School Improvement and Reform: A Study of Student-Related Factors in Priority School Turnaround Efforts

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate turnaround reform by identifying student factors from the perspective of successful turnaround leaders in Virginia that hinder or aid the process and the supports in place to address learning issues. A literature review was conducted which included several studies related to turnaround reform. As a result of the literature review, it was determined that research focused on the school culture, leadership, teacher and parent factors concerning turnaround reform efforts, but there was little mention of students beyond the scores they produce on end-of-the-year standardized tests. The central research question investigated the student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process.

A descriptive qualitative design was used in this study. Data were gathered through interviews conducted with four principals, in Virginia, who had successfully turned around a failing school. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using a meta- and sub-coding system. The themes that emerged from the coding were examined for commonalities and differences.

The results of the study indicated the student factors thought to impact learning were reading issues, teacher competency issues, students' personal needs, attendance issues, and discipline issues. Reading issues were addressed by giving students more time to read authentic text, providing students with books to keep, conducting family nights, and providing teachers with professional development to deliver quality reading instruction. Teacher competency issues were addressed by providing support through observations and feedback, one-on-one support, and professional development. Students' personal needs were addressed by providing weekend food backpacks, involving community partners, and building relationships. Attendance issues, specifically tardiness, were addressed through newsletters, family night events, and attendance contracts. Discipline issues were addressed through use of school-wide positive behavior programs, incentives, and community partners.

While the first inclination of school leaders in a failing school may be to find the "quick fix" to turn scores around, the principals in this study focused on three fundamental goals: get the students to read more, keep students in the classroom, and meet students' needs.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate turnaround reform by identifying student factors from the perspective of successful turnaround leaders in Virginia that hinder or aid the process and the supports in place to address learning issues**.** It was determined, through a literature review, that research focused on the school culture, leadership, teacher and parent factors concerning turnaround reform efforts, but there was little mention of students beyond the scores they produce on end-of-the-year standardized tests. The central research question investigated the student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process.

Interviews were conducted with four successful turnaround principals in Virginia. The results of the study indicated the student factors thought to impact learning were reading issues, teacher competency issues, students' personal needs, attendance issues, and discipline issues. While the first inclination of school leaders in a failing school may be to find the "quick fix" to turn scores around, the principals in this study focused on three fundamental goals: get the students to read more, keep students in the classroom, and meet students' needs.

Research in the area of turnaround strategies and implementation is useful for school boards and principals as they endeavor to raise the achievement of their students. This study of successful turnaround organizations focusing on how student-related factors impact academic performance would be beneficial in determining whether the organizational structure supports or hinders Priority School reform. This examination of how student-related factors contribute to an organization's capability to turn around low performance informs administrators and policy makers on strategies to overcome the learning barriers that may exist.

DEDICATION

To my husband, Alan, thank you for your constant support. Thank you for supporting and believing in me. From the very beginning of this journey you have been my biggest cheerleader. God surely blessed me when he put you into my life. I am more thankful for you every day.

To my children, Ashley, Scott, Arin, Alyssa, Cory, Garrett, and Caitlin, I am so thankful you are a part of my life. Each and every one of you makes me proud. You have all accomplished so much, and I am very excited to see where your journey takes you next. Always remember you can do anything you set your mind to, the sky is the limit. Remember also to appreciate the gifts and the opportunities God has given you.

To my parents, thank you for the ethics you modeled for me. Thank you for your support and guidance. God blessed me with two loving parents who endured basketball games, choir concerts, youth group events, and countless grandchildren events just to support me.

I would also like to dedicate this work to the memory of Dr. Lewis Romano.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate school turnaround reform by identifying student factors from the perspective of successful turnaround leaders that hinder or aid the process and the supports in place to address learning issues**.** The factors, thought to impact student learning, uncovered in this study were reading issues, teacher competency issues, student personal needs, attendance issues, and discipline issues.

The public school system's sole purpose for existence is to provide a high-quality education for all students. Every United States citizen has the right to a free public education. With the demand for a skilled and highly educated workforce, able to compete in the global economy, schools have come under immense pressure to raise student achievement. Without the opportunity to obtain academic success, students face being locked into the endless cycle of poverty. How schools ensure that every child receives the high-quality education he/she is entitled to, has become a hot topic of fierce debate, federal directives, and educational research. Turnaround Reform is the foremost strategy presently employed by the federal government in its effort for school reform.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was enacted to focus on equal access and treatment for all students no matter their ethnicity or socioeconomic status. With the reauthorization of ESEA in 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) focused on high-accountability school reform. NCLB reform aimed at closing the achievement gaps between high- and low-performing children, especially those created by ethnic and socioeconomic factors.

