study was based on a previous study conducted by Denny (2008). The purpose of Denny’s study was to understand the perceptions of HST testing on secondary principals in Texas. This study focused on principals in Virginia who were middle or high public school principals. The study was undertaken to bring an awareness of the perceptions secondary school principals experience while trying to meet the high expectations outlined in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).

The research into the dilemmas Virginia secondary school principals encounter and the actions taken to ensure that their school or school division meet the educational accountability standards set forth by the state and federal government may prove to be beneficial to state and federal policymakers, school boards, and educational leaders throughout the country. This research may provide stakeholders the concrete data necessary to begin dialogue and action on

the pressures and potential consequences principals undertake in order to achieve high student outcomes mandated by the state and federal government.

This chapter provides a background of the study followed by the purpose for undertaking this type of research. The chapter continues with the scholarly and practical significance of the study. Definitions of the key concepts included in the research will follow and the chapter concludes with research questions that helped to guide this study.

**Emergence of High-Stakes Testing**

Accountability can be traced all the way back to the biblical days of the *Old Testament.* In the book of Exodus, Chapter 18, Moses' father-in-law reprimands Moses because he had not instituted an accountability system to help him judge the Israelis. His father-in-law proposed an accountability system to help Moses by delegating responsibilities to others rather than having to be the sole judge. With the advice of his father-in-law, Moses established one of the first known accountability systems (Shafritz, Ott, & Jang, 2011). Since that time, accountability has continued to be a part of most types of organizations including education. Ohmann (2000) defines accountability as "keeping score, being able to show that the efforts of an instructor, department, or institution actually move toward a desired end" (p. 26).

Historically, schools throughout the United States (U.S.) have been known to have some type of an accountability system; however, many of the early accountability systems had no real high-stake repercussions. Prior to the 1960s, educational accountability primarily focused on compliance of rules and regulations prescribed by individual states such as the number of school days established each year and pupil-to-teacher ratios (Cobb, 2004). That all changed in 1957 when Russia launched Sputnik, the first orbiting satellite. The theory emerged that Russia had beaten the U.S. into space because it had better schools (Bracey, 2007).

As a result of the launching of Sputnik and the resulting theory of inadequately prepared American students, the federal government became increasingly involved in the educational system. This development was particularly interesting in light of the fact that the 10$^{th}$ amendment of the United States Constitution established that the educational system of each state is a primary function and responsibility of the state; however the federal government sensing an urgent need to intervene became a key player in the nations educational system and began

deciding on the process and content of education for the nation's school children (Kesslinger, 2011).

To counter the perceived educational deficits, the federal government passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 to address the weaknesses. With support from the NDEA, schools began training teachers in mathematics, science and foreign languages. The NDEA provided funding for testing programs and national curriculum development projects; all geared toward science and mathematics to compete with the Russians (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1984). With the federal government funding many programs and projects, schools were beginning to be held accountable, and fear in the post-Sputnik era became the tool of choice in reshaping American's curriculum landscape (Steeves, Bernhardt, Burns, & Lombard, 2009); however there was no formalized HST accountability linked directly to principals. As long as principals and superintendents could successfully work with the community, devise master school schedules, take appropriate disciplinary actions, and manage school budgets, principals were considered good managers and that was the scope of their accountability (Hunt, 2008).

Approximately twenty years after Sputnik, the National Commission on Education reviewed literature and interpreted data about the quality of instructional programs within our nations' schools, colleges and universities. The results were included in a report entitled: *A Nation at Risk.* The report criticized the quality of schools in the U.S. and called for educational reform (Louis, 1998). Many states began to demand public reporting on student achievement to include test data. At this time in American education, a distinct difference between managing and leading a school began to emerge. Even with increased educational accountability, school boards still held the success or failure of a school on the district superintendent (Hunt, 2008).

In January of 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The legislation had a profound impact on principals, causing them to become personally involved in the entire school improvement planning process. Administrators were now held accountable for the academic performance of individual and subgroups of students. For the first time, many principals were forced to defend the educational programs and decisions they implemented in their schools and districts (Hunt, 2008).

According to Walberg (2011), "achievement tests today play a major role in K-12 education. They allow educators to assess the programs of students, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and plan remediation as well as revisions of teaching and curriculum" (p. 6). The

pressure of NCLB accountability, which is mainly linked to student outcomes, has risen to the point that the legislation has created ethical dilemmas for school administrators who struggle to balance short-term student performance with long-term interests of the school (Willis, 2011). These factors as well as those perceived by school administrators was supported or discounted by the scholarly literature and research data.

## The Evolution of the Standards of Learning in Virginia

**The beginning of the standards of learning.** When Virginia first implemented standardized assessments, they were initiated on a voluntary basis. A memo dated June 27, 1997 from the Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction (LaPointe, 1997) elicited division superintendents to participate in the implementation of the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests; in return divisions would receive a one-time incentive payment for their participation.

On September 4, 1997 the Virginia Board of Education (VBOE) adopted new regulations for establishing standards for accrediting public schools in Virginia. The VBOE affirmed that the goal of higher student achievement was an effort to improve public education in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The VBOE stated “for the first time in Virginia, schools will earn their accreditation based on student’s achievement on specially developed tests as well as traditional measures such as course offering and staffing patterns” (Virginia Board of Education, 1997, p. ii).

According to the VBOE there were four reasons for instituting the new tests:

- provide an essential foundation of educational programs of high quality in all schools for all students;
- encourage continuous appraisal and improvement of the school program for the purpose of raising student achievement;
- foster public confidence; and
- establish a means of determining the effectiveness of schools (p. 1).

According to the Virginia Board of Education (1997), students in grades three, five and eight were expected to pass the SOL designated grade level tests in English and math, and their scores would be used as part of the criteria for advancement to the next grade level. Students were not to be systematically excluded from their assigned grade levels in order to avoid participation on their assigned grade level SOL assessments. At the middle and high school

level, students were required to take end-of-course SOL assessments in which they earned a verified credit as a part of the graduation requirement.

**The introduction of No Child Left Behind.** In an annual report released by the Virginia Board of Education (2003), the VBOE reported that the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation represented the "most significant federal education policy initiative in decades" (p. 25). The VBOE asserted that there would be a significant impact felt by schools and school divisions in Virginia due to NCLB requirements. The VBOE noted that the cornerstone of the legislation would be that the "state, school divisions, and schools make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in improving student achievement" (p. 26). Included in the NCLB legislation, AYP targets would be instituted incrementally until the 2013-2014 school year in which all students were expected to reach 100% proficiency in English and math.

Additionally schools were required to focus on closing the achievement gap of certain subgroups of students (limited English proficient, economically disadvantaged, major racial/ethic groups, and students with disabilities), and these populations of students would have to "meet state-established 'targets' for student performance on statewide assessments and other indicators" (Virginia Board of Education, 2003, p. 26). Another component instituted by the NCLB legislation required that during the 2002-2003 school year, an annual report card be issued to the public from the State on each school division regarding student achievement.

DeMary (2004), then-Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction, outlined the VBOE guidelines for sanctions and corrective actions for schools not meeting AYP targets. Superintendent DeMary affirmed that NCLB required the establishment of sanctions and corrective actions be applied to school divisions that did not meet the AYP targets for two consecutive years in the same content area. The two types of sanctions were identified; one was for schools that received Title I funding. These schools would be required to develop a school improvement plan within 90 days of notification of their status. The plan would have to be monitored and be included as part of the school division's improvement plan required for the *Standards of Quality* (Virginia Board of Education, 2004, p. 1).

The second type of sanction was established for Non-Title I schools. Non-Title I schools not meeting the targets in a specified subject area for two consecutive years were required to pinpoint areas of weakness and develop an improvement plan by analyzing their schools' data. Corrective action would be implemented when a school failed after two years in the same

subject area to meet the AYP targets. The VBOE (2004) identified seven corrective actions the state could institute for schools not meeting AYP targets three years in a row. They ranged from reducing funding to restructuring to authorizing the transfer of students to other schools that were high performing (Virginia Board of Education, 2004).

Another addition to the NCLB requirements was instituted during the 2005-2006 school year. Virginia, along with other states, would have to begin assessing students in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades three through eight and at least one time during high school. During this same year, states were now required to have "highly qualified" teachers teaching core academic subjects. In order to be highly qualified, teachers had to hold a teaching license and be endorsed in the content area in which they were assigned to teach.

During the 2007-2008 school year, schools were required to administer SOL assessments in science once at each grade span: elementary, middle and high school. Additionally, the VBOE reported that 95 percent of all students enrolled in each subject as well as the major subgroups must participate in the grade level assigned SOL assessments.

**Standards of learning today – accreditation.** According to the Virginia Department of Education (2012), the accountability system in Virginia is structured to support student learning through providing rigorous academic standards. These standards are still known as the Standards of Learning (SOL); students are assessed annually based on these SOLs to identify student academic progress.

The accreditation rating of each school in Virginia is determined by the school's overall student achievement in the four core academic subjects that are assessed annually. These subjects are English, history/social science, mathematics and science. Additionally, high schools are required to meet targeted benchmarks for students graduating and completing high school. Those schools that meet or exceed the established objectives defined by the Virginia Board of Education are rated as Fully Accredited (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

According to the Virginia Department of Education (2012), there are five types of accreditation ratings in Virginia; a school can be labeled as Fully Accredited if the pass rates established by the State Board of Education are met. The second accreditation rating is entitled Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate. This rating only applies to high schools with a graduating class. A high school can be labeled Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate if a school meets the established targets in all four-subject areas however the Graduation and

Completion Index (GCI) is between 81 to 84 points and does not meet the 85-point mark established graduation target.

The third accreditation rating is Accredited with Warning, schools are assigned this accreditation rating if a schools' adjusted pass rates in any of the four core subject areas is below the established achievement rate required for full accreditation. The Accreditation Denied rating is assigned to schools that do not meet the requirement for full accreditation for four consecutive years. The last type of rating is Conditionally Accredited; this rating is given for two reasons: (1) a school that is in the first year of existence, when given this rating the school is awarded a one-year grace period; and (2) the school for four consecutive years failed to meet the full accreditation targets and receives permission from the State Board of Education to reconstitute (Virginia Department of Education, 2012). Table 1 provides an overview of the accreditation ratings in Virginia.

**Standards of learning today – federal accountability.** Additionally NCLB legislation requires each state institute annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in order to ensure schools steadily increase their overall reading and mathematic student achievement results including achievement rates of selected subgroups. On June 29, 2012, Virginia received an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver that granted permission for Virginia to establish AMOs over six years in order to help reduce the achievement gaps between high and low performing schools. Since the Flexibility Waiver was granted, Virginia no longer uses Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) ratings; however the reporting of performance on how schools and student subgroups faired in meeting AMOs is still reported (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

According to the Virginia Department of Education, those schools not meeting the AMOs established by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and approved by the federal government must devise and institute improvement plans to help raise student achievement. The lowest performing schools are labeled as Priority or Focus schools and are targeted for specified interventions established by the State Board of Education. A news release by the Virginia Department of Education (2012) identified a Priority school based on a school's overall achievement rates of students on SOLs given in a single year. The number of Priority schools is

Table 1

*Overview of Accreditation Ratings in Virginia*

| Accreditation Rating | Rating Descriptions |
|---|---|
| Fully Accredited | Elementary and middle schools are Fully Accredited if students achieve all of the following pass rates:<br>English – 75 percent or higher<br>Mathematics – 70 percent or higher<br>Science – 70 percent or higher<br>History – 70 percent or higher<br>High schools are Fully Accredited if:<br>Students achieve pass rates of 75 percent or Higher in English and 70 percent or higher In mathematics, science, and history; and Attain a point value of 85 or greater based On the Graduation and Completion Index (GCI) |
| Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate | A high school or combined school with a graduating class is Provisionally Accredited-Graduation Rate if students achieve adjusted pass rates of 75 percent or more in English and 70 percent or more in mathematics, science, and history, and a GCI of 82 to 84 points. |
| Accredited with Warning | A school receives an Accredited with Warning rating if its adjusted pass rates for the four core subjects are below the achievement levels required for full accreditation. |
| Accreditation Denied | A school is rated Accreditation Denied if it fails to meet the requirements for full accreditation for four consecutive years. |
| Conditionally Accredited-New | Conditionally Accredited-New is awarded for a one-year period to a new school—comprising students who previously attended one or more existing schools. |
| Conditionally Accredited-Reconstituted | Conditionally Accredited-Reconstituted is awarded to a school that fails to meet full accreditation requirements for four consecutive years and receives permission from the Board of Education to reconstitute as an alternative. |

*Note*. Adapted from the Virginia Department of Education webpage, retrieved on 9/23/13 http://www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/school_report_card/accountability_guide.pdf.

equal to five percent of the Title I schools in Virginia, no non-Title I schools are identified in the Priority rating.

Any school labeled by the VDOE as a Priority school must undergo state-approved monitoring of improvement interventions. These schools are required to work alongside state-

approved turnaround partners designated to assist with implementation of the school improvement interventions that meet state and federal requirements (Virginia Department of Education, 2012).

Schools labeled as Focus schools are identified based on the schools' academic achievement rates of students in three "proficiency gap groups." These gap groups are comprised of students who, over time, have had difficulty in achieving the Commonwealth's academic standards. These Proficiency Gap Groups are:

> Proficiency Gap Group 1 – Students with disabilities, English language learners and economically disadvantaged students, regardless of race or ethnicity (unduplicated);
>
> Proficiency Gap Group 2 – African-American students, not of Hispanic origin, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1;
>
> Proficiency Gap Group 3 – Hispanic students, of one or more races, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1 (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 2).

Ten percent of the Title I schools in Virginia are identified as Focus schools and are subject to the same requirements as a Priority school; however Focus schools are required to use a state-approved coach to help the school "develop, implement, and monitor intervention strategies to improve the performance of students at risk of not meeting achievement standards or dropping out of school" (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 2).

Although the labeling of Priority and Focus will only be applied to schools not meeting the criteria indicated, Priority and Focus schools are not subjected to the sanctions of NCLB. This means that principals of Priority or Focus schools do not have to offer school choice or private tutoring for not meeting the prescribed standards, which in the past, factored into the principal's overall evaluation (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

**Principal Evaluation in Virginia**

The VDOE provides school divisions with guidelines for evaluating principals, administrators and central office personnel. Reported on the VDOE website (2013), the

*Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals* in Virginia was recently revised on February 23, 2012. The Virginia Board of Education approved the new guidelines and standards to become effective on July 1, 2013.

There are seven standards used to evaluate all principals in Virginia. The guidelines recommend, "40 percent of a principal's evaluation be based on student academic progress, as determined by multiple measures of learning and achievement, including, when available and applicable student-growth data from the VDOE" (p. 1).

The other six standards that are used to evaluate principals are "instructional leadership, school climate, human resource management, organizational management, communication and community relations, and professionalism each of which account for ten percent of the evaluation and performance rating" (p.1).

**Statement of the Problem**

McGhee and Nelson (2005) suggest that the impact of HST accountability on school leadership has yet to be deeply explored. The determination of a school's academic performance rating, state accreditation and federal accountability, are used as the predominant factors in determining the overall success or failure of schools (Kohn, 2000). The results of how well students perform on state assessments have high-stakes consequences for students and administrators alike (Willis, 2011). Kohn (2000) shares that principals in particular may be suspended from their positions or even fired; publicly shamed or taken over by the state. Kohn goes on to share that "a high-stakes approach often holds people accountable for factors over which they have little control, which is as pointless as it is cruel" (Kohn, 2000, p. 320).

As policy makers continue to place more demands on schools, administrators are finding themselves challenged to attain high student academic success rates in the context of dwindling funding sources and instructional support. This high-pressure atmosphere can cause administrators to sidestep research-based best practices and even go so far as to engage in unethical behavior (Goldberg, 2004) all in the name of producing high student achievement results. Administrators are finding it much more difficult to keep from narrowing the curriculum and instruction by "cutting time for the arts, history, science, etc." (Kirylo, 2010, p. 50). Kohn (2000) reports that "high-stakes testing has radically altered the kind of instruction that is offered to the point that teaching to the test has become a prominent part of the nation's educational

landscape" (p. 320). The focus on HST in the era of transparent accountability exemplifies the enormous pressure principals' face on a daily basis. Therefore the purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature.

## Significance of Study

**Scholarly significance.** McGhee and Nelson (2005) state, "school leaders, whose performance was once assessed using a variety of indicators that reflected the complexity of their job, are now finding their effectiveness determined in much narrower terms" (p. 368). With the passage of NCLB and as a result of mandated testing, the significant responsibility of most administrators has been focused on academic achievement of all students. These principals understand that a significant portion of their evaluation is based on the outcomes of HST, which has driven many principals to cut corners for the sake of performance outcomes (Wright, 2009).

Many principals blame HST for distorting their honorable educational intentions, interfering with their sense of what is right and wrong, and corrupting their integrity (Guskey, 2007). Little research has been conducted on what type of actions and ethical dilemmas principals have faced because of the HST and educational accountability. In order to fully understand the implications that HST is having on middle and high school principals, further investigative study was needed. McGee & Nelson (2005) concurred that the impact of HST in our nations' schools and how it impacts our principals has yet to be deeply explored.

**Practical significance.** Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, educational accountability has shifted the focus to student outcomes and has become a contributing factor to the perceived success or failure of the principal. Exploring the impact that these high-stakes tests have on middle and high school principals is being researched because the outcomes from this study could offer insight to federal, state and local policymakers as to the perceptions principals have regarding HST accountability in the 21st century.

## Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding

unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature.

## Justification of the Study

According to the annual state report cards released by Education Week (2013), Virginia's public education system ranks fourth in the nation. The ranking is based on four fundamental areas: 1) the chances of success; 2) K-12 student achievement; 3) school finance; and 4) policies that are related to transition and alignment. Due to Virginia's high academic ranking, Virginia educators provided this researcher with an excellent context in which to conduct research to determine the impact HST is perceived to have on Virginia secondary principals.

## Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature. There were several questions that helped to guide this study in order to fully understand the dynamics employed by the principal for the sake of raising student academic outcomes. This study along with the scholarly literature assisted in the investigation of the research questions that follow:

1. What impact does high-stakes testing have on middle and high school principals as instructional leaders?
2. What are the possible positive unintended consequences identified by middle and high school principals?
3. What possible negative unintended consequences do middle and high school principals identify?
4. What are the perceptions from secondary school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing?

## Conceptual Framework

Using the conceptual framework model, there was an outline for the basis of this research in which the researcher developed three fundamental concepts to understand the impact HST has on middle and high school leaders in the Commonwealth of Virginia. They were: (1) educational

accountability; (2) roles and responsibilities of the principal; and (3) impact of high-stakes testing on the principal. Figure 1.1 outlines the significant role HST plays in the educational accountability movement and how HST impacts the middle and high school principal.

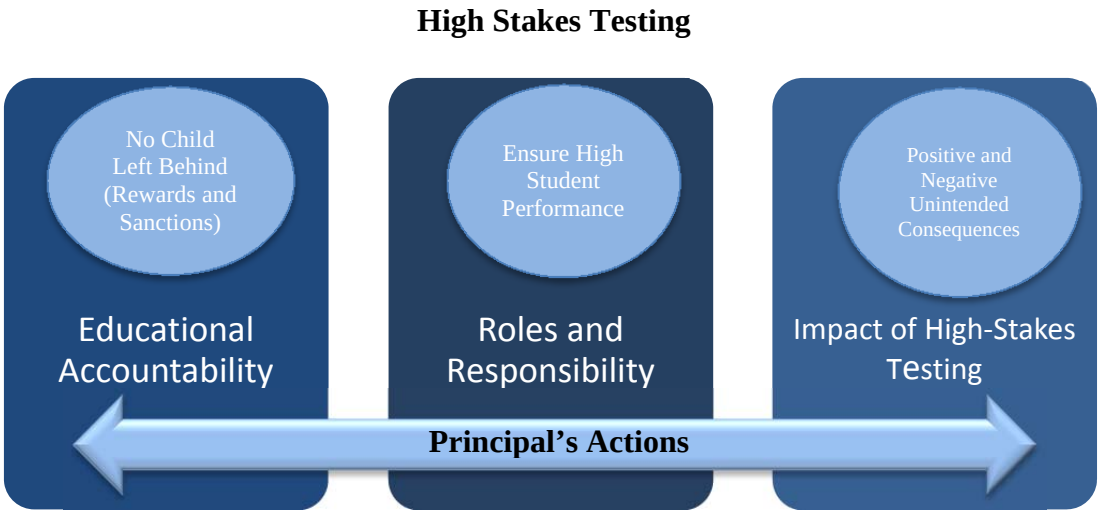


*Figure 1. 1.* Conceptual framework model of perceptions of secondary school leaders.

## Definitions of Key Terms

The following terms along with their definitions have been provided to facilitate the suggested meaning of the terms used throughout this study.

**Assessments.** "Used to describe processes of evaluating the effectiveness of sequences of instructional activities when the sequence is completed" (William, 2011, p. 3).

**Annual Measurable Objectives.** "Are the minimum required percentages of students determined to be proficient in each content area" (Virginia Department of Education, 2013, p. 1).

**Educational Accountability.** The purpose of testing students is to examine student outcomes and the performance of their schools and school divisions. Schools and school divisions that fail to show progress are held accountable to the state; low-performing schools are handed down consequences and sanctions for poor student academic performance (Botzakis, 2004).

**Focus School.** Schools are labeled as a Focus school if they are a low performing Title I school in the state of Virginia. A school labeled, as a Focus school must employ coaches that are approved by the State to assist in the implementation of instructional strategies and practices to improve student achievement (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

**High-Stakes Testing (HST).** According to Duffy, Giordana, Farrell, Paneque, and Crump (2008) HST is defined as the results of statewide assessments having direct and significant consequences on school building personnel as well as school divisions. “High-stakes testing refers to standardized exams with significant consequences for students (i.e., retention and promotion) or schools (i.e., decreased funding, negative teacher appraisals)” (Turner, 2009, p. 37).

**No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001**. Duffy et al. (2009) define NCLB as a legislative act that holds all schools accountable for student progress. There are four major components of the law “(a) stronger accountability, (b) more freedom from states and communities, (c) proven educational methods, (d) more choice for parents” (Robicheau, 2006, p. 3). This mandate requires schools to drastically raise student achievement levels as well as staff schools with highly qualified teachers (O'Donnell & White, 2005). NCLB requires states to introduce sanctions and rewards to public schools, which are based on their performance status. Those schools receiving Title I funding and do not meet the requirements are required to offer various options to continue to operate: such as public school choice, replacement of staff, school restructuring and in limited cases of underperformance, reconstitution of the school (Dee & Jacob, 2011).

**Principal.** This term is used interchangeably with school leader, administrator, manager, and instructional leader. The term is used to describe the person in the school building who is responsible for meeting the needs of the students and staff. The principal is the person who is ultimately responsible for improving student achievement of all students within his or her school building.

**Priority School.** The lowest performing schools in Virginia are labeled as Priority schools and are required to employ turnaround partners approved by the Virginia Department of Education. These turnaround partners assist these schools in the implementation process of strategies and reforms to improve student achievement (Virginia Department of Education, 2013).

**Proficiency Gap Groups.** The Virginia Department of Education (2013) defines Proficiency Gap Groups of students who are included in specific subgroups to identify Focus and Priority schools that have been established through the flexibility waiver. These gap groups are:

> Proficiency Gap Group 1—Students with disabilities, English language learners and economically disadvantaged students, regardless of race and ethnicity (unduplicated);
> Proficiency Gap Group 2—African-American students, not of Hispanic origin, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1; and
> Proficiency Gap Group 3—Hispanic students, of one or more races, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1 (p. 2).

**Sanctions.** DeCesara (2002) describes sanctions as a consequence that occurs when schools are labeled as failing. Schools labeled as failing suffer consequences imposed at the state and federal level. These consequences range from loss of state accreditation and/or takeover by the state to the more severe penalty of a school being closed or having to be reconstituted.

**Standardized Achievement Tests.** Standardized achievement tests are "designed to provide norm-referred interpretations of student achievement in specific content areas at certain points in their education careers. Norm-referenced interpretations are relative, showing how students compare with others in the nation" (Haladyna, Haas, & Allison, 1998, p. 262). Normed-referenced tests are tests based on how well a student does on a specific test that is then compared to a large group of test-takers (Marchant, 2004).

**Standards of Learning.** "The Commonwealth's expectations for student learning and achievement in grades K-12 in English, mathematics, science, and history/social science" (Virginia Department of Education, 2013, p. 2).

**Unintended Consequences**. Denny (2008) defines unintended consequences as "unforeseen results of the high-stakes accountability movement on public schools and its stakeholders as reported by educational researchers who have published in the timeframe beginning with the call for high-stakes testing by *A Nation at Risk* through the present" (p. 8).

## Scope and Limitations

The scope of this study focused on Virginia secondary school administrators who were middle and high school principals. The following limitations of this study are outlined as factors beyond the researcher's control:

1. The willingness of middle and high school principals to be honest and accurate when confronting their feelings regarding HST cannot be guaranteed.

2. There is the possibility that email may be returned or undeliverable if email addresses have changed, email is filtered as spam or other information technology security methods are in place within the school division.
3. Principals within the population may not wish to participate.
4. School divisions may have certain deadlines and timelines in which research can be conducted.
5. The research study may not be in alignment with a school division's strategic goals therefore the study is declined.

The following were delimitations of this study, which the researcher intentionally chose:

1. This study is limited to secondary school principals who are assigned to a middle or high school in Virginia.
2. The delivery method of the research survey instrument was via email; therefore some principals were excluded from the study as a result of the principals no longer assigned to a particular email address.
3. Outcomes from this study are not associated with any other school administrators except those school principals who are middle or high school principals in Virginia, thereby limiting generalizability beyond this group of educators.

**Organization of the Study**

Five chapters are included in this study. Chapter one of this study includes an introduction followed by an overview of the emergence of high-stakes testing in our nation's educational system. The chapter continues with the evolution of the Standards of Learning in Virginia, which is followed by the introduction of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and how the legislation impacts the state of Virginia. The chapter continues with the evolution of the Standards of Learning today and how Accreditation and Federal Accountability impact Virginia school divisions. The chapter continues with an outline of the Principal Evaluation in Virginia that focuses on student academic achievement, which is based on the Standards of Learning.

The conclusion of the chapter reports on the statement of the research problem, the significance of the study, the purpose and justification for the study, and the research questions. The last section of the chapter outlines the conceptual framework, defines key terms and lastly, asserts the scope and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two of this study provides a review of the scholarly literature on educational accountability throughout the years, the educational leadership and roles and responsibility of the principal and the impact of high-stakes testing on the principal. The chapter also includes relevant literature on the impact of HST: the good, the bad, and unintended consequences that have developed from high-stakes testing. This scholarly literature is followed by literature from both supporters and critics of high-stakes testing. The chapter concludes with a summary of the implications of educational accountability on the school principal.

Chapter Three is the Methodology section in which the purpose of the study, research design and justification are detailed in the beginning of the chapter. Next, the research questions, definition of the population, sample size and procedures, and data collection procedures are outlined. Following this information, the instrument design, data management and analysis along with the descriptive analysis are reported. The chapter concludes with a timeline for the research study along with a summary of the methodology.

In Chapter Four the researcher documented the data received from the participants along with an analysis of data and concludes with a summary of the results. Chapter Five includes the findings from the research and data analysis along with implications stemming from the results. The chapter concludes with recommendations from the researcher for future studies to address the findings resulting from this study.

# Chapter 2
# Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature. The review of the literature was designed to examine the historical framework of the educational accountability system throughout the U.S. and the impact it has had on the middle and high school principal.

This chapter is divided into five sections: (1) the historical background of educational accountability; (2) educational leadership and the roles and responsibilities of the principal; (3) the impact of HST on the principal; (4) unintended consequences of HST; and (5) supporters and critics of HST.

## Historical Background of Educational Accountability

Since the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, the federal government has set aside funding for education. It was Thomas Jefferson's vision that Americans be an educated population that could exercise their rights and responsibilities of citizenship (Alexander, Ravitch, & Elliott, 1993). During the infancy stage of our educational structure, most principals were considered managers; school boards were content with the role of their principals; as long as they could devise classroom schedules, discipline students, manage school budgets, and develop successful parent and community relations (Hunt, 2008). Not much in the way of testing for student achievement was instituted, rather "in the 1950s, educational testing was used mostly to track and select students for different courses or programs. Based on these tests results, students were often sorted into either a vocational or college preparatory track" (DeCesare, 2002, p. 10).

Unexpectedly, in 1957, accountability took a decisively different turn. The federal government became incensed that the Russians had launched Sputnik, the first orbiting satellite, and blamed the nation's education system for inadequately preparing students to compete academically on the global stage. It became clear from the launching of Sputnik that the federal government's goal was to improve America's educational system. Many forms of educational legislation began to emerge as a result of federal legislative intervention.

In the early 1960s federal initiatives began to take shape in the form of compensatory education, and funding for at risk students (Louis, 1998) to safeguard the educational accountability of students. One such initiative, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, required that any school receiving federal money for education be required to develop and implement desegregation plans for their schools in order to continue to receive federal funding (McCure, 2008). The enactment of the Civil Rights Act ultimately led to the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965.

The goal of the ESEA, enacted by the federal government, was to address the issues of inequality in the nation's educational system. It was established in an attempt to equalize the educational opportunities of all children and to ensure that all students would be able to fully develop to their potential. With the financial assistance provided by the federal government, the ESEA of 1965 was the beginning of holding principals accountable for student learning.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, educational accountability began to shift its focus to student outcomes. Students were now required to pass minimum-competency tests. These tests were deemed to be the key accountability measure needed for schools (Cobb, 2004). Many high school students were required to pass an exit exam as a prerequisite for graduation. This was seen as the first major push towards enforcing quality teaching and higher student achievement. That was until the release of a report known as *A Nation at Risk.*

On April 26, 1983, The National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE) submitted to Terrel Bell, Secretary of Education a report entitled *A Nation at Risk*. This report painted a startling picture of America's educational system (Goldberg & Harvey, 1983). The report was a scathing assessment of the schools and colleges in the U.S. According to Jorgensen and Hoffman (2003), "A Nation at Risk was also the beginning of an evolution in achievement testing and standards-based education reform"(p. 3). The report led President Bush in 1989 to convene for the first time a National Summit on Education in which all 50 governors' of the U.S. where invited to discuss education in our country.

From the goals developed at the Summit, schools were directed to ensure that kindergarten-aged children entered school ready to learn, high school graduation rates increase, students master five core subjects, students become global competitors in math and science, adult literacy rates increase, high school students are workforce prepared upon completion of high school, and that schools provide safe and drug-free facilities (Styron & Styron, 2011).

The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA) reauthorized the original Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. IASA was enacted to improve the education of disadvantaged children and continues to be an integral part of the ESEA.

In the same year, the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Goals 2000) was signed into law. This act helped support states' attempts to create rigorous benchmarks for what all students should be able to accomplish prior to leaving high school. For the first time in the U.S. educational accountability system, with the passage of IASA and Goals 2000, the federal government focused on the needs of all students, not just the disadvantaged and children at risk of school failure (Jorgensen & Hoffman, 2003).

Another defining moment in the U.S. educational system happened on January 8, 2002 when President George W. Bush reauthorized the ESEA of 1965 by signing into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), "arguably the most far-reaching education policy initiative in the United States over the last four decades" (Dee & Jacob, 2011, p. 418). This act proved to be a historic event that required each state to create a system of accountability that included annual assessments of students at certain grade level intervals. The enactment of NCLB brought into focus the importance of achievement testing of students in the K-12 arena.

Viewing America's educational accountability timeline, the reader can see that some form of accountability measures have been in place in our educational system for many years; however it was not until NCLB was enacted that schools that failed to meet federal accountability measures began to be held accountable for student academic progress. Post-NCLB, failing to meet those standards would result in significant consequences for school funding and accreditation. With the NCLB legislation in place, principals began to feel the ever-increasing pressure of educational accountability for student outcomes, as severe consequences are associated with schools that are underperforming. NCLB became the catalyst of a test-driven educational environment in which principals are under immense pressure to improve student academic achievement of not just some students, but all students.

## Educational Leadership and the Roles and Responsibility of the Principal

Kafka (2009) in her research explains that there is little historical documentation on the principal of the past, sharing that historians began tracing the principalship in the diminishing years of the Progressive era. Rousmaniere (2007) was surprised to learn that, at the time of

publication little was known about the development of the principalship and its significance to modern schooling. Even though there is little written on the historical perspective of the principal, there is some, and there are even a few historians working to retrace the roots of the principalship (Kafka, 2009).

In the early 1800s, teachers were seen as the head of the school and were supervised by the local school board that ultimately made all the decisions for the school. The teacher was responsible for performing the clerical, administrative and custodial duties. Eventually there became a need to have someone to be the person in charge. This person was called the principal teacher (Goodwin, Cunningham, & Eagle, 2005). As the century progressed, the principal became primarily a manager with responsibilities that included overseeing school finances, personnel, and overseer of school facilities (Goodwin et al., 2005).

In the early 1900s principals were responsible for teachers and their professional growth; this responsibility brought prestige and power to the principal's position (Kafka, 2009). In 1917 the profession of the principal gained further prominence when the first Annual Meeting of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) was held (Goodwin et al., 2005). Pierce (1934) asserts that the role of the principal as a professional came after 1918 as a result of the creation of the Department of Elementary School Principals of the National Education Association.

The goal of the organization was to bring awareness to the educational responsibilities of the principal. Pierce went on to assert that the organization "stimulated them to study their own problems, to conduct experiments in their schools, and to publish the results of their investigations" (p. 221). As a result of the professional organizations, principals began to implement more instructional practices such as having students read silently to understand printed information, effectively utilized intelligence and achievement tests and used socialized methods for recitations by students.

In 1921, the experimental use of intelligence and achievement tests by principals was sporadic due to principals having to furnish them at their schools' own expense (Pierce, 1934). Pierce explained that the "tests were used by principals for self-surveys of their school in such subjects as handwriting, spelling, reading, and problem analysis. The results were interpreted, and suggestions for improvement discussed at staff meetings" (The Origin and Development of the Public School Principalship, p. 84). Kafka (2009) affirmed that during this time, "although

principals were once seen as teachers who received better pay and additional responsibilities, the principalship gradually came to be seen as a distinct and increasingly prestigious profession" (p. 322).

Goodwin et al. (2005) reported that in the 1930s and 1940s, the focus of principals was spearheaded by the topics presented in principal professional magazines, and contextually, the U.S. was coping with the Great Depression and World War II. During this era, many students left school early to join the military, while adults returning from war went back to school to complete their education. With students transitioning in and out of the schoolhouse, principals evaluated the need to devise a tool to help assess whether students, once they completed their education, were well prepared to enter the workforce or ready for higher education. As a result, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) was established to help facilitate this concept (Goodwin et al., 2005).

In the postwar decade, the emphasis returned to the principal as the administrator in charge. However the launching by the Russians of Sputnik in 1957, forced the federal government to become a major player in the U.S. educational system (Kesslinger, 2011).

During the 1960s and 1970s, a new role emerged for the principal. Administrators became responsible for supporting and implementing federal programs. America's renewed interest in improving the educational system in the U.S. continued to add to the principals responsibilities; "the new role could be dubbed "manager-leader" (Johnson, 1981, p. 88).

Graduation requirements increased for high school students in the early 1980s, teachers had to earn enhanced teacher certifications and longer school days were implemented. Many states began requiring school divisions to publicly report the outcomes of student assessment results (Hunt, 2008). In 1983, after the release of the *A Nation at Risk* report, the focus for principals was "on how well individual students and groups of students were able to perform academically" (Hunt, 2008, p. 583). Hunt called this time period the standards movement and went on to explain that:

> The standards movement soon caused administrators to become more personally involved in school improvement planning. While administrators had traditionally worked to improve their schools, this new phase targeted the improvement of student performance in specific subject areas. In addition to the learning standards produced by the national professional organizations and state department of education, planning activities for

> school improvement were greatly enhanced by the signing of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act in 1994 (A Nation at Risk and No Child Left Behind: Deja Vu for Administrators, p. 583).

Between 1996 and 1999 the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) conducted a longitudinal study on standards-based reform that examined efforts in eight states and 23 school districts. Researchers found that during this time period, educators faced few consequences for not meeting academic outcomes prescribed by the state. The performance data given to principals were used for providing support to teachers and students rather than imposing consequences and sanctions. Principals whose schools posted low scores were called in to central office to explain their past actions and were required to submit a plan to correct the deficits. Principals, whose schools were identified as significantly underperforming, were moved to another school or placed in a different assignment; however these administrators were very rarely dismissed or demoted as a result of low student achievement (Goertz & Duffy, 2003).

When NCLB was enacted in 2002, the job descriptions and expectations for principals presented additional responsibilities that were directly linked to student achievement (O'Donnell & White, 2005). With the increase in the demands for accountability along with the changing demands of the position, principals were forced to become effective principals with “a broad set of principal roles and responsibilities designed to address the workplace needs of successful teachers and to foster improved achievement among students” (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 44). Principals were now tasked with becoming knowledgeable and competent in the area of student assessments and skilled in interpreting data in order to make critical instructional decisions (Cooley & Shen, 2003). Principals’ abilities to make good, sound instructional decisions could have dire consequences for schools that showed low academic growth.

Geortz and Duffy (2003) write, “the ‘soft sanction’ approach taken by many states and districts may be a thing of the past under the NCLB Act” (p. 9). Geortz and Duffy go on to report “the threat of sanctions, which range from school choice to school takeover, will get the attention of teachers and principals” (p. 10).

This new educational accountability system created a culture of fear, driven by the unanticipated consequences of NCLB (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). For example, principals having been evaluated on a number of indicators that reflected the complexity of the position

were now finding they were being evaluated in much narrower terms. These evaluation indicators ranged from student test scores to higher graduation rates (McGhee & Nelson, 2005).

For building principals, the pressures of accountability were even greater when assigned to low-achieving schools. Economic factors beyond the principal's control impact these schools in terms of their academic gains (Styron & Styron, 2005). Many argue that educational accountability should only include factors that are under the principal's control and should negate factors such as the economic status of students (Normore, 2004).

One principal interviewed in a study on educational leadership and accountability communicated her feelings about being a building principal in the age of accountability this way:

> Education is a different world now; it's all about accountability now. That's not entirely a bad thing because it's forced us to be very explicit about what we're teaching and how children are performing. But I worry about the stress all this accountability can bring to our lives. I worry about teachers who went into teaching because they care about teaching children and now they spend much of their time analyzing test data. I worry about children who may not get all of the enrichment programs they deserve because we have to use more time for the tested core academics. I believe my role [in an era of accountability] is to help people maintain some semblance of balance, to create schools that are focused on the joy of learning, not just passing the tests (Ylimaki & McClain, 2009, p. 13).

In the age of accountability, building leaders are held to standards measured by increased student performance. These achievements are expected of all students no matter the circumstances that might prevent student success, such as sickness or an extensive absence from school (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). Kafka (2005) reports that:

> As principals are asked to compete for students, parents and community support, and risk losing students (and thus funding) if their test scores do not improve, principals' individual importance in the success or failure of a school has seemingly increased (The Principalship in Historical Perspective, p. 329).

With such high-stake pressures being placed on the school principal, this researcher felt that it would be prudent to explore what impact school accountability may be having on our principals.

**Impact of High-Stakes Testing on the Principal**

This section of the scholarly literature focuses on the actions and decisions principals make in order to achieve high student outcomes on standardized tests. Guskey (2007) asserts that for at least three decades there have been efforts to hold principals accountable for testing results of students in public schools; however the reason educational accountability stands in the forefront is due to the passage of NCLB. Porter, Linn & Trimble (2005) affirm that the NCLB legislation dictates that "all students should achieve at the proficient level or higher (as defined by states) in mathematics and reading/English language arts by 2014" (p. 32).

Consider the following scenario; it's the end of the school year, all students have taken the required mandated HST and the results of those tests begin to go public. Here is an example of what can happen to principals:

> Hearts sink around the state when it is discovered that certain campuses are rated unacceptable. Other building leaders are elated to find all is well in their respective domains. Public relations directors in low-performing systems scramble to minimize the damage that will surely come in the morning papers. Recognized schools work feverishly to capitalize on the positive attention generated by these reports (Schulte, Schulte, Slate, & Brooks, 2002, p. 2).

This type of scenario described above happens across our country every year. Principals are aware that the outcomes from these high-stakes tests fall squarely on their shoulders and the consequences can be severe. "Principals may be suspended or fired.... or be publicly shamed (or, in extreme cases, find themselves closed down or taken over by the state) for low scores" (Kohn, 2000, p. 319).

Testing in schools in America is nothing new; however the stakes have become much higher for the principal, potentially leading to questionable actions or behaviors. "The pressure felt by educators has driven them to cut corners when preparing children to take high-stakes tests. Some of those efforts are good, others are bad (illegal), and yet others are ugly (ethically marginal)" (Wright, 2009, p. 117). Although much of the data examined thus far has emphasized the negative realizations of HST, several scholars including Denny (2008), Priolo (2011), and Almus (2010) have concluded from their studies, that there is some good that comes from HST.

**The good.** Denny (2008) conducted a study to determine the impact of high-stakes testing in Texas secondary schools. He compared what researchers believed was the impact of HST on secondary campuses with what Texas administrators believed was the impact of HST on

their own campuses. Denny used members of the Texas Association of Secondary Principals (TASSP) who were members during the 2005-2006 school year. Denny's findings concluded that HST had generated the use of copious data and that instructional decisions made by principals appeared to be data-driven.

An additional study conducted by Priolo (2011) concluded that the principals "expressed both positive and negative aspects of issues related to high-stakes testing and accountability, including data driven decision making and educating the "whole' child" (p. 113). Several participants in Priolo's study shared that the data they derive from testing were very helpful for guiding and informing decision-making.

Almus (2010) conducted a study in which he gathered information from 681 Texas principals and assistant principals on their beliefs of how HST had influenced their roles as administrators. Almus concluded that Texas principals and assistant principals believed that there were some positive aspects of HST. Emerging from the data, Almus' study revealed four positive outcomes from HST "(1) "Creates High Standards/Expectations," (2) "Creates Accountability," (3) "Creates More Focus and Sensitivity on Academics," and (4) "Other Positive Responses" (Almus, 2010, p. 82).

**The bad.** Guskey (2007) explains what educational accountability has done to principals: "Looming over educators, insensitive to the many problems they face, it wields the carrot of rewards in one hand and the club of sanctions in the other. Some educators even blame accountability for perverting their noble purposes, twisting their sensibilities, and corrupting their integrity" (p. 29). It is not uncommon to hear of school leaders cutting corners related to HST in the media.

> One just has only to browse the Internet, read the newspaper, or listen to the local and national news to learn of the problems with the current testing movement. The reliability of the actual tests and the many unintended consequences of high-stakes testing—from cheating by teachers and administrators to nonrandom human error to fudging dropout figures—should give us all pause. No one should overlook the increasing evidence of disquieting problems (Goldberg, 2004, p. 8).

On December 17, 2004 a keynote speaker, speaking to educators at a public forum in Columbus, Ohio, declared to the audience, "No Child Left Behind is a law that makes good people bad and bad people worse" (Chester, 2005, p. 3). Chester maintains that the impetus for

this statement was reports of cheating on state tests. He goes on to emphasize that due to NCLB, the ethics of educators are eroding; pressuring many educators to cheat in order to ensure that students met the intended targets outlined in the NCLB legislation. Goldberg (2004) explains that because of the pressures for administrators to achieve high student outcomes on high-stakes tests, it should not be surprising that scandals related to NCLB are prevalent. Goldberg suggests that these acts of cheating are not in isolation, but rather in many school divisions.

In Michigan there were 71 schools in 22 districts cited for testing irregularities and in Austin, Texas, indictments were handed down against the Austin Independent School District when it was revealed that high-stakes assessments had been compromised. There were 16 indictments handed by the Travis County grand jury against the school district and 16 counts against the deputy superintendent (Goldberg, 2004).

Many of the more recent scandals described by Goldberg involve fudging the numbers for dropout rates and manipulating low achieving students to leave school. What has led educators to resort to these types of unethical behavior? Wright (2009) believes that "It is no surprise that high-stakes testing in our schools is producing overwhelming pressure on everyone" (p. 117).

Wright (2009) asserts that some principals have been known to retain slower children in the first and second grade so that they may have a better chance of passing the high-stakes tests that they will experience for the first time in third grade. Wright reports that in Houston, Texas there is now an embarrassing excess of freshman students retained because school officials understand that these students, in their tenth grade year, would be required to take the NCLB mandated grade level tests. This situation was even featured on the television show *60 Minutes (2004).*

Kirylo (2010) interviewed Diane Ravitch, a research professor at New York University and a historian of education. Kirylo asked Ravitch if she could describe how testing is undermining our educational system. Part of Ravitch's response was, "high-stakes testing and accountability lead to all sorts of negative consequences: teaching to the test, narrowing the curriculum (cutting time for the arts, history, science, etc.), cheating, and gaming the system" (p. 50).

In *InSide Cox, a* Cox Communications customer magazine, an article appeared on the investigation conducted by *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (AJC) in which they led an

"unprecedented investigation exposing more questionable test results in schools across America. The AJC's investigative team gathered data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia and began publishing the information in the spring 2012, garnering attention from national officials and media" (Olmstead, 2012).

Figlio, (2006) in his study, investigated whether schools used discipline as a method to influence test scores. He hypothesized that during the weeks of high-stakes testing, students who were low-performing would receive longer suspensions than their higher performing classmates with similar infractions. Figlio presented the following evidence:

> Schools respond to high-stakes by selectively disciplining their students…The evidence is supportive of this hypothesis-these patterns are precisely what are observed in the data, but only for students in grades that are tested with high stakes for the school (Figlio, 2006, p. 850).

Although there are many journalistic and anecdotal accounts on the topic of principals cutting corners, using unethical testing practices, and cheating related to HST, there seems to be very little empirical research conducted on this topic. This revelation may be due to the fact that there are not many principals who are willing to acknowledge their role in such a highly volatile and career-ending scenario.

McGhee & Nelson (2005) conducted a study in which they interviewed three Texas principals who had been removed from their positions as principals due to their schools' recently released preliminary test scores. All three leaders shared how educational accountability created a culture of fear in most educational leaders in the Texas accountability system.

The three leaders had over 60 years of combined experience in education with 20 of those years in administration. Each was selected for administrative roles by upper administration and had reputations of being instructional innovators. Each of the three had also received awards and recognition within their own districts, as well as from outside educational groups for their exceptional leadership talents. One of the participants even earned the distinction of Teacher of the Year for the state. All three of the leaders had never received a warning about the professional consequences of low scores, and all three reported that, once removed from their schools as building leaders, they felt isolated and alone.

McGhee and Nelson (2005) suggested that cases such as these three illustrate the rash decision-making by school districts in response to student test scores and believe that these

principals' stories have implications for all educators across the nation due to accountability measures implemented as a result of NCLB. McGhee and Nelson write "what these cases suggest, then is that in a high-stakes testing accountability environment, test scores can trump all else when it comes to principal performance" (McGhee & Nelson, 2005, p. 370).

A study by Carlin (2010) on the perceived stress levels of schools principals elicited responses from middle school principals from four counties surrounding the City of Philadelphia who did not meet the annual yearly progress (AYP) goals. The study also was utilized to gain insight into the real life perspectives of these principals and how NCLB had impacted them personally and professionally. Carlin's study attempted to comprehend how NCLB had impacted the stress level of the middle school principals and their feelings on the future of education.

From the interviews conducted, all of the principals in the study reported that since the implementation of NCLB they had more direct contact with central office personnel to address interventions for students who did not meet the AYP requirements. One principal described a meeting with central office personnel as: "pressure packed, anxiety laced meeting in which each of the principals were told to get the scores up or you are fired" (Carlin, 2010, p. 122). All of the participants agreed that the central office staff wanted them to become much more data-driven, and this factor added to their feelings of increased pressure.

**The Unintended Consequences**

Ravitch, in her book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education* (2010), gives examples of how states and districts have tampered with their testing to reach the unrealistic goal of 100% student proficiency rates. Ravitch reports, "when people's jobs are on the line, the emphasis on testing and accountability produces these perverse consequences" (p. 50). In recent years, many school principals have been found to take extraordinary measures to ensure that their schools meet the high expectations set by the state and federal government. The most extreme measures taken by school principals are cheating on high stakes tests. Table 2 documents reported cases of cheating on high-stakes tests from around the country as reported in mainstream newspaper articles.

Reported in a case study conducted by Thiessen (2007), "more than 25% of educators cheat on high-stakes tests" (p. 3). Thiessen documents the types of cheating educators' resort to as a result of the pressures of HST. He places the types of cheating into four categories: "(1)

manipulating answer sheets; (2) manipulating administration process; (3) manipulating reporting process; and (4) manipulating teaching process philosophy" (p. 3).

Table 2

*Cheating Scandals*

| City/State | Source | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| Houston, TX | Gabriel, (2010) | Educators stole the state science test prior to testing and devised a detailed study guide. Student test results were invalidated. On May 24, the principal and assistant principal along with three teachers resigned over the scandal. |
| Norfolk, VA | Jeter, Minium & Vegh (2010) | A middle school principal was found to have coerced staff members to fabricate work for students in order to gain state accreditation. A staff member who refused to cheat reported the incident to the school division and the state department. The principal then tried to have the staff member fire. The principal eventually retired after the investigation found that she had pressured teachers to cheat. |
| Atlanta, GA | Bowers, Wilson, & Hyde (2011) | Thirty-eight principals in the Atlanta Public School System (APSS) were found to be involved in cheating on the high-stakes Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT). The three primary reasons found for the widespread cheating in the APSS: (1) unrealistic targets set by the school district; (2) a culture of fear, intimidation and retaliation throughout the district; and (3) the superintendent and her administrative staff, knowingly praising schools using unethical practices. |
| Los Angeles, CA | Blume (2011) | In 2010, administrators and teachers at six Crescendo charter schools near downtown Los Angeles, California were caught cheating by preparing students, and using actual test questions from the State exam. The Director of the charter schools had ordered principals to have their staff members break the seals on the high-stakes tests and allow the students to practice using the actual test questions. The director of the charter school |

| | |
|---|---|
| | was later demoted and the principals were suspended for 10 days. |

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

| City/State | Source | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| Baltimore, MD | Green (2011) | The Baltimore Sun reported assessment results from two Baltimore elementary schools were found to be compromised. This was the second time in over a year that Baltimore school officials had conceded to cheating at schools that were nationally recognized as urban model schools. The 18-month investigation revealed that test booklets had been tampered with and that a high percentage of erasure marks where changed from wrong to right answers. Additionally, attendance records had been altered prior to testing to indicate more students were in attendance. |
| El Paso, TX | Stanford (2012) | The Huffington Post reported that the school district of El Paso, Texas test scores rapidly increase. The schools in the district received additional funding and the superintendent received a $56,000 bonus. Many in the town called what was taking place “los desaparecidos,” meaning “the disappeared.” Some ninth graders were held back or skipped to the eleventh grade. Truant students were told not to come to school while others were encouraged to drop out or get their GED. The superintendent was given a hefty fine and sentenced to 3.5 years in prison. |
| Philadelphia, PA | Seigal (2012) | A principal and two teachers were suspended because they helped students to cheat on statewide assessments. The investigation found that there were a high number of erased answers changed from wrong to right. |
| Denver, CO | Auge (2012) | The principal at Beach Court Elementary school in Denver, Colorado was fired after oddities were found on test answers that could not be explained. The investigation revealed that widespread cheating had occurred at the principal level. |

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

| City/State | Source | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| Philadelphia, PA | Graham (2013) | Two principals voluntarily surrendered their administrative certifications rather than face disciplinary action by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Both principals confessed to erasing student answers on the statewide assessments. |
| Washington, D.C. | Resmovits (2013) | There are renewed calls for Michelle Rhee, the former Chancellor of the District of Columbia's school system to be investigated for cheating scandals that occurred during her 2007-2010 tenure. During her tenure, teacher evaluations were tied to bonuses for test results. Many said that the pressure teachers felt to ensure high-test results could have enticed teachers to cheat. |

Skorupski & Egan (2012) asserts that the reason educators may be motivated to cheat on statewide assessments could well be due to student test results being utilized to hold teachers, administrators and school districts accountable for student outcomes. Skorupski & Egan go on to declare that "the threat of not making AYP provides a large incentive for educators to cheat... the temptation to cheat must be great if it could make the difference between keeping or losing one's job" (p. 4).

Other unintended consequences of HST suggest that many principals are considering retiring early. In Carlin's study (2010), many of the principal's interviewed thought about leaving their chosen professions. One participant stated:

> I've been in this business much too long, and I've seen a lot of changes come and go, and I will be getting out soon enough - retiring - to try something else. But the pressure is too much, it is crushing to good people who help kids and then are told that is not good enough (Carlin, 2010, p. 136).

Another participant stated:

> I thought about getting out of this business on several occasions, maybe just moving my family away and starting a new career - that's the shame of it - I have all of this

> education, double masters, and I wind up with all the fingers pointed at me - this job is affecting my health (Carlin, 2010, p. 135).

Due to the steadily increasing shortage of Virginia school principals, DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) conducted a study to examine the concerns and conditions experienced by Virginia school principals. In the study, principals identified their most pervasive problems and issues related to their roles as instructional leaders, and 92.5% reported stresses related to increasing student achievement on standardized tests. The data from the study revealed that the principals are under stress as the researchers concluded "clearly, principals are straining under the burden of all that is expected of them in this new era of accountability, and many look forward to the day they can escape" (p. 58).

Styron and Styron (2011) conducted a study that explored the critical issues facing principals in Mississippi and compared the reported issues to conclusions from a study they conducted in 2003. The results of the survey indicated that, for both genders and all age groups of principals, accountability was the most frequently reported response and that regardless of the age of the principal, accountability was the most frequently reported critical issue.

Educational accountability as it relates to HST is one of the most frequently reported critical issues facing principals today. High-stakes testing requires principals to ensure that testing practices and procedures are carried out successfully to give surety of valid and reliable student data outcomes (Carlin, 2010).

In an article written by Zirkel (2013), he reports the findings of court cases in which administrators have been disciplined for improper administration of high-stakes tests. Zirkel shares the case of *Kentucky Education Professional Standards Board v. Gambrel and Thompson* (2002), in which principals' certifications were suspended.

> A state appellate court upheld the suspension of the certification of a principal and another administrator for 18 months and 12 months, respectively, for improprieties in the administration of a state-mandated school accountability test. The proven improprieties were that the principal, contrary to the mandated procedures, encouraged teachers, while administering the test, to assist students in understanding the test items, knew of staff member practices rewarding students for special efforts in the testing, and gave students unmonitored breaks and movement (p. 54).

Zirkel (2013) reports that many court cases expose the unintended consequences of HST. These cases uncover the implications associated with improper test administration as well as principal misconduct when they are held accountable for the administration and results of high-stakes tests.

## Supporters and Critics of HST

**Supporters.** On February 28, 2012**,** the U.S. Department of Education (USED), through the sponsorship from The National Center for Education Statistics, held a panel discussion on *Maintaining the Integrity of Assessment Student Achievement.* The USED was interested in collecting information on best practices used in HST. The focus of the discussion was on measures used to "prevent, detect, and respond to irregularities in academic testing" (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 2).