Accountability requirements under NCLB required schools to assess students in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and one time in high school. The results of the end-of-year assessments were to be reported for both the whole student population and by "subgroups" of students: English-learners, students in special education, racial minorities, and students from low-income families (see Appendix A). NCLB required all students to reach "proficiency level" on state assessments by the 2013-14 school year. The federal government permitted the individual states to set the form of assessments to be administered and the criteria needed to reach proficiency (Klein, 2015).

Districts and schools came under increased amounts of pressure to “turn around” low-performing schools or face sanctions under NCLB by the United States Department of Education (USDOE, 2007). If a school district fails to make adequate yearly progress for four years, “the state is mandated to take corrective actions which could include one of the following: deferring programmatic funds or reducing administrative funds, implementing new curriculum with professional development, replacing personnel, establishing alternative governance arrangements, appointing a receiver or trustee to administer the district in place of the superintendent and school board, or abolishing or restructuring the school district” (USDOE, 2007).

Title I schools are the focus of the mandates under NCLB as these schools have high rates of students of poverty and limited English proficient students. The U.S. Department of Education identifies a school as a School-wide Program School (Title I) if it has a poverty threshold of at least 50 percent (ESEA, 1965). A poverty index is a tool designed to measure family income levels to identify those that fall below the poverty threshold in a school setting. According to the United States Census Bureau (2016), the bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty, following the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Statistical Policy Directive 14. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered at poverty level. For the purpose of this study, students from families that fall below the poverty threshold will be identified through free or reduced-price meals statistics.

Public schools’ results have been monitored through the use of federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) regulations, as directed under NCLB, based on results from end-of-year/course state standardized assessments from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). The AYP targets were set by the USDOE and are applicable to all states. If Title I schools fail to meet AYP targets for two years or more, either for all students or for a subgroup, they are identified as not “making AYP” and are placed under sanctions. Specifically, schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia that do not meet AYP targets are labeled *Priority Schools* according to the language of NCLB. The sanctions increase as the school continues to not achieve AYP targets. If a school fails to achieve the targets for two years in a row, who must offer students the choice to transfer to a school in the same district that has made AYP. Three years in a row of failing to meet AYP results in schools having to offer students free tutoring. State interventions are put into place if

schools fail to achieve AYP for more than three consecutive years. Intervention choices include closing the school, reverting to a charter school, taking over the school, or choosing a turnaround strategy (Klein, 2015).

In 2009, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced a US $3.5 billion federal Title I School Improvement Grant (SIG) program with the intention of turning around persistently low-performing schools (United States Department of Education, 2009). Title I schools identified as the lowest 5% according to their academic performance data on state assessments (test scores) are required to commit to implementing one of the four USDOE turnaround models with the appropriated funds from the SIG grants. The four models consist of (a) turnaround model: replacing the principal, at least 50% of the staff and adopting new instructional programs; (b) restart model: closing the school and restarting as a charter school; (c) school closure: closing the school and redistributing the students; and (d) transformational model: transforming the school by replacing the principal and implementing comprehensive reforms.

Current legislation signed by President Barak Obama in December 2015 outlined the in the reauthorization of NCLB under Every Child Succeeds Act of 2016 (ESSA), which continues to focus on persistently low-performing schools. ESSA regulations were to become effective on January 30, 2017. After the election of President Donald Trump, the regulations were put on hold for 60 days (Klein, 2017). The hold gives President Trump's choice for U.S. Department of Education, Betty DeVos, the power to "issue new guidelines to states" or to uphold the original regulations (Goldstein, 2017). There is no clear direction on what parts of ESSA will remain in place or be replaced with new regulations. States are still required to submit accountability plans by April 3, 2017, and many are completing the plans in accordance with ESSA initial guidelines (Goldstein, 2017). Burnette (2016) explained that the newly signed ESSA will continue to require states to identify low-performing schools based on test scores, yet the proficiency targets will be left to the individual state and with a requirement to include at least one nonacademic indicator in the identification process. The nonacademic indicators include, but are not limited to, student engagement, educator engagement, access to and completion of advanced coursework, postsecondary readiness, or school climate and safety. States will decide individually which indicators best suits their needs. Ujifusa (2016) noted that states are now in the process of determining how to identify their worst-performing schools, when they will intervene, who will oversee those interventions, and how they will scrutinize and pay for those