One panel member, the 2011 Interim Chancellor of Washington, D.C. Public Schools, spoke to the audience and shared that HST had contributed to meaningful discussions regarding test scores and data analysis. The chancellor revealed that test scores had "created an education environment in which it is now the norm to talk about student achievement data" (p. 18).

In his book entitled *Defending Standardized Testing,* Phelps (2005) asserts, "standardized tests may reveal weaknesses or strengths that corroborate or supplement a teacher's or principal's analysis" (p. 56). In addition, Phelps reported another benefit to standardized testing; a change in behavior due to the high-stakes involved. The author affirms, "those behavior changes typically include increases in motivation (on the part of students, teachers, administrators, or others), the incorporation of feedback information from tests, and associated narrowing focus on the task at hand" (p. 57). Thus Phelps endorses that behavioral changes stemming from HST help to bring clarity, organizational efficiency and a streamlined alignment of standards, curriculum and instruction.

Jones' book entitled: *The Unintended Consequences of High-Stakes Testing* (2003) reports that there are some researchers who have found testing to contribute to positive changes in instructional approaches. "In fact, because of the test, some teachers are changing their methods to more student-centered approaches" (Jones, 2003, p. 44). Jones cites the influence of HST as a rationale for teachers changing their instructional delivery methods because they believe it benefits students (Jones, 2003).

Supporters of HST subscribe to the belief that school leaders should be held accountable for student outcomes, and that HST is a motivational factor in helping them to become more effective at supervising their staff members (Denny, 2008). As principals are becoming more knowledgeable on how to provide instructional support and guidance to teachers, Denny reports "supporters of testing believe that high-stakes have inspired educators to adopt better curricula and employ more effective teaching methods" (p. 29).

According to Kress (2007), the former domestic policy advisor for the White House under President George W. Bush and the chief negotiator of the NCLB legislation is still considered a strong supporter of the NCLB mandate and argues that there is no need to narrow the curriculum under NCLB. Kress asserts the curriculum is only narrowed "when poor teachers and/or administrators allow that to happen. It's pathetic. Poor practitioners do this and then blame it on NCLB. Ridiculous. If math and reading are professionally and effectively taught, there's plenty of time for other courses" (p. 3).

Klein (2011), in his interview with Michelle Rhee former chancellor of Washington, D.C. public schools, asked Rhee whether NCLB had been successful? Rhee was quoted as stating "I think everyone knows there are some changes and modifications that need to be made, but I don't think that anyone can doubt that it has brought a new level of accountability to American schools" (p. 3). Rhee goes on to assert that NCLB was the reason for schools looking at their data in ways they have never done in the past; schools are now paying attention to sub-groups of students. Kolodziej (2011) also believes in the logic behind NCLB is to hold schools accountable for all subgroup of students affirming that there are some parts of NCLB that are working, mainly the focus on improving education for the minority population.

Kolodziej asserts the most important component of NCLB has "brought attention to the state of education in its entirety. With a major debate surrounding No Child Left Behind, its faults can eventually be corrected to literally leave no child behind in education" (p. 61).

Dr. Gregory Cizek, a professor specializing in testing policy at the University of North Carolina's School of Education was interviewed in March 2010 by *The Economist* for their report titled "Eight Questions for Gregory Cizek" regarding standardized testing. One of the questions asked of Dr. Cizek was whether test scores could tell America anything about our educational system in todays' society. Cizek responded:

> Students test scores are valuable in a variety of ways to diverse audiences. When aggregated (that is, analysed [*sic*] as a group) they are often particularly helpful. For example, at the classroom level, test scores can provide teachers with information they can use to improve their instructional practices. Aggregated at a school or school-district level, they can inform choices about curriculum, textbooks, staff assignments, and professional development or additional training needs. At the highest level of aggregation, test scores provide information to policymakers at the state or national level that they can use to make decisions about funding and for evaluating policy initiatives. Even if there were no other uses, test scores help those responsible for education to understand how efficiently and effectively the allocated resources are used and they provide one source of accountability information (Democracy in America, 2010, p. 1).

Chetty, Friedman & Rockoff (2011) believe that the use of test scores is vital to our educational system. In their executive summary entitled: *The Long-Term Impacts of Teachers: Teacher Value-Added and Student Outcomes in Adulthood,* the researchers reported student test scores are one way of measuring teacher quality. In their research, they affirm that students who have high-quality teachers gain entrance into colleges, attend more prestigious colleges, live in higher socio-economic communities and ultimately save more for retirement.

**Critics.** There are many more critics of HST than supporters. Phelps (2011) reports "NCLB has created a clear incentive for educators who are worried about their schools' performance to cut back on art, music, and history classes while devoting more time to reading, math, and science" (p. 2). Cawelti (2006) agrees that the narrowing of the curriculum is a result of NCLB, attesting that schools are under extreme pressure to meet targets stipulated by AYP in reading and mathematics. Cawelti writes that teachers at the elementary level spend approximately 75 percent of their instructional time preparing students in reading and math, which leaves a disproportionate amount of time for other academic subjects.

While cutting out non-tested subject areas, Phelps reports that teachers spend an enormous amount of time on test-taking techniques with their students. These techniques range from filling in answer sheets to whether to guess or not on a particular question. Phelps believes that this type of instruction "eats up weeks, even months, of class time during which students study old examinations or practice test-taking skills" (p. 2). In addition to teaching to the test,

there is research to support that school administrators are allocating more resources to the subjects that are only included in HST.

Minarechová (2012), in her report, lists four negative effects HST has on the school leader:

- leads administrators to enact policies to increase test scores but not necessarily increase learning;
- causes administrators to reallocate resources to tested subjects at the expense of other subjects;
- leads administrators to waste resources on test preparation; and
- distracts administrators from other school needs and problems (p. 94).

Furthermore, Pepper (2010) writes “the spotlight on the use of test scores to demonstrate accountability without guidance or support for capacity building may inadvertently be creating a situation in which principals feel forced to take full responsibility for the academic programs and processes of the school” (p. 44). Pepper asserts that this type of situation could be pressuring principals to exert a more authoritarian leadership approach in which they alone make decisions about the instructional practices used throughout the school building.

Ravitch (2010), a leading researcher in the field of education and former Assistant Secretary of Education and Counselor to the Secretary of Education, was once a proponent of NCLB. She now subscribes that NCLB’s goals have “negative consequences for thousands of schools, whose teachers are struggling valiantly each day to do what no nation has ever done before. Furthermore, its simpleminded and singular focus on test scores distorts and degrades the meaning and practice of education” (p. 109). Ravitch suggests NCLB was “a punitive law based on erroneous assumptions about how to improve schools. It assumed that reporting test scores to the public would be an effective lever for school reform. It assumed that changes in governance would lead to school improvement” (p. 110).

Ravitch contends that NCLB’s assumption that shaming schools who’s scores did not meet the AMO targets would force the staff members that worked in them to produce higher test results and that the cause of the low test scores were due to “lazy teachers and lazy principals, who need to be threatened with the loss of their jobs” (p. 111). Lastly, Ravitch vehemently

attests that NCLB's creators believed that schools with strong test scores would result in students receiving a good education, unfortunately in her opinion that is not the case.

Ravitch and Chubb (2009) believe that it is time to discontinue NCLB. Ravitch et al. believes that NCLB has had adequate time to prove the benefits of its legislation; however it has failed. Ravitch et al. contends that since its inception, NCLB has yielded meager gains in student achievement, citing recent reports from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that "despite the intense concentration on reading and mathematics required by the law, the gains registered on NAEP since the enactment of NCLB has been unimpressive" (p. 1).

Another critic of HST, Berliner (2011), reports that the pressure associated with HST has led some administrators to remove students from tested subjects and even schools when they are expected not to fair well on these tests. Berliner writes that in addition to removing students from tested subjects, some administrators willfully mistreat students in the hopes that they will drop out of school or they hold students back a year before having to take the tests. Berliner believes that:

> one quite rational but troubling way to accommodate to the pressures to obtain ever higher tests scores from students is by curriculum narrowing. This may be the most important lesson to be learned by nations using high stakes testing policies to improve student achievement" (p. 289).

Berliner argues that since there is no sanction placed on subjects such as science and history, scores in English and math should increase; however the subjects not sanctioned are robbed of instructional time due to the need for time in subjects that have HST consequences. Berliner asserts that curriculum narrowing is the likely response to HST, stating that "while the narrowing, and the test preparation that accompanies the narrowing, is likely to result in higher scores on the tests that are so consequential for teachers and administrators, there are many side effects of this response to the high stakes testing policy" (p. 299).

Parents, too, seem to take issue with NCLB. A Gallup Poll (2009), conducted through telephone calls of 1,010 national adults reported that there was "no consensus among either the entire American adult population or parents of school-aged children that the landmark education act has improved the quality of education received by public school children" (p. 4). The report went on to attest that a large portion of the population surveyed believed that NCLB had no effect on their child's education, or in some cases, has made it worse.

A critic of the accountability system includes the current President, Barack Obama. On March 14, 2011, President Obama while addressing students, teachers, and representatives of major educational associations, proclaimed “I want every child in this country to head back to school in the fall knowing that their education is America’s priority. Let’s seize this education moment. Let’s fix No Child Left Behind” (Brenchlev, 2011, p. 1). President Obama spoke again on March 28, 2011 at Univision Town Hall. The President, responding to a student who questioned why they had to take so many tests answered the student by asserting, “we have piled on a lot of standardized tests on our kids…. Too often what we’ve been doing is using these tests to punish students or to, in some cases, punish schools” (Office of the White House Secretary, 2011, p. 8).

## Conclusion and Implications

The review of the literature shows that educational accountability for student achievement has existed, in some form, for many years, and that it has become an increasingly prominent responsibility of building principals. As accountability measures become more stringent and tied directly to student test scores, principals are finding themselves more than ever engaged in instructional leadership initiatives to improve their students’ test scores; however they are still responsible for the managerial tasks associated with the building leader.

The literature suggests that the principal is no longer just the manager of the schoolhouse but also a leader for student learning. With the accountability measures in place due to NCLB, principals are finding themselves measured by the success of statewide HST assessments. The long-term impact of the accountability movement on principals is worthy of further inquiry to determine how the continued HST pressure and soaring academic targets impact principals’ perceptions of HST.

# Chapter 3
# Methodology

## Purpose of the Study

Although the intentions behind NCLB were designed to ensure educational accountability for all students, this controversial legislation is a "punitive law based on erroneous assumptions about how to improve schools" (Ravitch, 2010, p. 110). The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature.

The research design is discussed in the first part of Chapter 3. It is followed by the study's research questions. The next section of the chapter describes the population and sampling techniques. The chapter continues by outlining the data collection and data gathering procedures. The next part of the chapter describes the instrumentation used in the study as well as the reliability and validity of the instrument. The chapter concludes with the data management and data analysis techniques along with the timeline utilized for conducting this study.

## Research Design

This investigation on the perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia on high-stakes testing is a mixed-methods study. According to Butin (2010), "mixed-methods design is the use of both types of research methods—qualitative and quantitative—to collect more varied data and strengthen the validity of the final conclusions" (p. 76). More emphasis is placed on the descriptive study to explore the perceptions that middle and high school principals in Virginia have about the impact high-stakes testing has had on them in their roles as school leaders.

According to Butin (2010), descriptive research provides clarity in order to have a better understanding of an educational issue; descriptive research asks the "what" and "how" questions that are needed to focus attention on the types of research methods and data collection that are utilized in this study. The qualitative aspect of this study was utilized to garner a different perspective on the explanatory aspect of the study; which resulted from open-ended questions.

Data collection for this study was tentatively scheduled for October and November of 2013; however due to many school divisions requiring the completion of a research application

prior to approval to conduct research in their division, the deadline was extended until mid December 2013. The researcher began the study by acquiring the contact information from the Virginia Department of Education on all 2013-2014 public middle and high school principals.

**Research Design Justification**

Although this research design is a mixed-method study, the dominant perspective focus was on the quantitative design. According to McMillan and Wergin (2010), quantitative research is utilized "to describe phenomena or to investigate relationships among variables. Descriptive non-experimental research uses frequencies, percentages, averages, and other simple statistics to provide a description of the data collected" (p. 14).

Additionally, Butin (2010) asserted that quantitative research methods provide for distinct quantification by using Likert-type scales. This study was designed to utilize frequencies, percentages, averages, and cross tabulations to describe the data collected. The data were derived from a questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale; therefore quantitative research methodology was the best fit for accurately interpreting data derived from this study.

According to Creswell (2009), investigating the relationships "between and among variables is central to answering questions and hypotheses through surveys and experiments" (p. 145). Creswell asserted that utilizing a small set of variables in the research design that is tightly controlled provides the researcher with the needed measures or observations needed to test a theory.

Additionally the qualitative design of this research was incorporated into the study to understand "the direct experience of others" (McMillan and Wergin, 2010, p. 7). This part of the study allowed for descriptive analysis unlike the quantitative data that focus on measurements and numbers.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What impact does high-stakes testing have on middle and high school principals as instructional leaders?
2. What are the possible positive unintended consequences identified by middle and high school principals?

3. What possible negative unintended consequences do middle and high school principals identify?
4. What are the perceptions from secondary school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing?

**Defining the Population**

In this study, the population was defined as all 2013-2014 middle and high public school principals in Virginia. The researcher received the education directory of all middle and high school principals from the Virginia Department of Education. The Virginia Department of Education school directory identified 665 middle and high school principals in Virginia.

**Sample Size and Procedures**

The population considered for this study began with the identification of 665 middle and high school principals in Virginia. Due to several school divisions having specified deadlines for applying for research approval that did not fall into the timeframe of this study, 75 school principals from four school divisions were not included in this study. Additionally, 39 school principals from three school divisions were not included because the research did not align with their school systems' strategic goals. There were 11 school principals not included due to email addresses being non-deliverable, all in different divisions. Therefore there were a total of 540 middle and high school principals included in the surveyed population.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher utilized a survey instrument to collect the data analyzed. The researcher provided a cover letter to explain the research being conducted as well as an embedded web link to which the participant could access the actual survey instrument. It was explained in the cover letter that completing the survey would imply their consent to participate in the study.

Additionally the cover letter explained to the potential participants their rights, stating that they had the right not participant at any time during the research process and that no negative impact would result from withdrawing from the study. The cover letter also shared that approval had been received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in order conduct the study. A copy of the cover letter is included in Appendix A.

The researcher sent the initial survey via email and sent two subsequent reminder emails to those who had not responded to the first request. The third email detailed to potential participants that this was the final request for participation in the research study. The requests were each sent a week a part from each other; therefore potential participants had three weeks in which to respond to the survey instrument.

The researcher only solicited participation with three emails to avoid the appearance of harassment. Additionally, the rationale for sending the two additional email requests was used as a reminder to potential participants who have many roles and responsibilities and may have simply placed the survey questionnaire at the bottom of their priority list.

The research study yielded quantitative and qualitative data compiled from the returned survey questionnaires. The quantitative data was analyzed using the software package *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS). SPSS is a computer application program that allows the operator to generate statistical data analysis. The program also allows for the production of analytical reports and has the capability of producing statistical graphs.

SPSS was used to analyze the data from the survey instrument to garner analyses in data reporting. The measures used to analyze the data included the frequencies, percentages, cross tabulations as well as in some cases pairwise analysis. Additionally, qualitative thematic analysis was conducted on the two open response questions posed at the end of the survey instrument.

**Data Gathering Procedures**

The first part of the study describes demographic data derived from the survey questionnaire; there were nine pieces of demographic included. The demographic data reported specified the gender makeup of respondents to the questionnaire. The second piece of demographic data focused on the age ranges of respondents. The table included the following age ranges: 30 and under, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 60 and older. The third piece of the demographic data reported included years of experience as an assistant principal prior to becoming a principal. The data are grouped as follows: 0-5, 6-11 12-17, 18-22, 23 or more years of experience.

The fourth demographic data included in the study detail the years of experience participants have had as a school principal. The data are grouped as follows: 0-5, 6-11, 12-17, 18-22, 23 or more years of experience. The fifth demographic data in this study focused on whether the school leader was a middle or high school principal. The sixth piece of demographic

data in this study focused on the campus type that the school principal was assigned to oversee. Since the study is focused on secondary school leaders, the data are grouped into two categories, middle and high school.

The seventh piece of demographic data included in this research identified the student enrollment at each school where the principal was assigned. The student enrollment size was categorized as follows: 100-400, 401-800, 801-1200, 1201-1600 and 1600 or more. The eighth demographic data included information on whether the schools that these principals run are identified as a Title I school or a Non-Title I school. The data are outlined to show the rate of return for Title I and Non-Title I school principals.

The last piece of included demographic data, identified the accreditation rating of each participant's school. The table groups respondents according to the following accreditation ratings for the 2013-2014 school year: Accredited, Accredited with Warning, Accreditation Denied, Accredited with Warning Graduation rate, and Conditionally Accredited.

In each section on demographic data, there is a corresponding table that reports the frequency and percentages of respondents. In the demographic comparison section there is also a table that reports the data results using contingency table analysis.

**Instrument Design**

The first portion of the research instrument begins with a cover letter used as an introduction. The introduction included background information regarding the researcher and an explanation of why the study was being conducted. Additionally the letter included information about the sample population and the framework of the survey questions. An explanation about the confidentiality of the participants was also included in the cover letter.

There were three sections included in the survey instrument. The first section collected demographic data pertinent to the study, which included gender, age, and years of experience as an assistant principal and as a principal. Participants answered the survey questions based on information from the 2012-2013 school year; these data included the type of school classification supervised by each school principal to determine whether it was a middle school or high school.

In addition, the questionnaire solicited the enrollment size of each participant's school. Information was also collected on whether the participants' school was identified as a Title I school. The last piece of demographic data collected establishes the type of accreditation rating

that was assigned to the school for the 2013-2014 school year based on testing results from the 2012-2013 school year.

The second section of the survey instrument was designed to measure participants' perceptions of HST as they related to the supporters' beliefs outlined in the literature review. This section also elicited information pertaining to perceptions of principals on how HST had impacted them as instructional leaders. This section also gathered information from participants' about their perceptions regarding the opinions of supporters and critics of HST that were addressed in the literature review. The instrument in its entirety can be found in Appendix B.

The last section of the questionnaire allowed for open-ended responses regarding participants' perceptions of HST that may not have been addressed in the overall questionnaire. This ethnographic part of the study allowed for "direct engagement with the participants and environment to obtain an in-depth description and interpretation of behavior within a culture or social group" (McMillan and Wergin, 2010, p. 7).

The survey instrument used a five point Likert scale in all sections except for the demographic data collected and free response/open-ended section. The Likert scale design used the following categories: 1) strongly agree, 2) agree, 3) uncertain, 4) disagree, 5) strongly disagree. (See Appendix B).

**Reliability and Validity**

The instrumentation used in this research study was a questionnaire developed by Denny (2008). Permission was granted by Denny to utilize his instrument and the electronic email detailing permission is included in Appendix C. Creswell (2009) asserted that validity of the instrument is critical to deriving meaningful interpretation of the data obtained from one's survey instrument. Denny's instrument had already been validated. He field-tested 10 non-participating secondary administrators from neighboring school districts to clarify and validate the instrument and calculated an alpha value of .8762.

**Data Management**

All data received from the survey instrument were gathered and maintained by an approved survey site (www.survey.vt.edu). This site was designed and approved by the Virginia Tech Information Technology Department. The format that the results from respondents were

captured in allowed for the data to easily be collected and manipulated. Additionally, in order for participant data to be accessed, a password was assigned that only the researcher had access to in order to analyze the results.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

This research study was designed to yield quantitative data compiled from the returned survey questionnaires. The data were analyzed using the software package *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS). SPSS is a computer application program that allows the operator to generate statistical data analysis. The program also allows for the production of analytical reports and has the capability of producing statistical graphs.

SPSS was used to analyze the data from the survey instrument to garner analyses in data reporting. The measures used to analyze the data included the frequencies, percentages, cross tabulations as well as in some cases pairwise analysis. Additionally, qualitative thematic analysis was conducted on the two open response questions posed at the end of the survey instrument.

**Descriptive Analysis**

Because of the properties of the final data corpus, nonparametric statistical measures were chosen for data analyses. Therefore, contingency table analyses Pearson $\chi 2$ statistics were reported. The use of these statistics is consistent with recommendations made by the American Psychological Association (Wilkinson, 1999).

**Timeline**

The researcher received IRB approval to conduct this study on October 21, 2013. (see Appendix D). The research instrument was first mailed out on October 23, 2013 to all 665 middle and high school principals in Virginia. Due to many school divisions requiring research approval from their division to conduct any type of research study, the researcher had to amend the start and closing dates once approval from a school division was received. The survey timeframe was amended to indicate that the participation window would be conducted within three weeks of the approval date.

Therefore after the first week of the survey instrument being distributed, a follow-up email with the introduction letter and survey instrument was again emailed to those participants

that had not completed the survey in order to ensure that the researcher was able to solicit a high return rate. The last and final reminder was a personal e-mail to each non-responder sent out at the end of the third week of the survey window.

**Methodology Summary**

The methodology chosen for this study, Virginia secondary principals' perceptions of HST, should lead to an overall understanding of the intended and unintended effects of HST. The findings from the study could prove beneficial to state and local policymakers, legislators and educators as well as other researchers in the field.

# Chapter 4
## Results of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature.

Four research questions were developed in order to investigate and understand the attitudes and behaviors of the school principal related to raising student academic outcomes in a HST environment:

1. What impact does high-stakes testing have on middle and high school principals as instructional leaders?
2. What are the possible positive unintended consequences identified by middle and high school principals?
3. What possible negative unintended consequences do middle and high school principals identify?
4. What are the perceptions from secondary school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing?

A five point Likert scale survey was developed and utilized to collect data. The survey instrument was developed by Denny (2008) and used with his permission (see Appendix C). Denny's instrument was validated and calculated with an alpha value of .8762. The survey instrument included three sections: the first section included nine demographic data questions that solicited information regarding the principal and his or her school; the second section used the Likert scale and included 31 statements pertaining to high-stakes testing as affirmed by the scholarly literature; the third and last section of the questionnaire included two free response/open-ended questions that the researcher wrote. This portion of the questionnaire was added from Denny's original instrument to allow respondents to provide qualitative data regarding their perceptions of HST that otherwise may not have been obtained through the use of the Likert scale format.

The population from this study included all present middle and high school principals in public schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Initially, 665 middle and high school principals were identified as fitting these parameters. Due to limiting deadlines for research

approval in several divisions, 75 school principals from four school divisions were not included in this study. Additionally, 39 school principals from three school divisions were not included because research approval from their division was denied because it was reported that participation did not align with their school systems' strategic goals. There were 11 school principals not included due to email addresses being non-deliverable, all in different divisions.

The remaining 540 middle and high school principals were included in this study. According to Krejcie and Morgan's criteria (1970), approximately 226 middle and high school principals would have needed to participate in order to consider the sample representative of the larger population. Only 166 Virginia middle and high school principals chose to participate in the study, falling 61 participants short of the benchmark set by Krejcie and Morgan. However the researcher continued with the described study using the 166 responses obtained from the survey instrument.

The questionnaires were emailed to all 540 middle and high school principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia. An overall return rate of 31% was obtained ($N$ = 166); high school principals completed 46% of the surveys ($N$ = 76) and 51% were completed by middle school principals ($N$ = 84), 3% of the respondents ($N$ = 6) did not identify if they were a middle or high school principal and left the answer blank.

This chapter revealed data collected from the survey instrument and the responses of the participants. The demographic data are summarized in the first section followed by the 31 questions analyzed from the survey questionnaire. The third section details the results of the open-ended responses from participants. The last section of the chapter provides a summary of the data analysis.

**Demographic Results**

The first section of the survey questionnaire was entitled Section I: Demographic Information. This section elicited demographic data from participants regarding their gender, age, years of experience as an assistant principal and principal, whether they were a middle or high school principal, how long they had been a principal at their current school building, how many students they had in their current school buildings, whether or not the school was a Title I or Non-Title I school and lastly, what type of accreditation rating their school was under during

the 2013-2014 school year. Totals for the sample's demographic variables are reported using frequencies, percentages, cross tabulations and in some cases pairwise analysis.

**Gender.** The first survey question in the demographic section asked respondents to identify their gender (see Table 3). Females accounted for 34.3% (*n* = 57) of the respondents and males accounted for 64.5% (*n* = 107).

Table 3

*Gender Totals*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Female | 57 | 34.3 |
| Male | 107 | 64.5 |
| Total | 164 | 98.8 |

*Note*: Missing values = 2

**Age.** Survey question 2 in the demographic section requires participants to identify an age range. The groupings were as follows: under 30 years of age, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 60+ years of age (see table 4). The data revealed that 0.6% (*n* = 1) of respondents were under the age of 30, 17.5% (*n* = 29) of the respondents were between the ages of 31-40, and 48.8% (*n* = 81) were between the ages of 41-50, and 25.9% (*n* = 43) were between the ages of 51-60 and 5.4% (*n* = 9) of the respondents were 60+ years of age.

Table 4

*Age*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Under 30 years | 1 | .6 |
| 31-40 years | 29 | 17.5 |
| 41-50 years | 81 | 48.8 |
| 51-60 years | 43 | 25.9 |
| 60+ years | 9 | 5.4 |
| Total | 163 | 98.2 |

*Note*: Missing values = 3

**Years as an assistant principal.** Question number 3 in the demographic section asked respondents to tell how many years they had spent as an assistant principal (see Table 5). Of the responses, 60.8% (*n* = 101) of the respondents had been an assistant principal for five years or less, and 31.3% (*n* = 52) had between 6-11 years of experience, and 1.8% (*n* =3) had between

12-17 years of experience. Participants that had been assistant principals with 18-22 years of experience had a response rate of 0.6% (*n* = 1), and those with 23 or more years had a response rate of 2.4% (*n* = 4).

Table 5

*Years as an Assistant Principal*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 0-5 years | 101 | 60.8 |
| 6-11 years | 52 | 31.3 |
| 12-17 years | 3 | 1.8 |
| 18-22 years | 1 | .6 |
| 23+ years | 4 | 2.4 |
| Total | 161 | 96.9 |

*Note*: Missing values = 5

**Years of experience as a principal.** Survey question 4 elicits data on how many years of experience has the respondent had as a principal (see Table 6). Of the responses, 44.6% (*n* = 74) had five or less years of experience, 35.5% (*n* = 59) had between 6-11 years, 12.7% (*n* = 21) had between 12-17 years of experience, and 3.6% (*n* = 6) had between 18-22 years. Those principals having 23 or more years or experience had a response rate of 1.8% (*n* = 3).

Table 6

*Years as a Principal*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 0-5 years | 74 | 44.6 |
| 6-11 years | 59 | 35.5 |
| 12-17 years | 21 | 12.7 |
| 18-22 years | 6 | 3.6 |
| 23+ years | 3 | 1.8 |
| Total | 163 | 98.2 |

*Note*: Missing values = 3

**Type of school.** Survey question number 5 asks the respondents to identify whether they are a middle or high school principal (see Table 7). Of the responses, 45.8% (*n* = 76) were high school principals and 50.6% (*n* = 84) were middle school principals.

Table 7

*Type of School*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| High School | 76 | 45.8 |
| Middle School | 84 | 50.6 |
| Total | 160 | 96.4 |

*Note:* Missing values = 6

**Length of time in current building.** The sixth demographic question asked respondents how long they had been in their current buildings (see Table 8). Of the respondents, 74.1% (*n* = 123) had been in their current building between 0-5 years, and 18.7% (*n* = 31) had been in their buildings between 6-11 years. Principals who had been in their buildings between 12-17 years response rate was 4.8% (*n* = 8), and those with 23+ years had a response rate of 1.8% (*n* = 3).

**School size.** Survey question 7 asks respondents to identify the size of their current school population (see Table 9). Respondents with less than 500 students in their school

Table 8

*Length of Time in Current Building*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 0-5 years | 123 | 74.1 |
| 6-11 years | 31 | 18.7 |
| 12-17 years | 8 | 4.8 |
| 23+ years | 3 | 1.8 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

Table 9

*Size of School Building*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 500 students | 31 | 18.7 |
| 501-800 students | 47 | 28.3 |
| 801-1000 students | 17 | 10.2 |
| 1001-1200 | 26 | 15.7 |
| 1201+ students | 43 | 25.9 |
| Total | 164 | 98.8 |

*Note:* Missing values = 2

buildings had a response rate of 18.7% (*n* = 31), with those between 501-800 students having a 28.3% (*n* = 47) response rate. Those respondents who had between 801-1000 students in their school buildings had a 10.2% (*n* = 17) response rate. Additionally, those respondents with a school population between 1001-1200 students had a response rate of 15.7% (*n* = 26), and respondents with school populations of 1201 or higher had a 25.9% (*n* = 43) response rate.

**Identified as a Title I School.** Question number 8 in the demographic section elicits information regarding the identification of the school as a high poverty school by the designation of Title I (see Table 10). Out of the 166 respondents, 92.8% (*n* = 154) were not identified as a Title I school while 6.6% (*n* = 11) were identified as being a Title I school.

Table 10

*Title I School*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| No | 154 | 92.8 |
| Yes | 11 | 6.6 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

**Accreditation status.** Question number 9 is the last demographic question asked of the respondents regarding the accreditation status of their current school for the 2013-2014 school year (see Table 11). The following data was collected from the respondents: 75.3% (*n* = 125) of the respondents were fully accredited and 21.7% (*n* = 36) were accredited with warning, 0.6% (*n* = 1) were denied accreditation, and 0.6% (*n* = 1) were conditionally accredited due to new school status, and 1.2% (*n* = 2) were provisionally accredited due to the high school graduation rate.

Table 11

*Accreditation Status*

| Response | Frequency | | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fully Accredited | 125 | | 75.3 |
| Accredited with Warning | 36 | | 21.7 |
| Conditionally Accredited—New School | 1 | | .6 |
| Provisionally Accredited—Graduation Rate | 2 | | 1.2 |
| Total | 165 | 9 | 9.4 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

**Comparisons of Demographic Variables by School Status**

In order to determine if there were pre-existing differences in demographic factors between the respondents assigned to middle schools versus high schools, contingency table analyses were calculated. Demographic data were analyzed using a series of contingency table analyses in order to determine if significantly greater numbers of participants occurred in categories based on being a middle or high school principal. Categories with less than 5 participants were not included in the analyses as small *n* sizes violate the assumptions of the contingency table analysis.

**Gender.** To examine whether the number of male versus female administrators occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset for middle and high school principals, a 2 X 2 contingency table analysis was completed. Results indicated that the number of male vs. female principals was significantly greater for the middle versus high school principals, $X^2$ (1, $n$ = 159) = 7.66, $p < .05$, *Cramér's V* =.219 (see Table 12). Results indicate that the proportion of middle school principals was significantly more likely to be female (.67%) than in high schools (.33%), $p$ =.014.

Table 12

*Gender Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Gender of Responder | Male | 46 | 55.4 | 58 | 76.3 | 104 | 65.4 |
| | Female | 37 | 44.6 | 18 | 23.7 | 55 | 34.6 |
| Total | | 83 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 | 159 | 100.0 |

**Age.** To examine whether the age of the administrators occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset for middle and high school principals, a 2 X 4 contingency table analysis was completed. Due to the small *n* size, the Under 30 years group ($n = 1$), was not included in the comparison. Results indicated that the number of principals aged 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 60+ was significantly different for the middle versus high school principal ages, $X^2 (4, n = 158) = 10.87$, $p < .05$, *Cramér's V* =.262. See Table 13.

Table 13

*Age Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Age of Responder | Under 30 years | < 5 | *n* <5 | < 5 | *n* <5 | < 5 | *n* <5 |
| | 31-40 years | 20 | 24.1 | 9 | 12.0 | 29 | 18.4 |
| | 41-50 years | 45 | 54.2 | 33 | 44.0 | 78 | 49.4 |
| | 51-60 years | 14 | 16.9 | 27 | 36.0 | 41 | 25.9 |
| | 60+ years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | 5 | 6.7 | 9 | 5.7 |
| Total | | 83 | 100.0 | 75 | 100.0 | 158 | 100.0 |

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference among the age groups. Table 14 shows the results of these analyses. The Holm's Sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all three comparisons. Results indicated significant pairwise comparisons for the 31-40 vs. 51-60 year-old groups with middle school principals more likely to be in the 31-40 year-old group ($n = 20$, 24.1%) vs. the high

school principals (*n* = 9, 12%). High school principals were more likely to be in the 51-60 year-old group (*n* = 27, 36%) vs. the middle school principals (*n* = 14, 16.9%).

A significant pairwise comparison was also indicated between the 41-50 vs. the 51-60 year-old groups with more middle school principals in the 41-50 year-old group (*n* = 45, 54.2%) than high school principals (*n* = 33, 44%). High school principals were more likely to be in the 51-60 year-old group (*n* = 27, 36%) than middle school principals (*n* = 14, 16.9%). Taken together, these results indicate that as a group, high school principals were significantly older than middle school principals.

Table 14

*Results for the Pairwise Comparisons Using the Holm's Sequential Bonferroni Method*

| Comparison | Pearson chi-square | *p* value | Cramér's *V* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 31-40 vs. 51-60 | 8.24 | .004 | .343 |
| 41-50 vs. 51-60 | 5.96 | .015 | .224 |
| 31-40 vs. 41-50 | 1.13 | .288 | .103 |

**Years as an assistant principal**. To examine whether the number of years the principals spent as assistant principals occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset for middle and high school principals, a 2 X 2 contingency table analysis was completed. Due to the small *n* size, the 12-17 years group (*n* = 3), and the 18-22 years group (*n* = 1) were not included in the comparison. Results indicated that the number of principals with 0-5 years, and 6-11 years as an assistant principal was not a significant difference for the middle versus high school principals years of experience as an assistance principal, $X^2$ (4, *n* = 157) = 6.10, *p* >.05, *Cramér's V* = .197. See Table 15.

Table 15

*Number of Years as an Assistant Principal Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Number of years as an Assistant Principal | 0-5 years | 58 | 69.9 | 40 | 54.1 | 98 | 62.4 |
| | 6-11 years | 22 | 26.5 | 29 | 39.2 | 51 | 32.5 |
| | 12-17 years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| | 18-22 years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| | 23+ years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| Total | | 83 | 100.0 | 74 | 100.0 | 157 | 100.0 |

**Years of experience as a principal.** To examine whether the number of years the principals spent as a principal occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset for middle and high school principals, a 2 X 4 contingency table analysis was completed. Due to the small *n* size, the 23+ years group ($n = 3$) was not included in the comparison. Results indicated that the number of principals with 0-5 years, 6-11 years, 12-17 years, and 18-22 years as a principal was a significant difference for middle versus high school principals, $X^2$ (4, $n = 159$) = 10.21, $p < .05$, *Cramér's V* = .253. See Table 16.

Table 16

*Number of Years as a Principal Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Number of years as a Principal | 0-5 years | 43 | 51.2 | 30 | 40.0 | 73 | 45.9 |
| | 6-11 years | 33 | 39.3 | 25 | 33.3 | 58 | 36.5 |
| | 12-17 years | 5 | 6.0 | 14 | 18.7 | 19 | 11.9 |
| | 18-22 years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | 6 | 3.8 |
| | 23+ years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| Total | | 84 | 100.0 | 75 | 100.0 | 159 | 100.0 |

Follow-up pairwise comparisons were conducted to evaluate the difference among the age groups. Table 17 shows the results of these analyses. The Holm's Sequential Bonferroni method was used to control for Type I error at the .05 level across all three comparisons. Results

indicated significant pairwise comparisons for 0-5 vs. 12-17 years of experience as principal groups with more middle school principals in the 0-5 years of experience group ($n$ = 43, 51.2%) versus high school principals ($n$ = 30, 40%). High school principals were more likely to be in the 12-17 years of experience group ($n$ = 14, 18.7%) versus the middle school principals ($n$ = 5, 6.0%).

A significant pairwise comparison was indicated between the 6-11 years of experience with the more middle school principals in this group ($n$ = 33, 39.3%) than high school principals ($n$ = 25, 39.3%). Again, high school principals were more likely to be in the 12-17 years of experience group ($n$ = 14, 18.7%) versus the middle school principals ($n$ = 5, 6.0%). Taken together, these results indicate that as a group, high school principals have more experience being principals than middle school principals.

Table 17

*Results for the Pairwise Comparisons Using the Holm's Sequential Bonferroni Method*

| Comparison | Pearson chi-square | *p* value | Cramér's *V* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-5 vs. 12-17 | 6.42 | .011 | .264 |
| 6-11 vs. 12-17 | 5.36 | .021 | .264 |
| 0-5 vs. 6-11 | .053 | .817 | .020 |

**Length of time in current building**. To examine whether the length of time middle and high school principals have spent in their current school buildings occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset, a 2 X 3 contingency table analysis was completed. Due to the small $n$ size, the 23+ years group ($n$ = 3) was not included in the comparison. Results indicated that the number of principals with 0-5 years, 6-11 years, and 12-17 years, years spent in the same building was not significantly greater for the middle versus high school principals, $X^2$ (3, $n$ = 160) = 4.01, $p > .05$, *Cramér's V* = .158. See Table 18.

Table 18

*Length of Time in Current Building Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Length of time in current building | 0-5 years | 67 | 79.8 | 54 | 71.1 | 121 | 75.6 |
| | 6-11 years | 15 | 17.9 | 15 | 19.7 | 30 | 18.8 |
| | 12-17 years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | 5 | 6.6 | 6 | 3.8 |
| | 23+ years | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| Total | | 84 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 | 160 | 100.0 |

**School Size**. To examine whether the number of students enrolled at the school principals work in occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset for middle and high school principals, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was completed. Results indicated that the number of principals with Less than 500 students, 501-800 students, 801-1000 students, 1001-1200 students, and 1201+ students was significantly different for the middle versus high school principals, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 27.30, $p$ < .05, *Cramér's V* = .413. The largest percent (35.7%) of the middle schools housed 501-800 students, while the largest percent (42.1%) of the high schools housed 1200+ students. See Table 19.

Table 19

*Size of School Building Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Size of School Building | Less than 500 students | 18 | 21.4 | 13 | 17.1 | 31 | 19.4 |
| | 501-800 students | 30 | 35.7 | 15 | 19.7 | 45 | 28.1 |
| | 801-100 students | 15 | 17.9 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | 17 | 10.6 |
| | 1001-1200 students | 11 | 13.1 | 14 | 18.4 | 25 | 15.6 |
| | 1200+ students | 10 | 11.9 | 32 | 42.1 | 42 | 26.3 |
| Total | | 84 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 | 160 | 100.0 |

**Identified as a Title I school.** To examine whether the principals were assigned to a Title I or Non-Title I school occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset for middle and high school principals, a 2 X 2 contingency table analysis was completed. Results indicated that the number of principals assigned to a Title I versus and Non-Title I school was significantly

different for the middle versus high school principals, $X^2(1, n = 160) = 4.07$, $p < .05$, *Cramér's V* = -.160. See Table 20. The data reveal that there are more middle school Title I schools than there are Title I high schools. This result may be from there being smaller elementary and middle schools therefore this contributed to higher free and reduced lunch populations at the lower grade levels than at the high school level where the populations of students are larger.

Table 20

*Title I or Non Title I School Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Title I or Non Title I | No | 75 | 89.3 | 74 | 97.4 | 149 | 93.1 |
| School | Yes | 9 | 10.7 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | 11 | 6.9 |
| Total | | 84 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 | 160 | 100.0 |

**Accreditation status**. To examine whether the accreditation status of the school (Fully Accredited vs. Accredited with Warning) occurred with significantly more frequency in the dataset for middle and high school principals, a 2 X 2 contingency table analysis was completed. Due to the small *n* size, the Conditionally Accredited – New School ($n = 1$), and the Provisionally Accredited –Graduation Rate groups ($n = 2$) were not included in the comparison. Results indicated that the number of principals in schools Fully Accredited, and Accredited with warning was not significantly different for the middle versus high school principals, $X^2(4, n = 160) = 4.31$, $p > .05$, *Cramér's V* = .164. See Table 21.

Table 21

*Type of Accreditation Rating Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Response | Middle School | | High School | | Avg. Percent | |
| | | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* | *N* | *%* |
| Type of Accreditation Rating | Fully Accredited | 65 | 77.4 | 56 | 73.7 | 121 | 75.6 |
| | Accredited with Warning | 18 | 21.4 | 17 | 22.4 | 35 | 21.9 |
| | Accreditation Denied | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| | Conditionally Accredited – New School | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| | Provisionally Accredited – Graduation Rate | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 | < 5 | *n* < 5 |
| Total | | 84 | 100.0 | 76 | 100.0 | 160 | 100.0 |

In this next section, the researcher intentionally grouped the 31 research statements in the survey instrument together based on the research questions. Statements 1-12 address the first research question, which states: What impact does high-stakes testing have on middle and high school principals as instructional leaders? Statements 13-17 address the second research question, which states: What are the possible positive unintended consequences identified by middle and high school principals? Statements 18-31 address the third research question, which states: What possible negative unintended consequences do middle and high school principals identify? The last research question: What are the perceptions from secondary school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing is answered by having respondents answer two open response questions. These questions are: As a school principal, what would you say has been the greatest impact high-stakes testing has had on you as the instructional leader of your building? The second open response question asks what type of unintended consequences have you encountered as a school principal resulting from high-stakes testing?

**Survey Questions 1-12**

**Research question 1.** What impact does high-stakes testing have on high and middle school principals as instructional leaders? In order to answer research question 1 which compares the impact of HST on middle and high school principals in Virginia, the researcher calculated the

frequencies, percentages, and conducted cross tabulation analysis in order to report contingency tables for statements 1-12. A 5-point Likert scale was used for all statements with the minimum score of 1 signifying (strongly agree) and the maximum score of 5 signifying (strongly disagree).

Statement 1 asked participants if high-stakes testing in Virginia helped to focus public attention on schools with low-achieving students by making these students more visible and less likely to slip between the cracks, of the 165 respondents, 69.3% ($n$=115) strongly agree or agree that high-stakes in Virginia had helped to focus attention on schools with low-achieving students. This was in stark contrast to the 21.1% ($n$ = 35) disagreed and 5.4% ($n$ = 9) strongly disagree and 3.6% ($n$ = 6) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 22.

Table 22

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 1: High-Stakes Testing in Virginia Has Helped Focus Public Attention on Schools With Low-Achieving Students and by Making These Students More Visible and Less Likely to Slip Between the Cracks and Fall Further Behind.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 29 | 17.5 |
| Agree | 86 | 51.8 |
| Unsure | 6 | 3.6 |
| Disagree | 35 | 21.1 |
| Strongly Disagree | 9 | 5.4 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

To further examine statement 1, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was completed to determine whether high-stakes tests have helped focus public attention on schools with low-achieving students with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 1, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 3.27, $p > .05$, *Cramér's V* = .143. See Table 23.

Table 23

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 1 Contingency Table*

| Statement 1 | Response | Principal of a Middle or High School: Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* 76) | Avg. % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High-stakes testing in Virginia has helped focus public attention on schools with low-achieving students and by making these students more visible and less likely to slip between the cracks and fall further behind. | Strongly Agree | 16.7 | 17.1 | 16.9 |
| | Agree | 56.0 | 50.0 | 53.1 |
| | Unsure | 4.8 | 2.6 | 3.8 |
| | Disagree | 20.2 | 22.4 | 21.3 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.4 | 7.9 | 5.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

*Note*: Missing values = 6

Statement 2 asked participants if high-stakes testing in Virginia was designed and implemented to improve instruction by helping teachers focus on what is most important to teach. There were 162 participants who responded to statement 2. Only 6% (*n* = 10) strongly agreed that high-stakes testing in Virginia was designed and implemented to improve instruction by helping teachers focus on what is most important to teach while 47% (*n* = 78) agreed, 33.7% (*n* = 56) disagreed, 4.8% (*n* = 8) strongly disagreed, and 6% (*n* = 10) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 24.

Table 24

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 2: High-Stakes Testing in Virginia is Designed and Implemented to Improve Instruction by Helping Teachers Focus on What is Most Important to Teach.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 10 | 6.0 |
| Agree | 78 | 47.0 |
| Unsure | 10 | 6.0 |
| Disagree | 56 | 33.7 |
| Strongly Disagree | 8 | 4.8 |
| Total | 162 | 97.5 |

*Note:* Missing value = 4

Additionally for statement 2, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes testing in Virginia was designed and implemented to improve instruction by helping teachers focus on what is most important to teach with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 2, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 157) = 2.41, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .124. See Table 25.

Table 25

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 2 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 2 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 81) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes testing in Virginia is designed and implemented to improve instruction by helping teachers focus on what is most important to teach. | Strongly Agree | 4.9 | 6.6 | 5.7 |
| | Agree | 53.1 | 43.4 | 48.4 |
| | Unsure | 6.2 | 3.9 | 5.1 |
| | Disagree | 30.9 | 40.8 | 35.7 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 4.9 | 5.3 | 5.1 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 3 asked participants if high-stakes tests had helped close the achievement gap between minority students and majority students in Virginia. Of the 164 respondents to statement 3 regarding whether high-stakes tests has helped to close the achievement gap between minority students and majority students in Virginia, 3% ($n$ = 5) strongly agreed and 36.1% ($n$ =60) agreed while 37.3% ($n$ = 62) disagreed and 7.8% ($n$ = 13) strongly disagreed and 14.5% ($n$ = 24) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 26.

Table 26

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 3: High-Stakes Tests Have Helped Close the Achievement Gap Between Minority Students and Majority Students in Virginia.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 5 | 3.0 |
| Agree | 60 | 36.1 |
| Unsure | 24 | 14.5 |
| Disagree | 62 | 37.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 13 | 7.8 |
| Total | 164 | 98.7 |

*Note*: Missing values = 2

To further explore statement 3, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes test have helped close the achievement gap between minority students and majority student in Virginia with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was no significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 3, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 5.56, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .187. See Table 27.

Table 27

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 3 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 3 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 75) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes tests have helped close the achievement gap between minority students and majority students in Virginia. | Strongly Agree | 6.0 | 0.0 | 3.1 |
| | Agree | 38.1 | 34.7 | 36.5 |
| | Unsure | 15.5 | 14.7 | 15.1 |
| | Disagree | 33.3 | 42.7 | 37.7 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 7.1 | 8.0 | 7.5 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 4 asked participants if teachers needed to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teach better, particularly to push the least motivated student to perform. Of the 165 respondents regarding whether teachers needed to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teach better, 4.2% ($n$ = 7) strongly agreed and

34.3% (*n* = 57) agreed, 37.3% (*n* = 62) disagreed and 13.3% (*n* = 22) strongly disagreed while 10.2% (*n* = 17) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 28.

Table 28

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 4: Teachers Need to be Held Accountable Through High-Stakes Tests to Motivate Them to Teach Better, Particularly to Push the Least Motivated Students to Perform.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 7 | 4.2 |
| Agree | 57 | 34.3 |
| Unsure | 17 | 10.2 |
| Disagree | 62 | 37.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 22 | 13.3 |
| Total | 165 | 99.3 |

*Note:* Missing value = 1

Additionally for statement 4, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether teachers needed to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teacher better particularly, to push the least motivated students to perform with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 4, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 12.41, $p < .05$, *Cramér's V* = .279. The data revealed that middle school principals disagreed that teachers needed to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teacher better at a 39.3% disagreement rate, while high school principals agreed with teachers needing to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teacher better at a 35.5% agreement rate. See Table 29.

Table 29

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 4 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 4 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| Teachers need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teach better, particularly to push the least motivated students to perform. | Strongly Agree | 7.1 | 1.3 | 4.4 |
| | Agree | 34.5 | 35.5 | 35.0 |
| | Unsure | 3.6 | 18.4 | 10.6 |
| | Disagree | 39.3 | 34.2 | 36.9 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 15.5 | 10.5 | 13.1 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 5 asked participants if doing poorly on high-stakes tests would lead to increased student effort to learn. Of the 165 respondents to statement 5 regarding whether doing poorly on high-stakes tests will lead to increased student effort to learn, 0.6% ($n$ = 1) strongly agreed, 6.6% ($n$ = 11) agreed, 50% ($n$ = 83) disagreed and 33.7% ($n$ = 56) strongly disagree while 8.4% ($n$ = 14) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 30.

Table 30

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 5: Doing Poorly on High-Stakes Tests Will Lead to Increased Student Effort to Learn.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 0.6 |
| Agree | 11 | 6.6 |
| Unsure | 14 | 8.4 |
| Disagree | 83 | 50.0 |
| Strongly Disagree | 56 | 33.7 |
| Total | 165 | 99.3 |

*Note:* Missing value = 1

To further explore statement 5, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether doing poorly on high-stakes test would lead to increased student effort to learn with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 5, $X^2(4, n = 160) = 3.62$, $p > .05$, *Cramér's V* = .150. See Table 31.

Table 31

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 5 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 5 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* = 76) | Avg. % |
| Doing poorly on high-stakes tests will lead to increased student effort to learn. | Strongly Agree | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| | Agree | 4.8 | 9.2 | 6.9 |
| | Unsure | 9.5 | 7.9 | 8.8 |
| | Disagree | 46.4 | 53.9 | 50.0 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 38.1 | 28.9 | 33.8 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 6 asked participants if students worked harder and learned more because they knew what was expected and that the high-stakes tests really counted. Of the 165 respondents, 0.6% (*n* = 1) strongly agreed, 16.3% (*n* = 27) agreed, 48.8% (*n* = 81) disagreed and 19.9% (*n* = 33) strongly disagreed. There was 13.9% (*n* = 23) that were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 32.

Table 32

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 6: Students Work Harder and Learn More Because they Know What is Expected and that the High-Stakes Tests Really Count.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 0.6 |
| Agree | 27 | 16.3 |
| Unsure | 23 | 13.9 |
| Disagree | 81 | 48.8 |
| Strongly Disagree | 33 | 19.9 |
| Total | 165 | 99.5 |

*Note:* Missing value = 1

To further explore statement 6, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether students work harder and learn more because they knew what is expected and that the high-stakes tests really count with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 6, $X^2(4, n = 160) = 3.62$, $p > .05$, *Cramér's V* = .150. See Table 33.

Table 33

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 6 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 6 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* = 76) | Avg. % |
| Students work harder and learn more because they know what is expected and that the high-stakes tests really count. | Strongly Agree | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| | Agree | 15.5 | 17.1 | 16.3 |
| | Unsure | 8.3 | 21.1 | 14.4 |
| | Disagree | 51.2 | 46.1 | 48.8 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 23.8 | 15.8 | 20.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 7 asked participants if the public display of high-stakes test scores motivated administrators' to ensure that standards on which the tests are based were part of the curriculum and are being successfully taught. Out of the 162 respondents to statement 7, 14.5% (*n* = 24) strongly agree that the public display of high-stakes test scores motivated administrators to ensure that standards on which the tests are based were part of the curriculum and are being successfully taught. While 51.8% (*n* = 86) agree, 20.5% (*n* = 34) disagree and 3% (*n* = 5) strongly disagree and 7.8% (*n* = 13) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 34.

Table 34

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 7: The Public Display of High-Stakes Test Scores Motivates Administrators to Ensure that Standards on Which the Tests are Based are Part of the Curriculum and are Being Successfully Taught.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 24 | 14.5 |
| Agree | 86 | 51.8 |
| Unsure | 13 | 7.8 |
| Disagree | 34 | 20.5 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 3.0 |
| Total | 162 | 97.6 |

*Note*: Missing values = 4

Additionally for statement 7, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether the public displays of high-stakes test scores motivated administrators to ensure that standards on which the tests were based are part of the curriculum and are being

successfully taught with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was a not significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 7, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 157) = 2.22, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .119. See Table 35.

Table 35

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 7 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 7 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 82) | High School ($n$ = 75) | Avg. % |
| The public display of high-stakes test scores motivates administrators to ensure that standards on which the tests are based are part of the curriculum and are being successfully taught. | Strongly Agree | 18.3 | 12.0 | 15.3 |
| | Agree | 51.2 | 54.7 | 52.9 |
| | Unsure | 9.8 | 6.7 | 8.3 |
| | Disagree | 18.3 | 22.7 | 20.4 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.4 | 4.0 | 3.2 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 8 asked participants when high-stakes tests are developed and use appropriately, are they among the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measures available. Out of the 163 respondents to statement 8 that asked the question when high-stakes tests are developed and use appropriately, they are among the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measures available, 2.4% (n = 4) strongly agreed, 30.1% (n = 50) agreed, 34.9% (n = 58) disagreed, 10.2% (n = 17) strongly disagreed, 20.5% (n = 34) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 36.

Table 36

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 8: When High-Stakes Tests are Developed and use Appropriately, They are Among the Most Sound and Objective Knowledge and Performance Measure Available.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 4 | 2.4 |
| Agree | 50 | 30.1 |
| Unsure | 34 | 20.5 |
| Disagree | 58 | 34.9 |
| Strongly Disagree | 17 | 10.2 |
| Total | 163 | 98.1 |

*Note:* Missing values = 3

Additionally for statement 8, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether when high-stakes tests are developed and used appropriately, they are among the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measure available with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was a not significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 8, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 158) = 3.62, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .151. See Table 37.

Table 37

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 8 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 8 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 74) | Avg. % |
| When high-stakes tests are developed and use appropriately, they are among the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measure available. | Strongly Agree | 3.6 | 1.4 | 2.5 |
| | Agree | 33.3 | 28.4 | 31.0 |
| | Unsure | 22.6 | 17.6 | 20.3 |
| | Disagree | 29.8 | 43.2 | 36.1 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 10.7 | 9.5 | 10.1 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 9 asked participants if principals needed to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to be more effective in supervising their staff. Of the 164 respondents to statement 9, .6% ($n$ = 1) strongly agreed, 36.7% ($n$ = 61) agreed while 40.4% ($n$ =

67) disagreed and 15.1% (*n* = 25) strongly disagreed, 6% (n = 10) of the respondents were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 38.

Table 38

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 9: Principals Need to be Held Accountable Through High-Stakes Tests to Motivate Them to be More Effective in Supervising Their Staff.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 1 | 0.6 |
| Agree | 61 | 36.7 |
| Unsure | 10 | 6.0 |
| Disagree | 67 | 40.4 |
| Strongly Disagree | 25 | 15.1 |
| Total | 164 | 98.8 |

*Note*: Missing values = 2

To further explore statement 9, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether principals needed to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to be more effective in supervising their staff with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 9, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 14.71, $p$ < .05, *Cramér's V* = .304. Middle school principals either agreed or strongly agreed (47.0% more frequently, while high school principals either disagreed or strongly disagreed (60.5%) more frequently. See Table 39.

Table 39

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 9 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 9 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 83) | High School (*n* = 76) | Avg. % |
| Principals need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to be more effective in supervising their staff. | Strongly Agree | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| | Agree | 45.8 | 28.9 | 37.7 |
| | Unsure | 2.4 | 10.5 | 6.3 |
| | Disagree | 31.3 | 51.3 | 40.9 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 19.3 | 9.2 | 14.5 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 10 asked participants if increasingly, from the classroom to the school board room, if educators are making use of student performance data generated by high-stakes tests to help them refine programs, channel funding and identify roots of success. Of the 165 respondents to statement 10, 12.7% (*n* = 21) strongly agreed, 62.7% (*n* = 104) agreed, 11.4% (*n* = 19) disagreed, 1.2% (*n* = 2) strongly disagreed and 11.4% (*n* = 19) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 40.