efforts. Even with the reauthorization of NCLB on hold, children will "still be required to take standardized tests in math, reading, and science, and schools will still need to report on the progress of at-risk groups, like disabled students, nonwhite students and those learning English" (Goldstein, 2017, p. 2). According to Goldstein (2017), states will be developing their own plans for how to intervene in failing schools. Accountability for student achievement remains a focus of school improvement reform.

From data available on school turnaround efforts, even with the millions of federal dollars committed to the reform, it is worth noting that the number of low-performing schools is on the rise (Hamilton, Heilig, & Pazey, 2014; Peck & Reitzug, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2007). One example of this is seen in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each year schools with the lowest 5% results on the state's standardized assessments are identified as Priority Schools and are required to participate in turnaround reform as part of the federal government's sanctions. In 2012, the first year of implementation, 36 schools were identified as Priority Schools. Of those 36, some have exited of priority status by making necessary academic gains with interventions while others have remained under the mandate. Each year some schools in Virginia exit priority status while others are identified and enter priority status. According to the VDOE records, a total of 64 schools have gone, or are going, through Virginia's priority status process to date (see Appendix B). As a result of the rise in number of schools unable to meet the standard test benchmarks and close the achievement gaps, researchers are taking a deeper look into the organizational structure of low-performing schools. Low-performing schools make a concerted effort to put into place the mandated interventions and strategies identified by the state to help raise student achievement, and some succeed while others struggle. What student-related factors are perceived to impact a school's success? The purpose of this study is to examine factors which may impact student success from the perspective of principals who have successfully participated in turnaround reform.

Statement of the Problem

Principals in low-performing schools are under immense pressure to make rapid, significant improvement in academic achievement in a one- to three-year time period or face sanctions. A review of selected relevant literature revealed several strategies and components essential to school turnaround success, such as collaboration, data-driven decision making,

leadership, organizational structures, staff development, alignment of curriculum and assessments, high expectations, parent involvement, and scheduling. Researchers have examined the positive and negative effects of these elements on the turnaround process, including performance outcomes, morale of participants, and the effects of employee turnover and replacement. Current research has centered on the elements of school-, parent-, and teacher-level effects on school turnaround, but little has been documented on the student factors that may contribute to the success or failure of the turnaround process. Peck and Reitzug (2013) stated, "The core constituents and members of schools are students, yet there is scant mention of students and their personal needs and rights in the turnaround literature" (p. 25). Another conclusion drawn from their research was that the silence in the literature regarding the identification of students' personal socioemotional issues and needs, reflects the reality that in a turnaround school all that really matters are the test scores the students must produce. Eliminating the gap in the knowledge of student related factors, affects the success of turnaround reform. The results of this research will aid districts in providing appropriate interventions and services to increase student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to investigate school turnaround reform by identifying factors, from the perspective of successful turnaround school leaders, that hinder or aid the process. Specifically, this study sought to explore Virginia elementary schools that have exited the turnaround process and the student factors that aided or impeded reform. Current studies on school turnaround and reform in the United States were limited in number, especially pertaining to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

A search was conducted of the relevant literature for the purpose of investigating NCLB's federal school turnaround reform. To conduct the article search, the search engine *Summon* was accessed through Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University's (Virginia Tech) online library service. Specific searches of peer reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and theses were conducted to locate studies pertaining to turnaround reform. Various search terms were used in the search including the following: *school turnaround, school reform, No Child Left Behind, priority schools, student performance,* and *accountability*. Peer-reviewed articles and studies published between January 1, 2000 to March 30, 2016 were searched and

identified for this study through examination of the articles' abstracts. These dates were chosen as they coincided with the turnaround reform mandates under NCLB. The decision to include studies in this literature review was based on whether the factors that had an effect on student achievement in turnaround efforts were examined. Current research on turnaround school reform has focused on school culture, leader, teacher, and parent factors' in turnaround reform.