Table 40

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 10: Increasingly, from the Classroom to the School Board Room, Educators are Making use of Student Performance Data Generated by High-Stakes Tests to Help Them Refine Programs, Channel Funding, and Identify Roots of Success.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 21 | 12.7 |
| Agree | 104 | 62.7 |
| Unsure | 19 | 11.4 |
| Disagree | 19 | 11.4 |
| Strongly Disagree | 2 | 1.2 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note:* Missing values = 1

Additionally for statement 10, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether increasingly, from the classroom to the school board room, educators are

making use of student performance data generated by high-stakes tests to help them refine programs, channel funding, and identify roots of success with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was a not significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 10, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 5.59, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .187. See Table 41.

Table 41

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 10 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 10 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| Increasingly, from the classroom to the school board room, educators are making use of student performance data generated by high-stakes tests to help them refine programs, channel funding, and identify roots of success. | Strongly Agree | 17.9 | 7.9 | 13.1 |
| | Agree | 59.5 | 67.1 | 63.1 |
| | Unsure | 10.7 | 13.2 | 11.9 |
| | Disagree | 9.5 | 11.8 | 10.6 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.4 | 0.0 | 1.3 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 11 asked respondents if driven by the demands of high-stakes tests, professional development had improved by focusing on helping educators hone their teaching skills and content area expertise. Of the 164 respondents, 6.8% ($n$ = 11) strongly agreed, 51.8% ($n$ = 86) agreed, 25.3% ($n$ = 42) disagreed and 3% ($n$ = 5) strongly disagreed. While 12% ($n$ = 20) respondents were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 42.

Table 42

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 11: Driven by the Demands of High-Stakes Tests, Professional Development has Improved by Focusing on Helping Educators Hone His or Her Teaching Skills and Content Area Expertise.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 11 | 6.8 |
| Agree | 86 | 51.8 |
| Unsure | 20 | 12.0 |
| Disagree | 42 | 25.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 3.0 |
| Total | 164 | 98.9 |

*Note:* Missing values = 2

To further analyze statement 11, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether driven by the demands of high-stakes tests, professional development has improved by focusing on helping educators hone his or her teaching skills and content area expertise with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 11, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 9.70, $p < .05$, *Cramér's V* = .247. Middle school principals agreed and strongly agreed more frequently than high school principals. See Table 43.

Table 43

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 11 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 11 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 75) | Avg. % |
| Driven by the demands of high-stakes tests, professional development has improved by focusing on helping educators hone his or her teaching skills and content area expertise. | Strongly Agree | 9.5 | 4.0 | 6.9 |
| | Agree | 60.7 | 44.0 | 52.8 |
| | Unsure | 7.1 | 18.7 | 12.6 |
| | Disagree | 20.2 | 29.3 | 24.5 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.4 | 4.0 | 3.1 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 12 asked participants if the implementation of high-stakes testing had been a catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs. Of the 165 respondents to statement 12, 9.6% (*n* = 16) strongly agreed that the implementation of high-stakes testing had been a catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs while 55.4% (*n* = 92) agreed, 21.1% (*n* = 35) disagreed, 5.4% (*n* = 9) strongly disagreed, and 7.8% (*n* = 13) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 44.

Table 44

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 12: The Implementation of High-Stakes Testing Has Been a Catalyst for Increased Attention to Students With Special Needs.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 16 | 9.6 |
| Agree | 92 | 55.4 |
| Unsure | 13 | 7.8 |
| Disagree | 35 | 21.1 |
| Strongly Disagree | 9 | 5.4 |
| Total | 165 | 99.3 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

Additionally for statement 12, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether the implementation of high-stakes testing was a catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 12, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 17.04, $p < .05$, *Cramér's V* = .326. Middle school principals agreed and strongly agreed more frequently than high school principals. See Table 45.

Table 45

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 12 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 12 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* = 76) | Avg. % |
| The implementation of high-stakes testing has been a catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs. | Strongly Agree | 14.3 | 5.3 | 10.0 |
| | Agree | 61.9 | 48.7 | 55.6 |
| | Unsure | 1.2 | 15.8 | 8.1 |
| | Disagree | 16.7 | 26.3 | 21.3 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 6.0 | 3.9 | 5.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

An overview of the results of the contingency tables for statements 1-12 for middle and high school principals is outlined in the Table 46. The researcher included the 12 statements, the school level, the number of respondents, and the highest response from middle and high school principals for each statement along with the percentage associated with the response.

Table 46

*Contingency Table Results for Statements 1 – 12*

| | Statement | School Level | N | Mode | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | High-stakes tests have helped focus public attention schools with low-achieving students and by making these students more visible and less likely to slip between the cracks and fall further behind. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 56.0 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 50.0 |
| 2. | High-stakes testing in Virginia is designed and implemented to improve instruction by helping teachers focus on what is most important to teach. | Middle School | 81 | Agree | 53.1 |
| | | High School | 81 | Agree | 43.4 |
| 3. | High-stakes test have helped close the achievement gap between minority students and majority students in Virginia. | Middle School | 76 | Agree | 38.1 |
| | | High School | 76 | Disagree | 42.7 |
| 4. | Teachers need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teach better, particularly to push the least motivated students to perform. | Middle School | 84 | Disagree | 39.3 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 35.5 |
| 5. | Doing poorly on high-stakes tests will lead to increased student effort to learn. | Middle School | 84 | Disagree | 46.4 |
| | | High School | 76 | Disagree | 53.9 |
| 6. | Students work harder and learn more because they know what is expected and that the high-stakes tests really count. | Middle School | 84 | Disagree | 51.2 |
| | | High School | 75 | Disagree | 46.1 |
| 7. | The public display of high-stakes test scores motivates administrators to ensure that standards on which the tests are based are part of the curriculum and are being successfully taught. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 51.2 |
| | | High School | 74 | Agree | 54.7 |
| 8. | When high-stakes tests are developed and used appropriately, they are among the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measure available. | Middle School | 82 | Agree | 33.3 |
| | | High School | 76 | Disagree | 43.2 |
| 9. | Principals need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to be more effective in supervising their staff. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 45.8 |
| | | High School | 76 | Disagree | 51.3 |
| 10. | Increasingly, from the classroom to the school board room, educators are making use of student performance data generated by high-stakes tests to help them refine programs, channel funding, and identify roots of success. | Middle School | 83 | Agree | 59.5 |
| | | High School | 75 | Agree | 67.1 |
| 11. | Driven by the demands of high-stakes tests, professional development has improved by focusing on helping educators hone his or her teaching skills and content area expertise. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 60.7 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 44.0 |
| 12. | The implementation of high-stakes testing has been a catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 61.9 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 48.7 |

**Survey Questions 13-17**

**Research question 2.** What are the possible positive unintended consequences identified by high and middle school principals? To answer the question, the researcher calculated the frequencies, percentages, and conducted cross tabulation analysis in order report contingency tables for statements 13-17 to assess the positive unintended consequences identified by high and middle school principals in Virginia. A 5-point Likert scale was used for all statements with the

minimum score of 1 signifying (strongly agree) and the maximum score of 5 signifying (strongly disagree).

Statement 13 asked participants if the one result of high-stakes testing is that educators know more about testing than ever before. Of the 164 respondents to question 13 regarding whether the results of high-stakes testing is that educators know more about testing than ever before, 17.5% (*n* = 29) strongly agreed, 51.8% (*n* = 86) agreed, 15.1% (*n* = 25) disagreed, 3% (*n* = 5) strongly disagreed and 11.4% (*n* = 19) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 47.

Table 47

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 13: One Result of High-Stakes Testing is That Educators Know More About Testing Than Ever Before.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 29 | 17.5 |
| Agree | 86 | 51.8 |
| Unsure | 19 | 11.4 |
| Disagree | 25 | 15.1 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 3.0 |
| Total | 164 | 98.8 |

*Note*: Missing values = 2

Additionally for statement 13, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether one result of high-stakes testing was that educators knew more about testing than ever before with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 13, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 7.84, $p > .05$, *Cramér's V* = .222. See Table 48.

Table 48

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 13 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 13 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* = 75) | Avg. % |
| One result of high-stakes testing is that educators know more about testing than ever before. | Strongly Agree | 21.4 | 14.7 | 18.2 |
| | Agree | 58.3 | 49.3 | 54.1 |
| | Unsure | 4.8 | 17.3 | 10.7 |
| | Disagree | 13.1 | 14.7 | 13.8 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.4 | 4.0 | 5.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 14 asked participants if the prominent and public interest in pupil performance on high-stakes tests had resulted in an intensity of effort directed toward data collection and quality control that is unparalleled. Of the 164 respondents to statement 14 that asked whether prominent and public interest in pupil performance on high-stakes tests had resulted in an intensity of effort directed toward data collection and quality control that is unparalleled, 16.9% (*n* = 28) strongly agreed, 48.8% (*n* = 81) agreed, 16.3% (*n* = 27) disagreed, 2.4% (*n* = 4) strongly disagreed, and 14.5% (*n* = 24) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 49.

Table 49

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 14: Prominent and Public Interest in Pupil Performance on High-Stakes Tests has Resulted in an Intensity of Effort Directed Toward Data Collection and Quality Control That is Unparalleled.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 28 | 16.9 |
| Agree | 81 | 48.8 |
| Unsure | 24 | 14.5 |
| Disagree | 27 | 16.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 4 | 2.4 |
| Total | 164 | 98.9 |

*Note*: Missing values = 2

To further analyze statement 14, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether prominent and public interest in pupil performance on high-stakes tests had resulted in an intensity of effort directed toward data collection and quality control that is unparalleled with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school

principals. Results indicated that there was a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 14, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 10.66, $p$ < .05, *Cramér's V* = .259. While both middle and high school principals strongly agreed or agreed at about the same combined level, more middle school principals strongly agreed. See Table 50.

Table 50

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 14 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 14 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 83) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| Prominent and public interest in pupil performance on high-stakes tests has resulted in an intensity of effort directed toward data collection and quality control that is unparalleled. | Strongly Agree | 26.5 | 7.9 | 17.6 |
| | Agree | 43.4 | 57.9 | 50.3 |
| | Unsure | 15.7 | 13.2 | 14.5 |
| | Disagree | 13.3 | 19.7 | 16.4 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 15 asked participants if high-stakes tests promoted greater homogeneity of education. A result of schools' aligning their curricula and instructional focus more closely to outcomes embodied in high-stakes tests, the experiences of and aspirations of children in urban, suburban, and rural divisions within a state are more comparable then they have been in the recent past.

Of the 165 respondents to statement 15 regarding whether high-stakes tests promoted greater homogeneity of education. A result of schools' aligning their curricula and instructional focus more closely to outcomes embodied in high-stakes test, the experiences of and aspirations for children in urban, suburban, and rural divisions within a state are more comparable then they have been in the recent past, 8.4% ($n$ = 14) strongly agreed, 35.5% ($n$ = 59) agreed, 24.1% ($n$ = 40) disagreed, 6% ($n$ = 10) strongly disagreed and 25.3% ($n$ = 42) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 51.

Table 51

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 15: High-stakes Tests Promote Greater Homogeneity of Education. a Result of Schools' Aligning Their Curricula and Instructional Focus More Closely to Outcomes Embodied in High-Stakes Tests, the Experiences of and Aspirations For Children in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Districts Within a State are More Comparable Then They Have Been in the Recent Past.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 14 | 8.4 |
| Agree | 59 | 35.5 |
| Unsure | 42 | 25.3 |
| Disagree | 40 | 24.1 |
| Strongly Disagree | 10 | 6.0 |
| Total | 165 | 99.3 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

To further analyze statement 15, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes tests promoted greater homogeneity of education. A result of schools' aligning their curricula and instructional focus more closely to outcomes embodied in high-stakes tests, the experiences of an aspirations for children in urban, suburban, and rural districts within a state are more comparable then they have been in the recent past with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 15, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 7.09, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .210. See Table 52.

Table 52

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 15 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 15 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-stakes tests promote greater homogeneity of education. A result of schools' aligning their curricula and instructional focus more closely to outcomes embodied in high-stakes tests, the experiences of and aspirations for children in urban, suburban, and rural districts within a state are more comparable then they have been in the recent past. | Strongly Agree | 13.1 | 3.9 | 8.8 |
| | Agree | 33.3 | 38.2 | 35.6 |
| | Unsure | 28.6 | 23.7 | 26.3 |
| | Disagree | 22.6 | 26.3 | 24.4 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 2.4 | 7.9 | 5.0 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 16 asked participants if a profoundly positive effect that the introduction of high-stakes consequences has had lies in the test themselves. High-stakes tests have evolved to a state of being: highly reliable; free from bias; relevant and age appropriate; higher order; tightly related to important public goals; time and cost efficient; and yielding remarkably consistent decisions.

Of the 165 respondents to statement 16, 13.3% (*n* = 22) agreed, 18.7% (*n* = 31) were unsure, 47.6% (*n* = 79) disagreed and 19.9% (*n* = 33) strongly disagreed. This information is outlined in Table 53.

Table 53

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 16: A Profoundly Positive Effect That the Introduction of High-Stakes Consequences Has Had Lies in the Tests Themselves. High-Stakes Tests Have Evolved to a State of Being: Highly Reliable; Free From Bias; Relevant and Age Appropriate; Higher Order; Tightly Related to Important Public Goals; Time and Cost Efficient; and Yielding Remarkably Consistent Decisions.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Agree | 22 | 13.3 |
| Unsure | 31 | 18.7 |
| Disagree | 79 | 47.6 |
| Strongly Disagree | 33 | 19.9 |
| Total | 165 | 99.5 |

*Note:* Missing value = 1

Additionally for statement 16, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether a profoundly positive effect that the introduction of high-stakes consequences lay in the tests themselves. High-stakes tests have evolved to a state of being: highly reliable; free from bias; relevant and age appropriate; higher order; tightly related to important public goals; time and cost efficient; and yielding remarkably consistent decisions with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 15, $X^2$ (3, $n$ = 160) = 1.73, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .104. See Table 54.

Table 54

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 16 Contingency Table*

| Statement 16 | Response | Principal of a Middle or High School: Middle School (*n* = 84) | Principal of a Middle or High School: High School (*n* = 76) | Avg. % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A profoundly positive effect that the introduction of high-stakes consequences has had lies in the tests themselves. High-stakes tests have evolved to a state of being: highly reliable; free from bias; relevant and age appropriate; higher order; tightly related to important public goals; time and cost efficient; and yielding remarkably consistent decisions. | Agree | 16.7 | 10.5 | 13.8 |
| | Unsure | 16.7 | 21.1 | 18.8 |
| | Disagree | 48.8 | 47.4 | 48.1 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 17.9 | 21.1 | 19.4 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 17 asks participants if high-stakes tests had exposed educators to high-quality writing prompts, documented-based questions, constructed-response formats, and even challenging multiple choice items and had led teachers to enhance their own assessment practices.

Of the 164 respondents to statement 17, 4.2% (*n* = 7) strongly agreed, 54.8% (*n* = 91) agreed, 20.5% (*n* = 34) disagreed, 9.6% (*n* = 16) strongly disagreed and 9.6% (*n* = 16) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 55.

Table 55

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 17: High-Stakes Tests Have Exposed Educators to High-Quality Writing Prompts, Documented-Based Questions, Constructed-Response Formats, and Even Challenging Multiple-Choice Items. This Has Lead to Teachers Enhancing Their Own Assessment Practices.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 7 | 4.2 |
| Agree | 91 | 54.8 |
| Unsure | 16 | 9.6 |
| Disagree | 34 | 20.5 |
| Strongly Disagree | 16 | 9.6 |
| Total | 164 | 98.7 |

*Note*: Missing values = 2

To further analyze statement 17, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes tests have exposed educators to high-quality writing prompts, documented-based questions, constructed-response formats, and even challenging multiple – choice items. This has led to teachers enhancing their own assessment practice with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 17, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 6.48, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .202. See Table 56.

Table 56

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 17 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 17 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 83) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes tests have exposed educators to high-quality writing prompts, documented-based questions, constructed-response formats, and even challenging multiple-choice items. This has lead to teachers enhancing their own assessment practices. | Strongly Agree | 6.0 | 2.6 | 4.4 |
| | Agree | 62.7 | 50.0 | 56.6 |
| | Unsure | 6.0 | 11.8 | 8.8 |
| | Disagree | 15.7 | 27.6 | 21.4 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 9.6 | 7.9 | 8.8 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

An overview of the results of the contingency tables for statements 13-17 for middle and high school principals is outlined in the Table 57. The researcher included the 5 statements, the school level, the number of respondents, and the highest response from middle and high school principals for each statement along with the percentage associated with the response.

Table 57

*Contingency Table Results for Statements 13-17*

| | Statement | School Level | N | Mode | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 13. | One result of high-stakes testing is that educators know more about testing than ever before. | Middle School<br>High School | 84<br>75 | Agree<br>Agree | 58.3<br>49.3 |
| 14. | Prominent and public interest in pupil performance on high-stakes tests has resulted in an intensity of effort directed toward data collection and quality control that is unparalleled. | Middle School<br>High School | 83<br>76 | Agree<br>Agree | 43.4<br>57.9 |
| 15. | High-stakes tests promote greater homogeneity of education. A result of schools' aligning their curricula and instructional focus more closely to outcomes embodied in high-stakes tests, the experiences of and aspirations for children in urban, suburban, and rural districts within a state are more comparable then have been in the recent past. | Middle School<br>High School | 84<br>76 | Agree<br>Agree | 33.3<br>38.2 |
| 16. | A profoundly positive effect that the introduction of high-stakes consequences has had lies in the tests themselves. High-stakes tests have evolved to a state of being: highly reliable; free from bias; relevant and age appropriate; higher order; tightly related to important public goals; time and cost efficient; and yielding remarkably consistent decisions. | Middle School<br>High School | 84<br>76 | Disagree<br>Disagree | 48.8<br>47.4 |
| 17. | High-stakes have exposed educators to high-quality writing prompts, documented-based questions, constructed-response formats, and even challenging multiple-choice items. This has lead to teachers enhancing their own assessment practices. | Middle School<br>High School | 83<br>76 | Agree<br>Agree | 62.7<br>50.0 |

**Survey Questions 18-31**

**Research question 3.** What possible negative unintended consequences do high and middle school principals identify? The researcher calculated the frequencies, percentages, and conducted cross tabulation analysis in order to report contingency tables for statements 18-31 in order to assess the positive unintended consequences identified by middle and high school

principals in Virginia answered research question 3. A 5-point Likert scale was used for all statements with the minimum score of 1 signifying (strongly agree) and the maximum score of 5 signifying (strongly disagree).

Statement 18 asked participants if high-stakes testing programs also resulted in massive amounts of test preparation, resulting in a loss of instructional time. Of the 165 respondents, 41% (*n* = 68) strongly agreed, 40.4% (*n* = 67) agreed, 12% (*n* = 20) disagreed, and 6% (*n* = 10) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 58.

Table 58|

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 18: High-Stakes Testing Programs Also Result in Massive Amounts of Test Preparation, Resulting in a Loss of Instructional Time.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 68 | 41.0 |
| Agree | 67 | 40.4 |
| Unsure | 10 | 6.0 |
| Disagree | 20 | 12.0 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

Additionally for statement 18, a 2 X 4 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes testing programs also resulted in massive amounts of test preparation, resulting in a lost of instructional time with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 18, $X^2$ (3, *n* = 160) = 3.87, *p* > .05, *Cramér's V* = .155. See Table 59.

Table 59

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 18 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 18 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes testing programs also result in massive amounts of test preparation, resulting in a loss of instructional time. | Strongly Agree | 44.0 | 38.2 | 41.3 |
| | Agree | 34.5 | 48.7 | 41.3 |
| | Unsure | 7.1 | 3.9 | 5.6 |
| | Disagree | 14.3 | 9.2 | 11.9 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 19 asked participants if high-stakes testing had resulted in a loss of local control of what is taught, how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction. These decisions are now greatly impacted by policy makers at the state and national levels. Of the 164 respondents to question 19, 38.6% (*n* = 64) strongly agreed, 40.4% (*n* = 67) agreed, 15.7% (*n* = 26) disagreed, and 4.2% (*n* = 7) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 60.

Table 60

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 19: High-Stakes Testing Has Resulted in a Loss of Local Control of What is Taught, How it is Taught, and Who Gets High-Quality Instruction. These Decisions are Now Greatly Impacted by Policy Makers at the State and National Level.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 64 | 38.6 |
| Agree | 67 | 40.4 |
| Unsure | 7 | 4.2 |
| Disagree | 26 | 15.7 |
| Total | 164 | 98.9 |

*Note:* Missing values = 2

To further analyze statement 19, a 2 X 4 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes testing had resulted in a loss of local control of what is taught, how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction. These decisions are now greatly impacted by policy makers at the state and national levels with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant

difference between middle and high school principals for statement 19, $X^2$ (3, $n$ = 159) = 3.16, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .141. See Table 61.

Table 61

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 19 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 19 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 83) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes testing has resulted in a loss of local control of what is taught, how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction. These decisions are now greatly impacted by policy makers at the state and national level. | Strongly Agree | 38.6 | 40.8 | 39.6 |
| | Agree | 37.3 | 43.4 | 40.3 |
| | Unsure | 3.6 | 5.3 | 4.4 |
| | Disagree | 20.5 | 10.5 | 15.7 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 20 asked participants if a test that had been validated only for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of individual students should not be used to evaluate the educational quality of a school or school division. Of the 165 respondents to question 20, 34.3% ($n$ = 57) strongly agreed, 41.6% ($n$ = 67) agreed, 13.3% ($n$ = 22) disagreed, and 10.2% ($n$ = 17) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 62.

Table 62

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 20: A Test That Has Been Validated Only for Diagnosing Strengths and Weaknesses of Individual Students Should Not be Used to Evaluate the Educational Quality of a School or School District.*

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 57 | 34.3 |
| Agree | 69 | 41.6 |
| Unsure | 17 | 10.2 |
| Disagree | 22 | 13.3 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

To further analyze statement 20, a 2 X 4 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether a test that had been validated only for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of individual students should not be used to evaluate the educational quality of a school or school division with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 20, $X^2$ (3, $n$ = 160) = 1.06, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .081. See Table 63.

Table 63

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 20 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 20 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| A test that has been validated only for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of individual students should not be used to evaluate the educational quality of a school or school district. | Strongly Agree | 36.9 | 34.2 | 35.6 |
| | Agree | 39.3 | 44.7 | 41.9 |
| | Unsure | 11.9 | 7.9 | 10.0 |
| | Disagree | 11.9 | 13.2 | 12.5 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 21 asked participants if high-stakes testing compromises educational quality by leading educators to "teach to the test," which results in a narrowing of the curriculum, limiting the scope of tested subjects and shortchanging or eliminating subjects not included in the assessments. Of the 164 respondents to question 21, 16.3% ($n$ = 27) strongly agreed, 45.8% ($n$ = 76) agreed, 27.7% ($n$ = 26) disagreed, 3% ($n$ = 5) strongly disagreed, and 6% ($n$ = 10) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 64.

Table 64

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 21: High-Stakes Testing Compromises Educational Quality by Leading Educators to "Teach to the Test," Which Results in a Narrowing of the Curriculum, Limiting the Scope of Tested Subjects and Shortchanging or Eliminating Subjects Not Included in the Assessments.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 27 | 16.3 |
| Agree | 76 | 45.8 |
| Unsure | 10 | 6.0 |
| Disagree | 46 | 27.7 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 3.0 |
| Total | 164 | 98.8 |

*Note*: Missing values = 2

Additionally for statement 21, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes testing compromised educational quality by leading educators to "teach to the test," which resulted in the narrowing of the curriculum, limiting the scope of tested subjects and shortchanging or eliminating subjects not included in the assessment with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 21, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 2.53, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .126. See Table 65.

Table 65

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 21 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 21 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 75) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes testing compromises educational quality by leading educators to "teach to the test," which results in a narrowing of the curriculum, limiting the scope of tested subjects and shortchanging or eliminating subjects not included in the assessments. | Strongly Agree | 20.2 | 13.3 | 17.0 |
| | Agree | 45.2 | 49.3 | 47.2 |
| | Unsure | 4.8 | 5.3 | 5.0 |
| | Disagree | 28.6 | 28.0 | 28.3 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1.2 | 4.0 | 2.5 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 22 asked participants if high-stakes tests were too expensive and resulted in diverting scarce resources and attention from serious problems. Of the 163 respondents to question 22, 20.5% (*n* = 34) strongly agreed, 30.7% (*n* = 51) agreed, 21.1% (*n* = 35) disagreed, 0.6% (n = 1) strongly disagreed and 25.3% (*n* = 42) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 66.

Table 66

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 22: High-Stakes Tests are too Expensive and Result in Diverting Scarce Resources and Attention from Serious Problems.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 34 | 20.5 |
| Agree | 51 | 30.7 |
| Unsure | 42 | 25.3 |
| Disagree | 35 | 21.1 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 0.6 |
| Total | 163 | 98.2 |

*Note*: Missing values = 3

To further analyze statement 22, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes tests are too expensive and resulted in diverting scarce resources and attention from serious problems with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 22, $X^2$ (4, *n* = 158) = 5.45, *p* > .5, *Cramér's V* = .186. See Table 67.

Table 67

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 22 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 22 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 84) | High School (*n* = 74) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes tests are too expensive and result in diverting scarce resources and attention from serious problems. | Strongly Agree | 20.2 | 23.0 | 21.5 |
| | Agree | 26.2 | 39.2 | 32.3 |
| | Unsure | 31.0 | 18.9 | 25.3 |
| | Disagree | 21.4 | 18.9 | 20.3 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 23 asked participants to rate their agreement with the following statement: A focus on standards and accountability that ignored the processes of teaching and learning in classrooms would not provide the direction that teachers needed in their quest to improve instruction. Of the 163 respondents to question 23, 26.5% (*n* = 44) strongly agreed, 50.6% (*n* = 84) agreed, 12% (*n* = 20) disagreed, 0.6% (n = 1) strongly agreed and 8.4% (*n* =14) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 68.

Table 68

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 23: A Focus on Standards and Accountability that Ignore the Processes of Teaching and Learning in Classrooms will not Provide the Direction that Teachers Need in their Quest to Improve Instruction.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 44 | 26.5 |
| Agree | 84 | 50.6 |
| Unsure | 14 | 8.4 |
| Disagree | 20 | 12.0 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 0.6 |
| Total | 163 | 98.1 |

*Note*: Missing values = 3

To further analyze statement 23, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether a focus on standards and accountability that ignored the processes of teaching and learning in classrooms would not provide the direction that teachers need in their quest to improve instruction with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 23, $X^2$ (4, *n* = 158) = 2.07, *p* > .05, *Cramér's V* = z.114. See Table 69.

Table 69

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 23 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 23 | Response | Middle School (*n* = 83) | High School (*n* = 75) | Avg. % |
| A focus on standards and accountability that ignore the processes of teaching and learning in classrooms will not provide the direction that teachers need in their quest to improve instruction. | Strongly Agree | 28.9 | 25.3 | 27.2 |
| | Agree | 48.2 | 54.7 | 51.3 |
| | Unsure | 7.2 | 9.3 | 8.2 |
| | Disagree | 14.5 | 10.7 | 12.7 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 24 asked participants if the pressure exerted from the need to succeed on high-stakes tests often led to inappropriate test preparation practices. Of the 163 respondents to question 24, 6.6% (*n* = 11) strongly agreed, 27.7% (*n* = 46) agreed, 34.3% (*n* = 57) disagreed, 8.4% (n = 14) strongly agreed and 21.1% (*n* = 35) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 70.

Table 70

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 24: Pressure Exerted From the Need to Succeed on High-Stakes Tests Often Leads to Inappropriate Test Preparation Practices.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 11 | 6.6 |
| Agree | 46 | 27.7 |
| Unsure | 35 | 21.1 |
| Disagree | 57 | 34.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 14 | 8.4 |
| Total | 163 | 98.1 |

*Note*: Missing values = 3

To further analyze statement 24, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether the pressure exerted from the need to succeed on high-stakes tests often led to inappropriate test preparation practices with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference

between middle and high school principals for statement 24, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = .15, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .031. See Table 71.