Research Question

Some of the schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia identified as Priority Schools exited the program quickly while others remain in priority status and are under constant threat of sanctions. Students play an important role as one of the variables that could inhibit or facilitate the change needed in the turnaround process. A look at previous research indicated there was a gap in the knowledge concerning student-related factors and whether they hinder academic achievement. The central question for this study was the following: What were the student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process? The research sub-questions for this study were the following:

1. What student learning issues were identified?
2. How were student learning issues addressed to attain learning and achievement goals?
3. What exterior student factors were identified as needing improvement? (e.g. attendance, discipline, support, etc.)
4. What were the student-support strategies implemented to address exterior student factors?

Significance of the Study

School turnaround, as presented under NCLB, focused on mandating school reform through the turnaround process in order to raise student achievement in the United States. The goal to ensure that all students receive the level of education necessary to succeed is a worthy endeavor. The pressure to have low-performing schools use the same turnaround strategies and practices has been alleged to hinder turnaround success.

Schools are not all equal in their organizational performance, learning capacity, function, stability, and external factors (Peck & Reitzug, 2013, p. 29). Identifying the root causes of low performance has been identified as an area in need of further investigation with regard to

successful school turnaround. Each school has a different story to tell, and each part of the story documents effective strategies or barriers to change.

Research in the area of turnaround strategies and implementation would be useful for school boards and principals as they endeavor to raise the achievement of their students. A study of successful turnaround organizations focusing on how student-related factors impact academic performance would be beneficial in determining whether the organizational structure supports or hinders Priority School reform. Examination of how student-related factors contribute to an organization's capability to turn around low performance informs administrators and policy makers on strategies to overcome the learning barriers that may exist.

Description of Terms

1. *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)*—a measurement defined by the No Child Left Behind Act which allows the U.S. Department of Education to determine how every public school and school district in the country is performing academically according to results on standardized tests.
2. *Attendance rates*—the percentage of attendance that equaled the average daily attendance divided by the average daily membership for each defined elementary school.
3. *Discipline occurrences*—the number of individual referrals reported by the school for a one-year time-period.
4. *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*—a new education law signed on December 10, 2015, by President Obama as a reauthorization of ESEA, effective 2017 with identification of schools for support and improvement delayed until the 2018-2019 school year.
5. *External Lead Partners (ELP)*—a state-approved, contracted turnaround partner (a private company) who assists a school in priority status with implementation of an improvement model. The External Lead Partner is paid through federal funds from the School Improvement Grants.
6. *Focus Schools*—10% of Virginia's Title I schools with one or more proficiency gap groups not meeting performance expectations or the 95% participation rate in reading and mathematics Standards of Learning Assessments.

7. *Free and reduced-price meals percentage*—the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals. A student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals if his/her family's income falls below the federal poverty guidelines.
8. *Plan of Improvement (POI)*—a formal written plan that identifies areas of need in an organization and a strategy to address those needs.
9. *Priority Schools*—the lowest 5% of Virginia's Title I schools based on overall student performance on end-of-the-year reading and mathematics Standards of Learning Assessments and graduation rates (high school).
10. *Priority status*—the circumstance of undergoing sanctions due to being labeled a Priority School in the Commonwealth of Virginia VDOE.
11. *Race*—the minority population percentage in a school as defined via the Federal Race Code.
12. *Required Local Effort (RLE)*—the locality's expenditures and appropriations designated to meet their required local effort in support of the Standards of Quality
13. *Sanctions*—federally mandated interventions such as shutting down the school, changing to a charter school, taking over of school by the state, or choosing a turnaround strategy assigned to schools that do not meet Adequate Yearly Progress in the prescribed time.
14. *School Improvement Grant (SIG)*—grants provided to state education agencies to obtain resources to substantially raise the achievement of students in their lowest performing schools.
15. *Socioeconomic status*—the combined total measure of a family's economic and social position in relation to others based on income, education, and occupation. In the school system, socioeconomic status (SES) is broken down into those who qualify for free and reduced-price meals and those who do not.
16. *Turnaround reform*—rapid, significant improvement in the academic achievement of low-performing schools in a one- to three-year time-period using one of four models established by the United States Department of Education.
17. *VDOE Contractor*—a state-approved coach (from within the state) who works with the Priority School to conduct an academic review and develop, implement, and monitor intervention strategies. Services for the contractor are paid from local funds.

Limitations

In this study, several limitations were anticipated in determining the impact of student-related factors, encountered by Virginia schools that have participated in turnaround reform.