Table 71

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 24 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 24 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 75) | Avg. % |
| Pressure exerted from the need to succeed on high-stakes tests often leads to inappropriate test preparation practices. | Strongly Agree | 7.1 | 6.7 | 6.9 |
| | Agree | 27.4 | 29.3 | 28.3 |
| | Unsure | 20.2 | 21.3 | 20.8 |
| | Disagree | 36.9 | 34.7 | 35.8 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 8.3 | 8.0 | 8.2 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 25 asked participants if high-stakes tests drawn an inaccurate picture of student achievement and unfairly jeopardize students or schools that were making genuine efforts to improve. Of the 164 respondents to question 25, 34.3% ($n$ = 57) strongly agreed, 47.6% ($n$ = 79) agreed, 9.6% ($n$ = 16) disagreed, 0.6% (n = 1) strongly disagreed and 6.6% ($n$ = 11) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 72.

Table 72

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 25: High-Stakes Tests Draw an Inaccurate Picture of Student Achievement and Unfairly Jeopardize Students or Schools that are Making Genuine Efforts to Improve.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 57 | 34.3 |
| Agree | 79 | 47.6 |
| Unsure | 11 | 6.6 |
| Disagree | 16 | 9.6 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 0.6 |
| Total | 164 | 98.7 |

*Note:* Missing values = 2

Additionally for statement 25, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes tests drew an inaccurate picture of student achievement and unfairly jeopardize students or schools that were making genuine efforts to improve with

significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 25, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 4.81, $p >$ .05, *Cramér's V* = .174. See Table 73.

Table 73

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 25 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 25 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 83) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes tests draw an inaccurate picture of student achievement and unfairly jeopardize students or schools that are making genuine efforts to improve. | Strongly Agree | 6.0 | 2.6 | 4.4 |
| | Agree | 62.7 | 50.0 | 56.6 |
| | Unsure | 6.0 | 11.8 | 8.8 |
| | Disagree | 15.7 | 27.6 | 21.4 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 9.6 | 7.9 | 8.8 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 26 asked participants if educational decisions based on high-stakes tests had a disproportionate impact on poor and minority children. Of the 164 respondents to question 26, 25.3% ($n$ = 42) strongly agreed, 37.3% ($n$ = 62) agreed, 15.7% ($n$ = 26) disagreed, 1.2% (n = 2) strongly disagreed and 19.3% ($n$ = 32) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 74.

Table 74

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 26: Educational Decisions Based on High-Stakes Tests Have a Disproportionate Impact on Poor and Minority Children.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 42 | 25.3 |
| Agree | 62 | 37.3 |
| Unsure | 32 | 19.3 |
| Disagree | 26 | 15.7 |
| Strongly Disagree | 2 | 1.2 |
| Total | 164 | 98.8 |

*Note:* Missing values = 2

To further analyze statement 26, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether educational decisions based on high-stakes tests had a disproportionate impact on poor and minority children with significantly more frequency in the dataset between

middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high school principals for statement 26, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 2.66, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .129. See Table 75.

Table 75

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 26 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 26 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 83) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| Educational decisions based on high-stakes tests have a disproportionate impact on poor and minority children. | Strongly Agree | 21.7 | 28.9 | 25.2 |
| | Agree | 37.3 | 38.2 | 37.7 |
| | Unsure | 19.3 | 19.7 | 19.5 |
| | Disagree | 20.5 | 11.8 | 16.4 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1.2 | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 27 asked participants if high-stakes testing and the accompanying consequences of failure led to overstressed students. Of the 165 respondents to question 27, 18.1% ($n$ = 30) strongly agreed, 55.4% ($n$ = 92) agreed, 15.7% ($n$ = 26) disagreed, and 10.2% ($n$ = 17) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 76.

Table 76

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 27: High-Stakes Testing and the Accompanying Consequences of Failure Lead to Overstressed Students.*

| Response | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 30 | 18.1 |
| Agree | 92 | 55.4 |
| Unsure | 17 | 10.2 |
| Disagree | 26 | 15.7 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note*: Missing value = 1

To further analyze statement 27, a 2 X 4 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes testing and the accompanying consequences of failure led to overstressed students with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle

and high school principals for statement 27, $X^2$ (3, $n$ = 160) = 2.85, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .134. See Table 77.

Table 77

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 27 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 27 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes testing and the accompanying consequences of failure lead to overstressed students. | Strongly Agree | 16.8 | 21.1 | 18.8 |
| | Agree | 57.1 | 52.6 | 55.0 |
| | Unsure | 7.1 | 13.2 | 10.0 |
| | Disagree | 19.0 | 13.2 | 16.3 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 28 asked participants if the pressure inherent in preparing students for high-stakes tests is driving out good teachers. Of the 165 respondents to question 28, 30.1% ($n$ = 50) strongly agreed, 38% ($n$ = 63) agreed, 17.5% ($n$ = 29) disagreed, 1.2% ($n$ = 2) strongly disagreed and 12.7% ($n$ = 21) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 78.

Table 78

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 28: The Pressure Inherent in Preparing Students for High-Stakes Tests is Driving Out Good Teachers.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 50 | 30.1 |
| Agree | 63 | 38.0 |
| Unsure | 21 | 12.7 |
| Disagree | 29 | 17.5 |
| Strongly Disagree | 2 | 1.2 |
| Total | 165 | 99.5 |

*Note:* Missing value = 1

To further analyze statement 28, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether the pressure inherent in preparing students for high-stakes tests is driving out good teachers with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle and high

school principals for statement 28, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 4.04, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .159. See Table 79.

Table 79

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 28 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 28 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| The pressure inherent in preparing students for high-stakes tests are driving out good teachers. | Strongly Agree | 29.8 | 30.3 | 30.0 |
| | Agree | 36.9 | 39.5 | 38.1 |
| | Unsure | 11.9 | 14.5 | 13.1 |
| | Disagree | 21.4 | 13.2 | 17.5 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 0.0 | 2.6 | 1.3 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 29 asked participants if high-stakes tests unfairly and inaccurately assessed and penalized learners for whom English is not their first language. Of the 163 respondents to question 29, 38.6% ($n$ = 64) strongly agreed, 35.5% ($n$ = 59) agreed, 9.6% ($n$ = 16) disagreed, and 14.5% ($n$ = 24) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 80.

Table 80

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 29: High-Stakes Tests Unfairly and Inaccurately Assess and Penalize Learners for Whom English is not their First Language.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 64 | 38.6 |
| Agree | 59 | 35.5 |
| Unsure | 24 | 14.5 |
| Disagree | 16 | 9.6 |
| Total | 163 | 98.2 |

*Note*: Missing values = 3

Additionally for statement 29, a 2 X 4 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether high-stakes tests unfairly and inaccurately assessed and penalized learners for whom English is not their first language with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference

between middle and high school principals for statement 29, $X^2$ (3, $n$ = 158) = 3.18, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .142. See Table 81.

Table 81

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 29 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 29 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 82) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| High-Stakes tests unfairly and inaccurately assess and penalize learners for whom English is not their first language. | Strongly Agree | 40.2 | 36.8 | 38.6 |
| | Agree | 35.4 | 39.5 | 37.3 |
| | Unsure | 11.0 | 17.1 | 13.9 |
| | Disagree | 13.4 | 6.6 | 10.1 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 30 asked participants if the high-stakes testing movement had resulted in a significant increase in student dropout rates. Of the 165 respondents to question 30, 6% ($n$ = 10) strongly agreed, 12.7% ($n$ = 21) agreed, 28.3% ($n$ = 47) disagreed, 3% (n = 5) strongly disagreed and 49.4% ($n$ = 82) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 82.

Table 82

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 30: The High-Stakes Testing Movement is Resulting in a Significant Increase in Student Drop Out Rates.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 10 | 6.0 |
| Agree | 21 | 12.7 |
| Unsure | 82 | 49.4 |
| Disagree | 47 | 28.3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 5 | 3.0 |
| Total | 165 | 99.4 |

*Note:* Missing value = 1

To further analyze statement 30, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether the high-stakes testing movement had resulted in a significant increase in student dropout rates with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference between middle

and high school principals for statement 30, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 160) = 5.53, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .186. See Table 83.

Table 83

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 30 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 30 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 76) | Avg. % |
| The high-stakes testing movement is resulting in a significant increase in student drop out rates. | Strongly Agree | 6.0 | 6.6 | 6.3 |
| | Agree | 13.1 | 13.2 | 13.1 |
| | Unsure | 56.0 | 40.8 | 48.8 |
| | Disagree | 23.8 | 34.2 | 28.8 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1.2 | 5.3 | 3.1 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Statement 31 asked participants if no high-stakes decisions such as grade retention or graduation should be based on the results of a single test. Of the 164 respondents to question 31, 50.6% ($n$ = 84) strongly agreed, 39.8% ($n$ = 66) agreed, 2.4% ($n$ = 4) disagreed, 0.6% (n = 1) strongly disagreed and 5.4% ($n$ = 9) were unsure. This information is outlined in Table 84.

Table 84

*Frequency Distribution of Responses to Statement Number 31: No High-Stakes Decisions Such as Grade Retention or Graduation Should be Based on the Results of a Single Test.*

| Response | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly Agree | 84 | 50.6 |
| Agree | 66 | 39.8 |
| Unsure | 9 | 5.4 |
| Disagree | 4 | 2.4 |
| Strongly Disagree | 1 | 0.6 |
| Total | 164 | 98.8 |

*Note:* Missing values = 2

Additionally for statement 31, a 2 X 5 contingency table analysis was conducted to determine whether no high-stakes decisions such as grade retention or graduation should be based on the results of a single test with significantly more frequency in the dataset between middle and high school principals. Results indicated that there was not a significant difference

between middle and high school principals for statement 31, $X^2$ (4, $n$ = 159) = 4.40, $p$ > .05, *Cramér's V* = .166. See Table 85.

Table 85

*Middle * High School Principals Statement 31 Contingency Table*

| | | Principal of a Middle or High School | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Statement 31 | Response | Middle School ($n$ = 84) | High School ($n$ = 75) | Avg. % |
| No high-stakes decisions such as grade retention or graduation should be based on the results of a single test. | Strongly Agree | 57.1 | 45.3 | 51.6 |
| | Agree | 33.3 | 48.0 | 40.3 |
| | Unsure | 6.00 | 4.0 | 5.0 |
| | Disagree | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.5 |
| | Strongly Disagree | 1.2 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Total | | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

An overview of the results of the contingency tables for statements 18-31 for middle and high school principals is outlined in the Table 86. The researcher included the 14 statements, the school level, the number of respondents, and the highest response from middle and high school principals for each statement along with the percentage associated with the response.

Table 86

*Contingency Table Results for Statements 18-31*

| | Statement | School Level | N | Mode | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18. | High-stakes testing programs also result in massive amounts of test preparation, resulting in a lost of instructional time. | Middle School | 84 | Strongly Agree | 44.0 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 48.7 |
| 19. | High-stakes testing has resulted in a loss of local control of what is taught, how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction. These decisions are now greatly impacted by policy makers at the state and national levels. | Middle School | 83 | Strongly Agree | 38.6 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 43.4 |
| 20. | A test that has been validated only for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of individual students should not be used to evaluate the educational quality of a school or school division. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 39.3 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 44.7 |
| 21. | High-stakes testing compromises educational quality by leading educators to "teach to the test," which results in a narrowing of the curriculum, limiting the scope of tested subjects and shortchanging or eliminating subjects not included in the assessments. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 45.2 |
| | | High School | 75 | Agree | 49.3 |
| 22. | High-stakes tests are too expensive and result in diverting scarce resources and attention from serious problems. | Middle School | 84 | Unsure | 31.0 |
| | | High School | 74 | Agree | 39.2 |
| 23. | A focus on standards and accountability that ignore the processes of teaching and learning in classrooms will not provide the direction that teachers need in their quest to improve instruction. | Middle School | 83 | Agree | 48.2 |
| | | High School | 75 | Agree | 54.7 |
| 24. | Pressure exerted from the need to succeed on high-stakes tests often leads to inappropriate test preparation practices. | Middle School | 84 | Disagree | 36.9 |
| | | High School | 75 | Disagree | 34.7 |
| 25. | High-stakes tests draw an inaccurate picture of student achievement and unfairly jeopardize students or schools that are making genuine efforts to improve. | Middle School | 83 | Agree | 62.7 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 50.0 |

(continued)

Table 86 (continued)

| | Statement | School Level | N | Mode | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 26. | Educational decisions based on high-stakes tests have a disproportionate impact on poor and minority children. | Middle School | 83 | Agree | 37.3 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 38.2 |
| 27. | High-stakes testing and the accompanying consequences of failure lead to overstressed students. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 57.1 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 52.6 |
| 28. | The pressure inherent in preparing students for high-stakes tests are driving out good teachers. | Middle School | 84 | Agree | 36.9 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 39.5 |
| 29. | High-stakes tests unfairly and inaccurately assess and penalize learners for whom English is not their first language. | Middle School | 82 | Agree | 35.4 |
| | | High School | 76 | Agree | 39.5 |
| 30. | The high-stakes testing movement is resulting in a significant increase in student dropout rates. | Middle School | 84 | Unsure | 56.0 |
| | | High School | 76 | Unsure | 40.8 |
| 31. | No high-stakes decisions such as grade retention or graduation should be based on the result of a single test. | Middle School | 84 | Strongly Agree | 57.1 |
| | | High School | 75 | Agree | 48.0 |

**Research Question 4**

In asking the fourth research question, what are the perceptions from secondary school principals in Virginia on high-stakes testing, there were two open response questions posed to participants.

**Open response question 1.** The first open response question asked, "As a school principal, what would you say has been the greatest impact high-stakes testing has had on you as the instructional leader of your building?" There were eight resounding themes that emerged as principal perceptions: Instruction, Teachers, Student Populations, Principals, Instructional Resources, Data-Driven, Professional Development and School Climate.

In order to keep the respondents identity anonymous, the researcher used a coding system of "MS" and a number to represent the identity of the middle school principals, and a number to represent the open response question. The same coding system was used for high school principals only "HS" was used to identify high school principals.

**Instruction.** The first theme focused on instruction that centered on the curriculum and the loss of instructional time. The perception from the respondents was that HST had a significant impact on curriculum alignment. HS47, #145 stated, "HST forces the alignment of the written, taught and tested curriculum" with MS58, #152 affirming that HST had helped to provide a "clearer focus on curriculum and data" however, there was significant loss of instruction time due to HST. Principals believed that the loss of instructional time was due to testing. HS11, #23 asserted that there was a "loss of instructional time spent on test taking strategies" and MS38, #90 stated that there was "loss of instructional time" which they attributed to testing.

Many of the participants also believed that HST had significantly impacted the ability of students to develop critical thinking skills of students. HS12, #27 stated that HST was responsible for "narrowing the focus on developing critical thinkers and problem solvers," while MS33, #81 stated that HST "negatively impact creativity and critical thinking." HS33, #113 stated that the "lack of critical taking [*sic*] and more recall" was a direct impact of HST. But the overarching belief regarding HST was best stated by MS35, #85 "I do believe that teachers are doing a better job of teaching than ever. They have been forced to focus on the standards and to really hone their instructional skills, which has been a great consequence of testing."

The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on instruction, as gauged by the first open response question:

- Greater focus on curriculum alignment, ($n$ = 11)
- Narrowing of the curriculum, ($n$ = 4)
- Impacts critical thinking and creativity, ($n$ = 7)

**Teachers.** The second theme that emerged from the first open response question on what the greatest impact HST has had on secondary school principals as instructional leaders centered on teachers. There were with several positive results emerging. One of the positive impacts of HST was that there was now no way to hide ineffective teachers.

MS1, #2 reported that HST helped to "find effective teachers and get rid of those who can't teach." MS61, #156 stated there was much "time spent on poor teachers [and] does not allow time to improve other teachers."

There was also the belief that HST had a positive impact on teacher collaboration. MS8, #22 attested to the fact that "teachers are now working together, planning together, working

smarter, and planning meaningful rigorous tasks" which was one positive impact of HST. Additionally, many principals believed that HST had helped to improve instruction. MS16, #40 stated that their "teachers focused on teaching the same curriculum," and MS19, #45 stated that their "teachers were more accountable for the curriculum and what all students are required to know."

There was also an additional positive impact resulting from HST reported by middle and high school principals. Participants believed that HST had a positive impact on ensuring that they hired and retained the best teachers possible. HS22, #58 stated that they had to ensure that they were "retaining best qualified teachers to continue to teach SOL classes. Because of the pressure associated with high-stakes testing" and MS24, #55 stated that they were focused on "hiring the best teachers" due to the impact of HST.

Although HST was reported to have positive impacts on principals as instructional leaders, there were also many negative impacts reported. The biggest negative impact was that teachers experienced significant stress due to HST. MS21, #49 reported, "with student performance being part of the evaluation process, this has led to a great deal of stress" and that HST had resulted in teachers feeling demoralized. HS40, #133 reported that high stakes testing had "placed undue pressure and stress on students and teachers." Additionally, principals shared that many of the teachers were leaving the profession due to the stress of HST. HS35, #116 attested to the stress of "keeping teachers from leaving because they feel responsible when their students don't pass." Because of the pressure and stress attributed to HST, principals reported that teaching to the test was becoming the norm. MS33, #81 stated that teachers felt "pressure to teach to the test," and that teachers were "teaching to a given high-stakes test."

The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on teachers, as gauged by the first open response question:

- No longer able to hide ineffective teachers retaining the best teachers, ($n$ = 4)
- Retaining the best teachers, ($n$ = 4)
- Teacher collaboration, ($n$ = 4)
- Pressure and stress, ($n$ = 11)
- Leaving the profession, ($n$ = 3)
- Teaching to the test, ($n$ = 4)

**Student populations.** The third theme to emerge centered on student populations from the open response question regarding the greatest impact HST has had on the instructional leader. This theme centered on certain populations of students or sub-groups of students. MS7, #21 in this study stated that they were spending a "plethora of time focusing on best practices and strategies needed to help 'targeted populations' and HST MS62, #159 stated, "schools are no longer able to forget about the 10% or 20% that do not meet success, we are now examining and looking at everyone."

Principals also reported that HST had focused their attention on all gap groups of students. HS50, #160 stated "without high-stakes testing, students with disabilities and African American students would continue to be underachieving" and that HST "draws greater attention to students who in the pass [*sic*] were overlooked."

The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on students, as gauged by the first open response question:

- Focus on subgroups of students ($n$ = 13)

**Principal.** The fourth theme emerging from the open response question on what the greatest impact high-stakes testing has had on the instructional leader focused directly on the principal as the head of the school building. There was a decisive belief that HST had changed the role of the principal with MS68, #153 asserting there was a "change in the way we do business" and MS49, #123 reporting that the principal was "no longer the nuts and bolts" but the instructional leader of the building. MS54, #146 affirmed that as the school principal they now "moved me from a focus on school administration to a focus on instructional leadership," and MS57, #149 stated that there was "increased attention on instruction and achievement data." Many of the principals believed that they were now responsible for the entire quality of instruction within his/her school building.

With the responsibility of the entire instructional program within his/her school building falling on the principals' shoulders, principals reported that they were more focused than ever on monitoring teacher instruction. HS56, #48 stated that they had "been monitoring the instructional program more closely" while MS27, #62 stated that due to HST "it has brought a keen awareness of the lack of accountability from previous years until now, from the perspective of administrative oversight and teacher accountability." MS54, #146 reported that they "now have

less time for day to day monitoring of the building and I spend a large amount of time observing, conducting walk-throughs, and completing evaluations."

Since principals reported that the responsibility for the instructional program was now one of their primary job responsibilities, principals reported that they needed to have a clearer understanding of the data that resulted from HST. HS25, #65 believed HST "makes the principal become a data-driven decision maker that must analyze the data in order to develop instructional programs to address achievement gaps and learning deficiencies" while MS17, #43 reported that there was a "focus of data analysis and comparing student to student; teacher to teacher with the invisible threat of achieve or we shove more in your face." MS30, #70 attested to having an "increased understanding of instructional practices" to ensure high student outcomes.

Principals too reported that the impact of HST has placed great pressure and stress on them as the building leader. MS67 #140 reported that there was "constant pressure to increase students' performance on HST," and that there was "pressure to ensure full accreditation." MS36, #87 stated that "the pressure of responsibility" was great "whether good or bad the principal will be held accountable for the scores of his/her building." Additionally, respondents reported that they were the ones "held accountable for scores" and thus there was added pressure on them to be successful.

- The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on principals, as gauged by the first open response question:
  - More focus on being an instructional leader, ($n$ = 10)
  - Stress and pressure, ($n$ = 9)

**Instructional resources**. The fifth theme to emerge from the open response question on the greatest impact high-stakes testing has had on the instructional leader focused on instructional resources. Four principals reported that there was a lack of funding to assist with increasing student achievement. MS25, #57 reported that they were "spending a lot of time, money and human resources on testing using an assessment format that does not test the most valuable skills/knowledge," while MS35, #85 reported that they "have not been given the resources necessary to increase academic performance to a greater degree." MS22, #50 affirmed that HST "has also caused a diversion of funds away from needy schools that impacts student performance."

The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on instructional resources, as gauged

by the first open response question:

- Lack of instructional resources and funding, ($n$ = 6)

**Data-driven.** The sixth theme to emerge from the open response question on the greatest impact high-stakes testing has had on the instructional leader centered around the use of data to help improve instruction. Principals reported that they had become data-driven decision makers in order to increase student outcomes. Principals also reported that they were now competent data analyzers that used data to make instructional decisions for higher student achievement results. MS28, #66 reported that HST has led them to "focus more on data and how our staff can use it strategically to plan and differentiate instruction to meet all of our students needs" and HS50, #160 reported that they "generate goals using the data for increase student achievement." MS11, #33 reported that HST "has hyper-focused us on data (good thing)" while MS63, #163 stated "high-stakes testing has led to an increased focus on data-driven decision making in terms of instruction, assessment, and professional learning."

Many of the principals reported that the data were used to identify strengths and weaknesses in instruction. HS16, #39 reported that the "data gleaned from testing has been beneficial for targeting student weaknesses and planning instructional improvements" while MS40, #94, reported that they were "analyzing the data to determine strengths and weakness of students." There was a resounding feeling by principal that there was a large amount of data manipulation going on throughout their school building to ensure high student outcomes. MS44, #104 stated that they "have become buried in data" and HS34, #114 reported that there was a "constant request for data and to pass the test" from his/her teachers while HS45, #143 felt that "testing has required me to be more involved in things such as data collection and analysis" to ensure student success on HST.

The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on data use, as gauged by the first open response question:

- Data-driven decision makers, ($n$ = 34)
- Ability to identify students and teachers strengths and weakness, ($n$ = 3)

**Professional development.** The seventh theme emerging from the open response question on what had been the greatest impact high-stakes testing has had on the instructional leader focused on professional development. Principals reported that there was more professional development being offered to ensure good results on the high-stakes tests. Principals in this study

reported that they were spending more time focusing on professional development with their staff in order for students to be successful on the high-stakes tests. MS24, #55 reported that there was "a true focus on professional development" and HS26, #73 stated that HST "has overly focused the instructional conversation and professional development on instructional strategies designed to directly improve test results." HS37, #122 reported "on the positive side, it has caused me to change the professional development offered to teachers at the school."

The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on professional development, as gauged by the first open response question:

- Focused on professional development, ($n$ = 5)

**School climate.** The eighth and final theme emerging from the open response question on what had been the greatest impact high-stakes testing has had on the instructional leader centered on the school building as a whole. Seven surveyed principals reported that there was pressure on everyone due to HST. MS65, #56 reported that the "tests have greatly added to student, family, and staff stress" while HS52, #162 stated "it is an unfortunate pressure that is put on educators by legislators and the public." HS48, #157 reported, "the public perception of schools is a great consequence."

The list below summarizes the impact HST has had on school climate, as gauged by the first open response question:

- Pressure and stress on students, teachers and the principal, ($n$ = 10)

**Open response question 2.** The second open response question asked "what type of unintended consequences have you encountered as the school principal that had resulted from high-stakes testing?" There were six resounding themes that emerged as principal perceptions: Instruction, Teachers, Students, Principals, Instructional Resources, and Testing.

**Instruction.** The first theme focused on instruction with many of the principals reporting a narrowing of the curriculum. MS15, #38 reported that there was "a narrowing of teaching ONLY to the standards," while MS2, #4 reported that there was a decreased focus in "almost on all subjects except math and English." MS41, #95 reported:

> We take away physical education and electives from students so that we can remediate them. This is a necessary, but negative result of the pressures of testing. So we make sure that children pass the test, at the expense of their overall health and development.

MS28, #66 stated there was "diminishing attention given to the arts, where many students shine."

Additionally, in instruction, principals reported that authentic learning had been lost due to HST. MS15, #38 asserted that there was "a hyper-focus on preparing for a single test, and a lessening of actual learning, understanding, and building connections," while HS52, #162 stated "a focus has been placed on the memorization of content when our students really need 21st century skills." MS48, #118 stated that there had been "a loss of creative instruction. I want the teacher to be able to take the kids off the beaten path and really dig into a strand. There is a loss of authentic learning" which this principal attributed to one of the negative unintended consequences of HST.

The list below summarizes the unintended consequences HST has had on instruction, as gauged by the second open response question:

- Narrowing of the curriculum, ($n$ = 4)
- Authentic learning is lost, ($n$ = 5)

**Teachers.** The second theme focused on teachers and the unintended consequences resulting from high-stakes testing. There was a resounding belief that one of the unintended consequences of HST was teachers were leaving the profession. HS8, #17 reported "good teachers are leaving the profession because of testing" and MS62, #159 attested to:

> The loss of great teachers is one of the main unintended consequences of high-stakes testing. It is sad to bring on fresh, energetic, and talented new teachers who truly have a passion for both students and learning and watch them become overwhelmed and discouraged with having to always be pressured by the demands that are placed upon them. Nurturing and growing new teachers is one of the best parts of being a school principal and watching some of the best and brightest leave the profession because of the demands of high stakes testing has been one of the consequences that I never wanted to have to encounter.

MS14, #37 reported, "I have seen teachers who still had promising years in the classroom leave the profession because of the pressure that they felt from all of the emphasis on high-stakes tests." MS53, #135 reported that high-stakes testing is "driving away good teachers."

Along with teachers leaving the profession, principals reported that the stress of HST has taken a toll on teachers. MS43, #101 reported that "high-stakes testing is very stressful, much moreso than intended I think, for a significant portion of our student population—and extremely stressful for our classroom teachers." HS32, #102 attested the fact that "high-stakes testing leads

to a tremendous amount of stress on teachers…. As a result many excellent teachers are leaving the teaching profession."

HS22, #58 reported that "our strongest teachers are being asked to teach more classes with high-stakes testing due to their successes which can lead to higher stresses at work" while MS21, #49 states "teachers [sic] stress level has also increased dramatically leading to medical issues and in some cases, leaving the profession."

Principals also reported that morale was at an all time low due to HST. MS16, #36 shares "the negative impact it [HST] has on teacher morale, teacher efficacy, and our collective efficacy when everything is measure [sic] only by one test, one moment in time for our students" and HS12, #27 reported that HST "demoralized educators."

Another unintended consequence of HST reported by building principals as it related to teachers was the practice of teaching to the test. MS54, #146 reported that they "found that teachers are so focused on test creation and implementation that the real teaching for student learning is falling through the cracks." HS41, #134 reported that "the test is the be-all-end-all in what some teachers do each day in their classrooms and can impact diverse teaching methods because of teachers worrying about covering material that 'might' be on the test." MS17, #43 attested that teachers are now "teaching the test; not children."

Another unintended consequence that principals attributed to HST was that teachers believed there was a lack of creativity in instruction. MS33, #81 put it this way: "The passion that drives educators and results in inspiring and motivating students is compromised by high stakes testing." MS11, #33 stated, "teachers are afraid to try new things with their students" due to HST and HS9, #18 attested that teacher "creativity has disappeared."

One positive unintended consequence principals reported dealt with low-performing teachers and due to HST, the inability to hide these ineffective teachers any longer. MS24, #55 reported that there now was "a true focus on underperforming teachers." HS2, #3 simply stated that there is "less hiding of the ineffective teachers…gotta deal with the data," while MS19, #45 reported, "the main consequence is determining which teachers are proficient in the curriculum and the ones who are not."

The list below summarizes the unintended consequences HST has had on teachers, as gauged by the second open response question:

- Teachers leaving the profession, ($n$ = 10)

- Enormous stress placed on the teacher, ($n$ = 15)
- Teachers are teaching to the test, ($n$ = 13)
- Lack of creativity due to teaching to the test, ($n$ = 8)
- Can't hide ineffective teachers, ($n$ = 3)

**Students.** Another theme that emerged from the open response question regarding the unintended consequences encountered as a school principal resulting from HST centered on the students themselves. School principals reported that students with disabilities really struggled with HST.

MS49, #123 reported "students with disabilities are being required to take the same test as all other general education students regardless of their performance" and that this was a negative unintended consequence of HST. HS46, #144 reported that there were "fewer opportunities for students with disabilities to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. The current structure precludes them from this." HS5, #11 reported another unintended consequence associated to HST was that "students with disabilities are not capable of passing SOL tests and do not get a diploma despite their best effort."

Additionally, principals reported that the stress associated with HST was another unintended consequence that students were struggling with due to HST. MS21, #49 reported that "I have dealt with students that have made themselves physically sick over the testing" while HS37, #122 reports, "while high-stakes testing is meant to 'force' schools to help students excel, it can actually cause students to feel stressed out when they do not meet the set criteria for success." Another principal reported that there are "increased stress levels in students who struggle with the exams" and another who simply shared that they had seen "kids crying about tests."

HS32, #102 also reported that another unintended consequence of HST centered on students and their attempts at test taking in order to graduate, they reported:

> Students know they need the tests for a high school diploma and teachers are evaluated based upon performance of all their students. Some students have given up because they feel that they have worked so hard but have come up short.

HS30, #91 reports "students have worked hard for 13 years in school and are not able to graduate because they don't test well! It is very sad to see." MS7, #21 attested that

"having seniors continue to take a test to see if they can graduate is another unintended consequence."

Principals report that due to HST, students are being over-tested. HS19, #47 reported "students are continuously taking assessments" and MS39, #92 attested "students do not enjoy being tested all of the time" and HS49, #158 reported that "students are over-tested and tired of taking tests they see no use for because they are not truly formative."

The list below summarizes the unintended consequences HST has had on students, as gauged by the second open response question:

- Students with disabilities are struggling on the High-stakes tests, ($n$ = 7)
- Students are increased stress due to HST, ($n$ = 8)

**Principals.** Another theme that emerged from the second response question was the impact on the principal. Many principals reported that due to HST there was enormous pressure placed upon them to perform. MS17, #43 reported that there was "pressure to perform or else" and MS16, #40 stated:

> We were accredited with warning this year which creates even more pressure than we had already been feeling. As a principal, I want my school to make improvements each year. Teachers, for the most part, are motivated to do that. The stress is just unreal!

MS12, #34 principal reported:

> One negative consequence of high-stakes testing is I feel that I am competing with other schools to try not to be at the bottom. I find myself viewing other schools' scores trying to see if they are performing better than we are.

HS9, #80 felt that the punitive measure used to ensure successful student outcome was not the intent of HST, stating, "I think one unintended consequence is the punitive measures a school faces when they do not excel. Automatically firing the principal and/or staff members is not always the answer."

Principals also reported being under stress to achieve high student outcomes on high-stakes tests. MS25, #57 stated they had "a feeling of failure when students who I feel are being tested and measured unfairly perform appropriately (below standard) and are reported as not meeting standards." HS39, #130 affirmed, "I will probably retire this year, enough is enough." HS50, #160 stated:

> I do believe high stakes testing has diminished the number of educators wanting to move into administration especially in the principal position. No principal wants to read in the paper, or look on the VDOE website negative information about their school such as Not Accredited or Accredited with Warning.

The list below summarizes the unintended consequences HST has had on principals, as gauged by the second open response question:

- Pressure and stress to perform, ($n$ = 8)

**Instructional resources.** Another theme that emerged centered instructional resources. HS17, #41 reported that there were "increased mandates from the department of education without funding to truly implement vital programs. Localities with funding issues often drop programs to fund these new requirements."

MS38, #90 reported a "money loss due to having to purchase computer memory for OLD computers" and HS7, #15 reported, "I've always thought it was interesting that failing schools across the state would receive 'buckets' of money to make improvements. Being rewarded for failing has never been an effective strategy." MS41, #95 stated that there had been a "loss of computer resources for instruction because they are utilized much of the time for testing."

The list below summarizes the unintended consequences HST has had on instructional resources, as gauged by the second open response question:

- Lack of funding to improve instruction, ($n$ = 13)

**Testing.** Participants chose to comment about testing itself in the second response question. Twenty principals reported that testing was taking up too much of the instructional school year. MS35, #85 affirmed

> The frequency of testing within a school year was not intended but it is definitely a consequence. We are constantly assessing in order to determine possible SOL performance, which is time away from instruction. Is this the way it should be? It's hard to avoid when so much rides on this one factor. Perhaps this one end of year test should not carry so much weight.

MS39, #92 reported

> Our school is tied up in testing for two months of ten we spend in a school year. This is an estimate of how much time is spent taking tests, preparing for tests, practicing taking

> the test so that students can manipulate the IE item on the computer, reviewing testing data.

MS52, #129 attested to "time lost for the actual act of testing students. Hours and days are lost due to the time it takes to test each and every student," and HS3, #7 reported that they "lose 1/3 of the year to testing, when do we teach?"

The list below summarizes the unintended consequences HST has had on instruction, as gauged by the second open response question:

- Testing takes up too much instructional time, ($n$ = 20)

**School climate.** The last theme to emerge from the second open response question centered on the overall school organization. Seven principals reported that there was increased stressed placed on the school as whole. MS37, #88 reported, HST "has caused a high level of stress for employees, students and teachers. I have seen cases of anxiety and [at] the student and teacher level that is very concerning." HS31, #99 affirms

> There's a lot of pressure on schools to make students achieve. Instead of students and parents being primarily responsible for their education and taking advantage of the service schools provide, educators are primarily responsible for student achievement, to the point that students are often bribed to achieve, as seen through the variety of incentives now provided to students.

Four principals believed that HST unfairly reported that their schools were doing poorly; however they have significantly different populations of students. HS32, #102 reported

> Schools or teachers with high socio-economic diversity have greater challenges to get their students to pass the exams, but are still compared to schools or teachers with fewer challenges to overcome. This leads to these schools or teachers feeling like failures although in reality they may be doing an excellent job meeting the needs of their students.

MS47, #112 attested

> Schools being thought of as 'bad' just because they are Title I schools and required to do public school choice and Supplemental Services. Even when schools have worse scores, if they are not Title I schools, they do not have the same consequences.

The list below summarizes the unintended consequences HST has had on the school as an organization, as gauged by the second open response question:

- Stress on students, teachers and administrators, ($n$ = 7)

- Low socio-economic schools labeled as failures, ($n$ = 4)

**Summary**

The preceding information provides the reader with summary of the data on the perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia on the impact and consequences of high-stakes testing. The data suggest that HST contributed to an increased focus on the written, taught, and tested curriculum. Middle and high school principals, were split about whether the achievement gap of subgroups of students had closed as supported by the results of HST.

The data also suggest that middle and high school principals disagree with each other on whether principals need to be held accountable through HST in order to effectively supervise their instructional staff.

The data also suggests that high-stakes testing programs result in massive amount of test preparation, which results in a loss of instructional time. The data also suggests that middle school principals' high school principals agree that due to HST, principals have become data-driven decision makers, using data to make informed decisions.

Additionally, middle school principals and high school principals agree that they are now utilizing student performance data generated by high-stakes tests to help them refine programs, channel funding, and identify roots of success. Another positive unintended consequence resulting from HST as revealed through the data suggests that middle school principals high school principals agree that there is now a tight alignment between the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Middle and high school respondents also reported that another positive unintended consequence of HST was that they were no longer seen as managers of school building but as instructional leaders who now must have a clear understanding of the entire instructional process within their school buildings. The overarching theme to emerge from the survey data revealed that HST has placed an enormous amount of stress of students, teachers and principals.

# Chapter 5
## Summary and Conclusions

This chapter begins by providing a review of the purpose and methodology for this study and proceeds with a discussion of the research findings. Implications for practice and suggestions for future studies follow. The chapter concludes with reflections from the researcher on the experience of developing and conducting this study.

The purpose of this study was to identify perceptions of middle and high school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions were assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature. The researcher used SPSS to analyze the data from the survey instrument to garner analyses in data reporting. The measures used to analyze the data included frequencies, percentages, and cross tabulation analysis in order to make assumptions about the participants' perceptions of the impact of high-stakes testing as it related to the literature. The data collected and resulting analyses yielded the following findings. In addition to the descriptive data analysis, qualitative data analysis was conducted through the use of open response questions.

## Findings

### Finding 1. Principals perceive a loss of local control of what is taught, how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction.

Middle and high school principals believe decisions regarding HST are now greatly impacted by policymakers at the state and national levels. When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 19 regarding whether HST had resulted in a loss of local control of what is taught, how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction, 75.9% of middle and 84.2% of high school principals agreed with the finding.

Dr. Gregory Cizek, a professor specializing in testing policy at the University of North Carolina's School of Education, when interviewed by *The Economist* in March 2010, attested that "test scores provide information policymakers at the state or national level that they can use to make decisions about funding and for evaluating policy initiatives" (Democracy in America,

2010, p. 1). Cizek's beliefs may explain why middle and high school principals believe that decisions about HST are greatly impacted by policymakers at the state and national levels.

**Finding 2. Principals reported they are comfortable with understanding test result data and report they are making data-driven decisions regarding instruction.**

Participants were asked to rate their agreement on statement 1: "Increasingly, from the classroom to the school board room, educators are making use of student performance data generated by high-stakes tests to help them refine programs, channel funding, and identify roots of success." A majority of middle and high school principals agreed (77.4% and 75% respectively).

Additionally in statement 14 when asked if the prominent and public interest in pupil performance on high-stakes tests had resulted in an intensity of effort directed toward data collection and quality control that is unparalleled, 69.9% of middle school principals agreed and 65.8% of high school principals agreed.

Participant HS45, #143 shared that "testing has required me to be more involved in things such as data collection and analysis" to ensure student success on HST. Participant MS28, #66 reported that HST had led him/her to "focus more on data and how our staff can use it strategically to plan and differentiate instruction to meet all of our students needs." Participant HS50, #160 reported that he/she "generate[s] goals using the data for increase student achievement." Participant MS11, #33 reported that HST "has hyper-focused us on data (good thing)."

Cooley and Shen (2003) support this finding, asserting that principals are now tasked with becoming knowledgeable and competent in the area of student assessments and skilled in interpreting data in order to make critical instructional decisions. Denny's (2008) study also supported this finding by reporting that HST had generated the use of copious data, and that instructional decisions made by principals appeared to be data-driven.

**Finding 3. As a result of HST, principals perceive the necessity of instructional leadership as opposed to simply acting as school managers.**

Respondents reported that due to HST the role of the principal had changed. Participant MS68, #153 reported a "change in the way we do business," and participant MS49, #123

reported that the principal was “no longer the nuts and bolts,” but the instructional leader of the building. Participant MS54, #146 affirmed that, as the school principal, HST now “moved me from a focus on school administration to a focus on instructional leadership,” and participant MS57, #149 stated that there was “increased attention on instruction and achievement data.”

With shouldering the responsibility of the entire instructional program within his/her school building, principals reported that they were more focused than ever on monitoring teacher instruction. Participant HS56, #48 stated that they had “been monitoring the instructional program more closely,” while participant MS27, #62 stated that [HST] “has brought a keen awareness of the lack of accountability from previous years until now, from the perspective of administrative oversight and teacher accountability.” Participant MS54, #146 reported he/she “now ha[s] less time for day to day monitoring of the building and I spend a large amount of time observing, conducting walk-throughs, and completing evaluations.”

According to DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran (2003), the increase in the demands for accountability, along with the changing demands of the position has forced principals to become effective instructional leaders with “a broad set of principal roles and responsibilities designed to address the workplace needs of successful teachers and to foster improved achievement among students” (p. 44).

Due to the high-stakes associated with statewide assessment results, principals can no longer focus exclusively on management of the school building, leaving the instructional monitoring of teachers and students to someone else. Principals must be fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses of individual teachers in his or her building in order to ensure that strong instructional practices are taking place, thereby providing students with a high-quality education.

**Finding 4. Principals agreed that high-stakes tests are expensive and result in diverting scarce resources and attention away from serious problems.**

Out of the 84 middle school principals, 46.4 % agreed and out of the 74 high school principals, 62.2% agreed with statement 22 that HST is too expensive and that funding sources are being diverted to needed areas of attention. Thirty-one percent of middle school principals reported they were unsure that HST was too expensive and diverting scarce resources away from serious problems while only 18.9% of high school principals were unsure.

The literature supports the shifting of resources for testing. Phelps (2011) asserts that administrators are forced to allocate more resources to the subjects that are included in HST, and Minarechová (2012) listed HST as the cause to why administrators "reallocate resources to tested subjects at the expense of other subjects" (p. 94).

**Finding 5. Middle and high school principals strongly agreed that HST results in a loss of instructional time.**

Statement 18 asked participants if high-stakes testing programs also resulted in hours spent on test preparation, resulting in a loss of instructional time. Of the 84 middle school principals responding, 78.5% agreed and of the 76 high school principals, 86.9% agreed. Respondents reported that testing was taking up too much of the instructional school year. Principals responding to the open response question on unintended consequences of HST also supported this finding. Participant HS11, #23 asserted that there was a "loss of instructional time spent on test taking strategies" and participant MS38, #90 stated that there was "loss of instructional time" which they attributed to testing.

Phelps (2011) also supports this finding and reports that teachers spend enormous amounts of time on test-taking techniques with their students. Furthermore, Phelps asserts HST "eats up weeks, even months, of class time during which students study old examinations or practice test-taking skills" (p. 2). Additionally in a study conducted in 2005, Phelps asserts that this loss of instructional time necessitates narrowing of the curriculum.

**Finding 6. As a result of HST, principals perceive a narrowing of what is taught and a clearer alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.**

Respondents reported that a negative unintended consequence of HST centered on the narrowing of the curriculum to ensure high student outcomes in tested areas. In statement 21 principals were asked if high-stakes testing compromised educational quality by leading educators to "teach to the test," which resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum, limiting the scope of tested subjects and shortchanging or eliminating subjects not included in the assessments. A cross tabulation analysis revealed that 65.4% of middle school principals and 62.6% of high school principals agreed.

Participants responding to the open response question on unintended consequences supported this finding. Participant MS15, #38 reported that there was "a narrowing of teaching ONLY to the standards," while participant MS2, #4 reported that there was a decreased focus in "almost on all subjects except math and English." Participant MS41, #95 reported:

> We take away physical education and electives from students so that we can remediate them. This is a necessary, but negative result of the pressures of testing. So we make sure that children pass the test, at the expense of their overall health and development.

Phelps (2011) supports this finding declaring, "NCLB has created a clear incentive for educators who are worried about their schools' performance to cut back on art, music, and history classes while devoting more time to reading, math, and science" (p. 2). Cawelti (2006) agrees that the narrowing of the curriculum is a result of NCLB, attesting to the fact that schools are under extreme pressure to meet targets stipulated by AYP in reading and mathematics. Berliner (2011) also supports the finding that curriculum narrowing is the likely response to HST, reporting that "one quite rational but troubling way to accommodate to the pressures to obtain ever higher tests scores from students is by curriculum narrowing" (p. 289).

In addition to curriculum narrowing, the data in this study also revealed middle and high school principals' belief that HST was responsible for placing a clearer focus on the alignment of the written, taught and tested curriculum. When asked whether high-stakes tests promote greater homogeneity of education, which was a result of schools' aligning their curricula and instructional focus more closely to outcomes embodied in high-stakes tests, a cross tabulation analysis revealed that 46.4% of middle school principals and 42.1% of high school principals agreed. Participant HS47, #145 stated, "HST forces the alignment of the written, taught and tested curriculum," with participant MS58, #152 affirming that HST had helped to provide a "clearer focus on curriculum and data."

The data revealed another positive result of HST, that professional development had improved due to the focus of helping educators hone their instructional skills and content area expertise. A cross tabulation revealed that 70.2% of middle school and 48% of high school principals agreed. Participant MS24, #55 reported that there was "a true focus on professional development" and participant HS26, #73 stated that HST "has overly focused the instructional conversation and professional development on instructional strategies designed to directly

improve test results." Participant HS37, #122 reported "on the positive side, it has caused me to change the professional development offered to teachers at the school."

Phelps (2005) would agree that behavioral changes stemming from HST help to bring clarity, organizational efficiency and a streamlined alignment of standards, curriculum and instruction.

**Finding 7. Less than 50% of middle and high school principals believed that HST has helped close the achievement gap between minority and majority students, and data suggests HST has had a negative impact on students with disabilities.**

The data suggest there was a split between middle and high school principals on HST and whether the achievement gap was closing. When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 3 that asked whether HST had helped to close the achievement gap between minority and majority of students in Virginia, the data revealed that out of the 84 middle school respondents, 44.1% agreed (and 40.4% disagreed). Out of the 76 high school principals, 34.7% agreed (with 50.7% disagreeing) and about 15% of each group indicating they were unsure.

Participant MS62, #159 stated, "schools are no longer able to forget about the 10% or 20% that do not meet success, we are now examining and looking at everyone." Participant MS26, # 60 stated, there was a "growing achievement gap."

In a cross tabulation analysis of statement 1 on whether high-stakes testing in Virginia had helped focus public attention on schools with low-achieving students, 72.7% of middle school principals and 67.1% of high school principals agreed. Additionally when a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 12 regarding the implementation of high-stakes testing as being the catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs, 76.2% of middle school principals agreed and 54% of high school principals agreed.

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 26 on whether educational decisions based on HST have a disproportionate impact on poor and minority children, both middle and high school principals agreed. Out of 83 middle school principals, 59% agreed and out of the 76 high school principals responding 67.1%.

Although middle and high school principals were split on whether HST was causing the achievement gap of students to close, respondents agreed that more focus was now being paid to

low achieving students. While HST was perceived as the catalyst for the attention being paid to special needs students, participants reported students with disabilities really struggled with HST.

Participant MS49, #123 reported "students with disabilities are being required to take the same test as all other general education students regardless of their performance" and participant HS46, #144 reported that there were "fewer opportunities for students with disabilities to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. The current structure precludes them from this." Participant HS5, #11 reported that "students with disabilities are not capable of passing SOL tests and do not get a diploma despite their best effort."

Although there is the requirement from the Virginia Board of Education (2003) based on NCLB legislation that schools focus on closing the achievement gap of certain subgroups (including students with disabilities) as well as meeting targets set by the state on statewide assessments, principals seem split whether the achievement gap is actually closing.

While middle and high school principals were split on whether HST had helped to close the achievement gap among all students, the intent of the NCLB mandate is to ensure that all students including subgroups of students steadily increase their overall reading and mathematics student achievement results (Virginia Board of Education, 2012). Schools now are focusing their attention on all subgroups of students or they run the risk of being sanctioned and/or implementing corrective actions required by the federal mandate.

According to the Virginia Board of Education (2003), mandates from the NCLB Act of 2001 require schools to focus on closing the achievement gap of certain subgroups of students (limited English proficient, economically disadvantaged, major racial/ethic groups, and students with disabilities), and these populations of students have to "meet state-established 'targets' for student performance on statewide assessments and other indicators" (Virginia Board of Education, 2003, p. 26). Kolodziej (2011) reports that there is a belief that the logic behind NCLB is to hold schools accountable for all subgroup of students, affirming that some parts of NCLB are working - mainly the focus on improving education for minority populations.

**Finding 8. Principals do not believe that high-stakes decisions for students should be based on a single test.**

Out of the 84 middle school principals, 90.4% strongly agreed and out of the 75 high school principals 93.3% agreed with statement 31 that decisions, such as grade retention and

graduation should not be solely decided based on scores from HST. Participant MS35, #85 affirmed this finding stating:

> The frequency of testing within a school year was not intended but it is definitely a consequence. We are constantly assessing in order to determine possible SOL performance, which is time away from instruction. Is this the way it should be? It's hard to avoid when so much rides on this one factor. Perhaps this one end of year test should not carry so much weight.

Amrein (2003) concurs, reporting that using HST as a requirement for graduation, it leads to "increased drop-out rates, decreased graduation rates, and higher rates of younger individuals taking the GED equivalency exams" (p. 32). Amrein also reports a higher number of students are retained in the grade "before pivotal testing years, apparently to ensure that students are properly prepared to take high-stakes tests" (p. 32).

**Finding 9. Neither middle nor high school principals believe that HST is a motivating factor for teachers and principals.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 4, of the 84 middle school participants, 54.8% disagreed that teachers need to be held accountable through HST in order to motivate them to teach better and of the 76 high school principals, 44.7% disagreed. Although middle school and high school principals disagreed to what degree teachers needed HST as a motivator and accountability mechanism, as evidenced by a 10 point spread in percentages, responses elicited from the open response questions revealed a belief that teachers are collaborating together and providing much more meaningful instructional lessons to students as a result of HST.

Participant MS8, #22 attested to the fact that "teachers are now working together, planning together, working smarter, and planning meaningful rigorous tasks," which was one positive impact of HST. Additionally, participant MS16, #40 stated, "teachers focused on teaching the same curriculum," and participant MS19, #45 stated, "teachers were more accountable for the curriculum and what all students are required to know."

Denny's 2008 study supports this finding, wherein he reported "supporters of testing believe that high-stakes have inspired educators to adopt better curricula and employ more effective teaching methods" (p. 29). Although middle school and high school principals

disagreed to what degree teachers need to be held accountable through HST as evidenced by a 10 point spread in percentages, responses elicited from the open response questions revealed a belief that teachers are collaborating together and providing much more meaningful instructional lessons to students as a result of HST.

To reveal the findings as they related to principals needing to be held accountable through high-stakes tests in order to motivate them to be more effective in supervising their staff, a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 9. The data revealed that out of the 83 middle school respondents, 50.6% disagreed and of the 76 high school principals 60.5% disagreed that they needed HST to ensure effective supervision of their staff.

Supporters of HST believe that school leaders should be held accountable for student outcomes, and that HST is a motivational factor in helping them to become more effective at supervising their staff members (Denny, 2008).

**Finding 10. Middle and high school principals believe that HST has placed an enormous amount of stress on students, teachers, and administrators.**

Participants in this study reported that one of the biggest negative impacts of HST on them, as instructional leaders, was the enormous amount of stress that students, teachers and administrators were experiencing. Both middle and high school principals reported that many teachers were leaving the profession due to the amount of pressure placed on them to produce high student outcomes on high-stakes tests.

When asked in statement 27 whether high-stakes testing and the accompany consequences of failure lead to overstressed students, 73.9% of middle school principals and 73.7% of high school principals agreed. Respondents to the open response questions reverberated reports of stress placed on students, teachers and principals. Participant MS21, #49 reported, “with student performance being part of the evaluation process, this has led to a great deal of stress,” and participant HS40, #133 reported that HST had “placed undue pressure and stress on students and teachers.”

A study conducted by Carlin (2010) affirms this finding. Carlin reports that principals identified their most pervasive problems and issues related to their roles as instructional leaders, and 92.5% reported stresses related to increasing student achievement on standardized tests.

Wright (2009) also supports this belief and writes, “it is no surprise that high-stakes testing in our schools is producing overwhelming pressure on everyone” (p. 117).

**Finding 11. Middle and high school principals believe that administrators and teachers are leaving the profession or are considering leaving the profession due to HST.**

Participants in the study shared that teachers as well as administrators were leaving or considering leaving the profession due to the stress of HST. In response to statement 28 (“The pressure inherent in preparing students for high-stakes tests are driving out good teachers”), a cross tabulation analysis was conducted revealing 66.7% of middle school principals and 69.8% of high school principals agreed

Participant HS35, #116 attested to the stress of “keeping teachers from leaving because they feel responsible when their students don’t pass.” Participant HS8, #17 reported, “good teachers are leaving the profession because of testing,” and participant MS21, #49 stated, “teachers stress level has also increased dramatically leading to medical issues and in some cases, leaving the profession.”

Principals too reported thinking of leaving the profession and believed HST was keeping others from wanting to enter the principalship. Participant HS39, #130 affirmed, “I will probably retire this year, enough is enough.” Participant HS50, #160 stated:

> I do believe high stakes testing has diminished the number of educators wanting to move into administration especially in the principal position. No principal wants to read in the paper, or look on the VDOE website negative information about their school such as Not Accredited or Accredited with Warning.

Tschannen-Moran (2003) supports this finding, reporting that “clearly principals are straining under the burden of all that is expected of them in this new era of accountability, and many look forward to the day they can escape” (p. 58). Additionally in a 2010 study conducted by Carlin one participant stated,

> I thought about getting out of this business on several occasions, maybe just moving my family away and starting a new career - that’s the shame of it - I have all of this education, double masters, and I wind up with all the fingers pointed at me - this job is affecting my health (Carlin, 2010, p. 135).

**Finding 12. Middle and high school principals were split on whether HST had helped to improve instruction.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 2 to analyze whether high-stakes testing in Virginia was designed and implemented to improve instruction by helping teachers focus on what is most important to teacher, 58% of middle school principals agreed and 50% of high school principals agreed. However, 35.8% of middle school principals and 46.1% of high school principals disagreed with this finding.

Participant MS35, #85 stated, "I do believe that teachers are doing a better job of teaching than ever. They have been forced to focus on the standards and to really hone their instructional skills, which has been a great consequence of testing." Other participants disagreed that instruction had improved due to HST.

Participant MS15, #38 asserted that there was "a hyper-focus on preparing for a single test, and a lessening of actual learning, understanding, and building connections," while participant HS52, #162 stated "a focus has been placed on the memorization of content when our students really need 21st century skills."

Phelps (2005) asserted that "standardized tests may reveal weaknesses or strengths that corroborate or supplement a teacher's or principal's analysis" of instruction taking place in the classroom. Jones (2003) supports this finding by citing the influence of HST as a rationale for teachers changing their instructional delivery methods because they believe it benefits students.

Ravitch and Chubb (2009) disagree that HST has helped to improve instruction, citing recent reports from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that "despite the intense concentration on reading and mathematics required by law, the gains registered on NAEP since the enactment of NCLB has been unimpressive" (p. 1).

**Finding 13. Middle and high school principals disagree that doing poorly on HST will motivate students to learn.**

Statement 5 asked participant if doing poorly on HST would lead to increased student effort to learn. When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted, 84.5% of middle school principals disagreed and 82.8% of high school principals disagreed. In statement 6 that asked whether students work harder and learn more because they know what is expected and that the high-stakes tests really count, 75% of middle school and 61.6% high school principals disagreed.

**Finding 14. Middle and high school principals believe that public display of HST scores is a motivating factor to ensure that the standards tested on statewide assessments are being successfully taught.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 7 regarding whether the public display of high-stakes test scores motivated administrators to ensure that standards on which the tests are based are part of the curriculum and are being successfully taught, both middle and high school principals agreed. Out of the 82 middle school principals responding, 69.5% agreed and out of the 75 high school principals responding, 66.7% agreed with the finding.

This finding is not supported by the literature in which Ravitch (2010) contends that NCLB's assumption that shaming schools who's scores did not meet the AMO targets would force the staff members that worked in them to produce higher test results and that the cause of the low test scores were due to "lazy teachers and lazy principals, who need to be threatened with the loss of their jobs" (p. 111). Pepper (2010) believes that "the spotlight on the use of test scores to demonstrate accountability without guidance or support for capacity building may inadvertently be creating a situation in which principals feel forced to take full responsibility for the academic programs and processes of the school" (p. 44). Pepper asserts that this type of situation could be pressuring principals to exert a more authoritarian leadership approach in which they alone make decisions about the instructional practices used throughout the school building.

**Finding 15. Middle and high school principals disagreed that HST is the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measure available to test students.**

When a cross tabulation analysis of statement 8 on whether when high-stakes tests are developed and used appropriately, they are among the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measure available, middle and high school principals both disagreed. Out of the 84 middle school principals responding, 40.5% disagreed and out of the 74 high school principals responding, 52.7% disagreed while 22.6% of middle school and 17.6% of high school principals were unsure.

A cross tabulation analysis was also conducted on statement 16 that asked whether a positive effect that the introduction of high-stakes consequences has had lies with the tests

themselves, that they are highly reliable, free from bias, relate to important public goals, time and cost efficient, and yield remarkable consistent decisions. Out of the 84 middle school principals responding, 66.7% of middle and 68.5% of high school principals disagreed.

Goldberg in his 2004 study supports this finding be stating:

> The reliability of the actual tests and the many unintended consequences of high-stakes testing…. should give us all pause. No one should overlook the increasing evidence of disquieting problems (p. 8).

**Finding 16. Principals agreed that due to HST, professional development had helped teachers hone their teaching skills and content area expertise.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 11 that asked whether driven be the demands of high-stakes tests, professional development had improved to help educators hone their teaching skills and become experts in their content area, both middle and high school principals agreed. Out of the 84 middle school principals responding, 70.2% agreed with 20.2% disagreeing and 48% of high school principals agreed and 29.3% disagreed.

Participant MS24, #55 reported that there was "a true focus on professional development" and Participant HS26, #73 stated that HST "has overly focused the instructional conversation and professional development on instructional strategies designed to directly improve test results." Participant HS37, #122 reported "on the positive side, it has caused me to change the professional development offered to teachers at the school."

In a report by Democracy in America (2010) there was data to support the finding that when high-stakes testing is:

> Aggregated at a school or school-district level, they can inform choices about curriculum, textbooks, staff assignments, and professional development or additional training needs (p. 1).

**Finding 17. Middle and high school principals perceive that, due to HST educators know more about testing than ever before.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 13 that asked whether one result of high-stakes testing is that educators know more about testing than ever before, both

middle and high school principals agreed. Out of the 84 middle school respondents, 79.7% agreed and out of the 75 high school principals responding, 64% agreed with this finding.

Jones (2003) supports this finding and asserts that "in fact, because of the test, some teachers are changing their methods to more student-centered approaches" (Jones, 2003, p. 44).

**Finding 18. Middle and high school principals were uncertain as to whether pressure exerted on the need to be successful on HST led to inappropriate test preparation practices.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 24 that asked whether the pressure exerted from the need to succeed on high-stakes tests often led to inappropriate test preparation practices, there was uncertainty among the participants. Out of the 84 middle school principals responding, 34.5% agreed, 20.2% were unsure and 45.2% disagreed. Out of the 75 high school principals responding 36% agreed, 21.3% were unsure and 42.7% disagreed.

In the open response questions posed to principals, none of the participants reported thoughts regarding inappropriate test preparation practices. The research concludes that this revelation may be due to the fact that there are not many principals who are willing to acknowledge their role in such a highly volatile and career-ending scenario.

Goldberg (2004) suggests that due to accountability for high-stakes testing (HST) falling squarely on the principal's shoulders, many school principals have engaged in unethical practices to ensure that their schools produce high-test results (Goldberg, 2004). Phelps (2011) reports that teachers spend an enormous amount of time on test-taking techniques with their students. These techniques range from filling in answer sheets to whether to guess or not on a particular question. Kohn (2000) reports that "high-stakes testing has radically altered the kind of instruction that is offered to the point that teaching to the test has become a prominent part of the nation's educational landscape" (p. 320).

**Finding 19. Middle and high school principals agree that HST draws an inaccurate picture of student achievement in schools that are making genuine efforts to improve student outcomes.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted for statement 25 on whether high-stakes tests draw an inaccurate picture of student achievement and unfairly jeopardize students or

schools that are making genuine efforts to improve student outcomes, both middle and high school principals agreed. Out of the 83 middle school participants, 68.7% agreed and 52.6% of the 76 high school participants agreed.

Participant HS32, #102 reported

> Schools or teachers with high socio-economic diversity have greater challenges to get their students to pass the exams, but are still compared to schools or teachers with fewer challenges to overcome. This leads to these schools or teachers feeling like failures although in reality they may be doing an excellent job meeting the needs of their students.

Participant MS47, #112 attested

> Schools being thought of as 'bad' just because they are Title I schools and required to do public school choice and Supplemental Services. Even when schools have worse scores, if they are not Title I schools, they do not have the same consequences.

According to the Virginia Department of Education (2012) Title I schools are identified as Priority schools based on a school's overall achievement rates of students on SOLs given in a single year. The number of Priority schools is equal to five percent of the Title I schools in Virginia, no non-Title I schools are identified in the Priority rating. When these schools are labeled as a Priority school they must undergo state-approved monitoring of improvement interventions. These schools are required to work alongside state-approved turnaround partners designated to assist with implementation of the school improvement interventions that meet state and federal requirements.

Additionally, in Virginia there are schools labeled as Focus schools. These schools are identified based on the schools' academic achievement rates of students in three "proficiency gap groups." The VDOE identifies ten percent of the Title I schools in Virginia as Focus schools and they are subject to the same requirements as a Priority school; however Focus schools are required to use a state-approved coach to help the school "develop, implement, and monitor intervention strategies to improve the performance of students at risk of not meeting achievement standards or dropping out of school" (Virginia Department of Education, 2012, p. 2).

**Finding 20: Middle and high school principals agreed that HST unfairly assesses and penalizes English Language Learners.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 29 that asked whether high-stakes tests unfairly and inaccurately assess and penalize learners for whom English is not their first language, middle and high school principals agreed. Out of the 82 middle school principals responding, 75.6% agreed and out of the 76 high school principals responding, 76.3% agreed.

According to the Virginia Board of Education (2003) schools are required to focus on closing the achievement gap of certain subgroups of students, including limited English proficient students and this population of students has to also "meet state-established 'targets' for student performance on statewide assessments and other indicators" (Virginia Board of Education, 2003, p. 26).

**Finding 21. Middle and high school principals are unsure whether HST is the cause of students dropping out of school.**

When a cross tabulation analysis was conducted on statement 30 regarding whether the HST movement was the result of a significant increase in student drops out rates, both middle and high school principals were unsure. Out of the 84 middle school principals responding, 56% were unsure and 25% disagreed and out of the 76 high school principals 40.8% were unsure and 39.5% disagreed.

Participant HS32, #102 reported that another unintended consequence of HST centered on students and their many attempts at test taking in order to graduate, they reported:

> Students know they need the tests for a high school diploma and teachers are evaluated based upon performance of all their students. Some students have given up because they feel that they have worked so hard but have come up short.

Berliner (2011), writes that in addition to removing students from tested subjects, some administrators willfully mistreat students in the hopes that they will drop out of school or they hold students back a year before having to take the tests.

**Finding 22. Middle and high school principals' perceptions of HST are more negative than positive.**

An overarching finding from this study was reflected in the perceptions made by middle and high school principals. From the findings stated above, middle and high school principals reported more negative perceptions of HST than they did positive perceptions. The scholarly literature in this study also reflected this same belief.

## Implications for Practice

Based on the findings from this study, there are potential implications for principals, division-level leadership, leaders of teacher and principal preparation programs, and state and federal policymakers.

For principals:

- ***Principals need to continue to develop an understanding of how to use and interpret test data results.*** The use of HST data appears to be an informative tool that allows principals to make instructional decisions based on the outcomes of students of high-stakes tests. High-stakes testing has ultimately led to principals relying on the results of standardized test data to identify the weaknesses and strengths in each subject area as well as teacher overall instructional performance. This data could prove quite beneficial to administrators as they begin to identify instructional strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Additionally, the identification of strengths and weaknesses could be quite informative to preparing and planning professional development activities for the upcoming school year to address identified deficits in instruction.
- ***Principals need to be instructional leaders of their buildings.*** Now more than ever, principals are seen as the instructional leader of the school building. Principals should be fully knowledgeable about the curriculum, pacing guides, and best practices for good instruction. It would serve principals well to ensure that they are in classrooms monitoring instruction and student learning on a regular basis.
- ***Principals should ensure that they are monitoring classroom instruction regularly as well as providing adequate teacher feedback, resources, and professional development opportunities.*** Principals should understand that there is no longer any

room to hide ineffective teachers; therefore accurate documentation of strengths and weaknesses of his/her teaching staff will prove beneficial for strong teachers as well as teachers who are in need of additional support. This documentation could also support the recommendation for termination if identified teaching weaknesses do not improve.

- ***Principals should utilize HST results to determine strengths and weaknesses of instructional personnel in order to provide the necessary professional development.*** A positive impact from this study revealed that professional development was being earmarked towards identified strengths and weaknesses reported in the statewide assessment results. Principals should ensure that professional development opportunities help to improve instruction and assist teachers with becoming experts in their content area.
- ***Principals should investigate whether students are dropping out of high school due to not being able to pass the high-stakes tests needed in order to graduate.*** Principals at the high school level should begin to collect data to determine if student drop out rates are attributed to not passing required statewide assessments needed for graduation. Middle school principals should also begin collecting data on students not passing statewide assessments in order to support high school principals. This collaboration between middle and high school principals might assist high school principals in determining interventions and remediation strategies to put in place to ensure student success on high-stakes tests at the high school level.

For division-level leadership:

- ***Division-level leadership should continue to provide curriculum leadership.*** The data suggest that division-level leadership is ensuring that there is a tight alignment of the written, taught and tested curriculum. This tight alignment could prove to beneficial to all stakeholders (students, teachers, and administrators) looking to raise student achievement.
- ***Division-level leadership should be aware of the narrowing of the curriculum, and insure that the curriculum remains appropriately broad.*** The data supports that the ultimate responsibility of student outcomes falls directly on the school leader. This factor may be causing many principals to narrow the curriculum focusing only on

HST subjects. However the data reveal that due to narrowing the curriculum, the subjects not tested are suffering. Some are even losing time and financial resources, as funding is diverted to tested subjects. Not having enough time to fully cover all of the standards required for tested subjects puts students, teachers and principals in a pressure-packed situation of finding ways of ensuring that students are fully prepared to be successful on the statewide assessments; therefore this may be the cause for why principals are narrowing the curriculum. Division leaders should ensure that non-tested subjects are seen as just as important as tested subjects in order to provide students with a well-rounded education.

- ***Division-level leadership should examine structural barriers for students that impact their stress levels and their graduation.*** Having students with disabilities take the same standardized assessments as the general population of students may be precluding many students with disabilities from graduating with a standard diploma or dropping out of school altogether. An additional barrier that division leaders should consider is that HST results should not be used as the sole factor for student promotion because doing so may be causing many students to drop out of school.
- ***Division-level leadership should be mindful of and devise ways to counteract stressors felt by stakeholder groups.*** From the data reported, one of the most pervasive negative unintended consequences of HST is the enormous amount of stress placed on students, teachers and administrators as they are driven to perform. Division leaders must be mindful of the pressure experienced at the building level to meet HST expectations. They should be available to offer support and encouragement as opposed to adding to the stress level.

For leaders of teacher and principal preparation programs:

- ***University program leaders should prepare teachers and teacher leaders for stress-management, data-driven decision making, as well as an understanding of the written, taught and tested curriculum.*** New teachers and administrators, who probably have only interned for a couple of weeks or months, would benefit from understanding their role and accountability as it relates to HST. Having a more comprehensive and realistic preparation related to their own classroom or school buildings may prove to alleviate some of the stress caused by HST.

- ***University program leaders should prepare teachers and teacher leaders to become data-driven decision makers.*** Leaders of teacher and principal preparation programs should also provide potential teachers and administrators with the opportunity to manipulate results of test data to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as determining what type of professional development courses that need to be offered from the results of test data.
- ***University program leaders should provide teachers and teacher leaders multiple opportunities to understand the written, taught and tested curriculum.*** Teacher and principal preparation programs should also provide teachers with multiple opportunities to understand the written, taught and tested curriculum to ensure that they fully understand the importance of curriculum alignment. For principal preparation programs, potential candidates should be afforded many opportunities to observe and evaluate teachers in the classroom to provide feedback including strengths, weaknesses, and direction to instructional resources that may assist with stronger instructional practices.

For state and federal policymakers:

- ***Policymakers should review the current testing program in the Commonwealth in order to address whether the current type of assessments are useful in preparing students for 21st century skills, especially considering the high stakes nature of the high school tests and the reported amount of instructional time that is lost because of test preparation.*** An analysis of the current HST assessments taken by Virginia students should be undertaken to determine the relevance and validity of high-stakes tests related to 21st century workplace preparation.
- ***State and federal policymakers should conduct a study to determine if, as indicated in this study, teachers and principals are leaving the profession due to HST, causing a shortage of quality teachers and administrators.*** The data suggest teachers and principals are considering leaving or have left the profession due to the stress of HST and the need to produce high student outcomes. With the Virginia Department of Education now weighting student academic progress at 40 percent of teacher and principal evaluations (VDOE website, 2013), it is not surprising that HST has caused

many principals and teachers to consider whether or not to stay in the field of education. (VDOE website, 2013).

- ***Policymakers should investigate the possible loss of resources for other important programs because of the commitment of resources to HST subjects.*** The data from this study reveal that HST mandates have been put in place and students, teachers and administrators are being held accountable for the results; however, the state and federal government have not fully funded the required mandates. Therefore, resources once used in untested subjects are being systematically diverted to HST subjects.
- ***Policymakers should investigate whether statewide assessments in their current format, unfairly assess English Language Learners.*** The current format of statewide assessments may not fairly assess English Language Learners for whom their first language is not English. This type of testing may not fairly assess these students understanding of the curriculum simply due to the language barrier associated with not fully interpreting the assessment questions in their current form.
- ***State and federal policymakers should conduct a study to investigate whether reporting Title I schools in the same manner as non-Title I schools is accurately portraying student achievement outcomes.*** Title I schools have a disproportionate number of students that come to school lacking the basic skills to learn therefore most of these schools work extremely harder to get these students up to grade level. While Title I schools struggle to get most of their students up to grade level equivalency, most non-Title I schools do not have to work as hard. Therefore comparing Title I schools and low socioeconomic schools with higher socioeconomic schools may not actually be betraying student growth on statewide assessments. A study should be conducted to determine if Title I and non-Title schools data results should be reported separately to accurately reflect student achievement based on student growth.
- ***State policymakers should review the incidents of misconduct reported to the Virginia Department of Education relating to inappropriate testing practices by schools and school divisions to determine if the pressures associated with HST have caused teachers and principals to resort to unethical testing practices.*** The data revealed that principals were uncertain whether the pressure exerted from the need to succeed on high-stakes led to inappropriate test preparation. State policymakers

should analyze the reported incidents of unethical testing practices and determine if the practices are related to the pressure placed on high student outcomes and the repercussions that come with not meeting with success of statewide assessments.

- ***State policymakers should determine if the statewide assessments in their current format are the most reliable measure for assessing student achievement.*** Many participants question whether the current format of statewide assessments is the most reliable performance-based measure available to assess 21st century workplace skills. State policymakers should conduct research into whether multiple-choice formatted questions are actually assessing what our students know and don't know about the tested curriculum and whether a new format of testing should be implemented.
- ***All school leaders should weigh the value of accountability against the stress, narrowing of curriculum, and other unintended consequences of HST as they consider future testing structures.*** HST has led to teacher and principal attrition, narrowing of the curriculum, and loss of instructional time due to testing. Additionally, students with disabilities and English Language Learners are penalized due to the box-cutter assessment format given to all students regardless of their disabilities and language barriers. HST also has not shown to increase student outcomes in English and Math according to the NAEP Assessment cited by Ravitch and Chubb (2009). The overarching question to all stakeholders is whether high-stakes testing is worth continuing in its current format and whether accountability measures associated with HST need to be reexamined?

**Suggestions for Further Study**

Data produced from this study revealed several underlying interests for further research. The following recommendations could be considered as opportunities for additional inquiry:

1. A study could be conducted with elementary principals to assess the impact of high-stakes testing on the PK-5 setting, as this study was limited to middle and high school principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. A study could be conducted on whether the achievement gap between minority and the majority of the student populations within schools and school divisions has been narrowed due to HST. Perceptions among secondary principals in this study

indicated so, however a quantitative analysis could assess the accuracy of such statements.

3. Further research on the possible impacts of HST on teacher collaboration and effective research-based instructional practices could be explored.
4. A study could be conducted on whether high-stakes tests are the most reliable assessments to determine student preparedness for 21st century workplace skills.
5. Researchers could attempt to determine if HST has motivated principals to ensure teachers are being effective instructionally.
6. A study could be conducted on the attrition rate of principals and teachers due to HST.
7. Researchers could attempt to conduct a study on the amount of instructional time utilized to prepare and test students for high-stakes assessments.
8. A research study could investigate school leadership's rationale associated with the narrowing of the curriculum.
9. A study could be conducted on the changing allocation of resources related to HST.
10. A study could be conducted on the perceptions, impact and unintended consequences of HST on classroom teachers.
11. A research study could be conducted on whether the Commonwealth, due to HST, is having a hard time recruiting potential administrators into becoming building principals.

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## Appendix A

### Letter Disseminated to all Virginia Public Middle and High School Principals.

## Virginia Tech Doctoral Research Candidate Requests Your Participation

October 1, 2013

Dear Colleague:

I am currently working towards my doctorate in Educational Leadership at Virginia Tech. My research topic is a direct result of my interactions with secondary principals who are responsible for SOL testing within my division. The title of my Dissertation is: Perceptions of Middle and High School Principals in Virginia on High-Stakes Testing. This study is designed to exam the impact of state-mandated SOL testing on Virginia secondary school principals.

In order to complete my study, I am surveying all Virginia public middle and high school principals; By clicking on this link, https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1I0c7mauJPkL45COPb2z7qV1ruUOAIjOZrqPUlTSMxDg/closedform you will have access to the survey that I would like for you to complete. The purpose of this study is to gauge perceptions of secondary school principals in Virginia regarding high-stakes testing. Perceptions will be assessed regarding unintended consequences impacting the principals' role and their alignment with professional and scholarly literature.

It is my hope that you will agree to be a participant in this study. The survey will only take approximately 20 minutes to complete. The first section of the survey will collect some demographic information followed by the survey questions in section two. In section three there are two open-ended questions. This study is highly confidential and information obtained will be kept strictly private. No identifying information linking you to this study will be included in the data reporting. You may withdraw from the study at any time. If you have questions regarding this study you may contact me at 757-436-3316 during the daytime or 757-617-1205 in the evening. Additionally, my committee chairperson is Dr. Carol S. Cash. Lastly, I have obtained official approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Tech to conduct this study.

The deadline for submission of the survey is October 31, 2013. As an added incentive, those individuals submitting the survey by October 25th will be entered into a drawing for a $50 gift card. If I do not hear back from you by the week of October 21st, a reminder email will be sent. If you prefer to respond using the paper/pencil method, please let me know by email and I will send you a hardcopy.

I want to thank you in advance for taking the opportunity to respond to this survey and if at any time during this process you have questions or concerns, I stand ready to answer your questions.

Sincerely,

JACQUELINE C. COPPAGE-MILLER
Virginia Tech Doctoral Candidate

## Appendix B

## Survey Instrument Used in the Study

**Perceptions of Middle and High School Principals in Virginia on High-Stakes Testing**

Section I: Demographic Information. The information you provide in this section will assist with making demographic group comparison analysis.

**Name of School.**

**1. Gender:**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

**2. Age:**

- ☐ Under 30 years
- ☐ 31-40 years
- ☐ 41-50 years
- ☐ 51-60 years
- ☐ 60+ years

**3. Years of experience as an assistant principal.**

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-11 years
- ☐ 12-17 years
- ☐ 18--22 years
- ☐ 23+ years

**4. Years of experience as a principal.**

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-11 years
- ☐ 12-17 years
- ☐ 18-22 years
- ☐ 23+ years

**5. Are you a principal of a:**

- ☐ Middle School
- ☐ High School

**6. How long have you been a principal at your current location?**

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-11 years
- ☐ 12-17 years
- ☐ 18-22 years
- ☐ 23+ years

**7. Size of your school during the 2012-2013 school year.**

- ☐ Less than 500 students
- ☐ 501-800 students
- ☐ 801-1000 students
- ☐ 1001-1200 students
- ☐ 1201+ students

**8. During the 2012-2013 school year was your school a Title I school?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**9. What type of accreditation rating does your school have for the 2013-2014 school year based on testing results from the 2012-2013 school year?**

- ☐ Fully Accredited
- ☐ Accredited with Warning
- ☐ Provisionally Accredited - Graduation Rate
- ☐ Conditionally Accredited - New School
- ☐ Conditionally Accredited - Reconstituted
- ☐ Accreditation Denied

Section II: Survey Questions

In this section you will be asked questions regarding High-Stakes Testing (HST).

As you complete this portion of the survey, High-Stakes Testing is defined as the standardized assessments called the Standards of Learning (SOLs) in the state of Virginia.

**1. High-stakes testing in Virginia has helped focus public attention on schools with low-achieving students and by making these students more visible and less likely to slip between the cracks and fall further behind.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**2. High-stakes testing in Virginia is designed and implemented to improve instruction by helping teachers focus on what is most important to teach.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**3. High-stakes tests have helped close the achievement gap between minority students and majority students in Virginia.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**4. Teachers need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to teach better, particularly to push the least motivated students to perform.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**5. Doing poorly on high-stakes tests will lead to increased student effort to learn.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**6. Students work harder and learn more because they know what is expected and that the high-stakes tests really count.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**7. The public display of high-stakes test scores motivates administrators to ensure that standards on which the tests are based are part of the curriculum and are being successfully taught.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Agree

**8. When high-stakes tests are developed and used appropriately, they are among the most sound and objective knowledge and performance measures available.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**9. Principals need to be held accountable through high-stakes tests to motivate them to be more effective in supervising their staff.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**10. Increasingly, from the classroom to the school board room, educators are making use of student performance data generated by high-stakes tests to help them refine programs, channel funding, and identify roots of success.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**11. Driven by the demands of high-stakes tests, professional development has improved by focusing on helping educators hone his or her teaching skills and content area expertise.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**12. The implementation of high-stakes testing has been a catalyst for increased attention to students with special needs.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**13. One result of high-stakes testing is that educators know more about testing than ever before.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**14. Prominent and public interest in pupil performance on high-stakes tests has resulted in an intensity of effort directed toward data collection and quality control that is unparalleled.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**15. High-stakes tests promote greater homogeneity of education. A result of schools' aligning their curricula and instructional focus more closely to outcomes embodied in high-stakes tests, the experiences of and aspirations for children in urban, suburban, and rural districts within a state are more comparable then they have been in the recent past.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**16. A profoundly positive effect that the introduction of high-stakes consequences has had lies in the tests themselves. High-stakes tests have evolved to a state of being: highly reliable; free from bias; relevant and age appropriate; higher order; tightly related to important public goals; time and cost efficient; and yielding remarkably consistent decisions.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**17. High-stakes tests have exposed educators to high-quality writing prompts, document-based questions, constructed-response formats, and even challenging multiple-choice items. This has lead to teachers enhancing their own assessment practices.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**18. High-stakes testing programs also result in massive amounts of test preparation, resulting in a loss of instructional time.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**19. High-stakes testing has resulted in a loss of local control of what is taught, how it is taught, and who gets high-quality instruction. These decisions are now greatly impacted by policy makers at the state and national levels.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**20. A test that has been validated only for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of individual students should not be used to evaluate the educational quality of a school or school district.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**21. High-stakes testing compromises educational quality by leading educators to "teach to the test," which results in a narrowing of the curriculum, limiting the scope of tested subjects and shortchanging or eliminating subjects not included in the assessments.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**22. High-stakes tests are too expensive and result in diverting scarce resources and attention from serious problems.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**23. A focus on standards and accountability that ignore the processes of teaching and learning in classrooms will not provide the direction that teachers need in their quest to improve instruction.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**24. Pressure exerted from the need to succeed on high-stakes tests often leads to inappropriate test preparation practices, including outright cheating.**

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

**25. High-stakes tests draw an inaccurate picture of student achievement and unfairly jeopardize students or schools that are making genuine efforts to improve.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**26. Educational decisions based on high-stakes tests have a disproportionate impact on poor and minority children.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**27. High-stakes testing and the accompanying consequences of failure lead to overstressed students.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**28. The pressures inherent in preparing students for high-stakes tests are driving out good teachers.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**29. High-stakes tests unfairly and inaccurately assess and penalize learners for whom English is not their first language.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**30. The high-stakes testing movement is resulting in a significant increase in student drop out rates.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

**31. No high-stakes decisions such as grade retention or graduation should be based on the results of a single test.**

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Section III: Open Response

**1. As a school principal, what would you say has been the greatest impact high- stakes testing has had on you as the instructional leader of your building?**

**2. What type of unintended consequences have you encountered as a school principal resulting from high-stakes testing?**

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to complete this survey.

## Appendix C

## Permission Granted by Denny (2011) to Utilize his Survey Instrument.

**From:** Denny, Dave < DennyD@georgetownisd.org>
**Sent:** Saturday, June 01, 2013 1:53 PM
**To:** Coppage-Miller, Jacqueline
**Subject:** Re: Replicating Your Study

**Coppage-Miller, Jacqueline**

I am honored that you would use any part of my study. You have my permission to use the survey instrument. I would only ask that you share your results with me upon the conclusion of your study. I will be out of pocket for the next week. I will be glad help you in any way I can after then. Good luck in your study!

Dave Denny

Sent from my iPad

On Jun 1,2013, at 11 :25 AM, "Coppage-Miller, Jacqueline" <Jacqueline.Coppage-Miller@cpschools.com> wrote:

Good afternoon Dr. Denny:

My name is Jackie Coppage-Miller. I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. I am looking to replicate your dissertation study on The Impact of State-Mandated Standard-Based High-Stakes Testing on Selected Texas Public Secondary Schools as Perceived by Select administrators in the Membership of the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals.

My study will focus on secondary principals in the state of Virginia. I am contacting you to see if I could have your permission to utilize your survey instrument in my study. I am currently working on my prospectus and my chair and I agreed that your survey instrument would work perfectly with my study.

I know this is a busy time of year for you; however if you could find a moment in your schedule to respond one way or another, I would greatly appreciate it.

Your partner in education,

Jacqueline C. Coppage-Miller

# Appendix D

## IRB Approval Letter

VirginiaTech

**Office of Research Compliance**
Institutational Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website http://www.irb.vt.edu

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 21, 2013

**TO:** Carol S Cash, Jacqueline C Coppage-Miller

**FROM:** Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires April 25, 2018)

**PROTOCOL TITLE:** Perceptions of Middle and High School Principals in Virginia on High-Stakes Testing

**IRB NUMBER:** **13-904**

Effective October 21, 2013, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Administrator, Carmen T Papenfuss, approved the New Application request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

**PROTOCOL INFORMATION:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Approved As: | **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 2** |
| Protocol Approval Date: | **October 21, 2013** |
| Protocol Expiration Date: | **N/A** |
| Continuing Review Due Date*: | **N/A** |

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

**FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:**

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.