1. Elementary, middle and high schools are under federal mandate to identify the lowest performing schools for targeted assistance programs. The Commonwealth of Virginia identifies its lowest 5% performing schools, according to the federal guidelines, as Priority Schools. The lowest 10% of Title I schools that fail to meet performance expectations in reading and mathematics on end-of-year Standards of Learning assessments in one or more proficiency gap groups and are not under priority status are identified as *Focus Schools*. For the purpose of this study, schools being examined were limited to elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia that had been identified as Priority Schools. Results had an anticipated limitation due to the small number of schools being examined in this study.
2. Demographic differences had an anticipated limitation as the information from the Virginia Department of Education reports were compiled at the local level from divisions in Virginia. The data were certified by local school superintendents to be accurate; however, inaccuracies may have occurred due to human error in input and interpretation of reporting regulations set by the Virginia Department of Education.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 of the study consists of an introduction followed by the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, main research question and sub questions, significance of the study, definitions, limitations of the study, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 of the study includes a review of selected literature which examines the organizational structures of schools in the turnaround process and barriers that impede turnaround reform.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used for this study. This chapter also includes a description of the population, sub-groups, and sample group to be examined in this study. This is followed by a description of the demographic statistical data used to examine the population for commonalities and differences, where data were obtained, how data were gathered, and an

analysis of the data. A detailed description of how the qualitative study was conducted and a list of possible limitations were noted.

Chapter 4 presents an overview and a description of the participants for this study. This is followed by an analysis of the data gathered through interviews, and a presentation of the findings for each of the five research questions.

Chapter 5 presents the conclusions for this study. The chapter begins with a brief overview and summary of this study. The next section presents a discussion and interpretation of the findings. This is followed by a section outlining the following: implications for practitioners to improve academic achievement and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The turnaround reform policy is grounded in legislation which highlights specific mandates relative to the public school setting. With the revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) came high-accountability school reform aimed at closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially gaps created by ethnic and socioeconomic factors. Districts and Title I schools came under increased amounts of pressure to "turn around" low-performing schools or face sanctions under NCLB by the United States Department of Education (USDOE).

In June 2012, the USDOE granted Virginia waivers from certain requirements of the ESEA, as amended by the NCLB Act of 2001. Virginia established annual measurable objectives (AMOs) in reading and mathematics (see Appendix A), with the goal of reducing the proficiency gaps among all defined student subgroups (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2012). The VDOE supported the school turnaround initiative by implementing the intervention models and strategies of the 2010 SIG program. Intervention models from the USDOE are outlined in the *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants* (Perlman & Redding, 2011), published by the federal government, through the VDOE Office of School Improvement (VDOEOSI). Presently, schools in Virginia failing to meet accreditation criteria are identified as Priority Schools using the following federal guidelines (VDOE, 2012):

- Schools receiving School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds under Section 1003(g) of ESEA in Federal Fiscal Year 2009 (Cohort I) or 2010 (Cohort II) and identified and served as a Tier I or Tier II school

- Title I high schools with a federal graduation from high school indicator (FGI) of 60 percent or less for two or more of the most recent consecutive years

- Title I schools that fail to test 95 percent of students overall and in all subgroups (see Appendix A) in reading and mathematics for three consecutive years

- Title I schools in which overall achievement in reading and/or mathematics does not meet annual benchmarks—as needed to identify several schools equivalent to five percent of the state's Title I schools

Turnaround Structures

Once a Title I school has been identified as a Priority School, the division is required to develop a Plan of Improvement (POI) which must contain three mandated strategies. First the school division must choose one of the federal strategies for turnaround. The federal strategies for improving student performance in low-performing Title I schools includes the following four models: restart, school closure, transformation, and turnaround (VDOE, 2012).

According to the VDOE (2012) *the restart model* entails converting a school or closing and reopening a school under a charter school operator, a management organization, or an education management organization. *The school closure model* requires closing a failing school and enrolling those students in other high-achieving schools in the division. *The transformation model* requires replacing the principal, using a rigorous evaluation system for teachers and principals, providing high-quality professional development, and implementing rewards and incentives aimed at retaining quality staff. *The turnaround model,* the most commonly chosen strategy, of replacing the principal and giving the new administrator the flexibility to implement new approaches to improve student achievement, including changes to staffing, calendars, schedules, budgeting, etc. The turnaround model also includes adopting competencies to measure effectiveness of staff, screening and rehiring no more than 50 percent of the existing staff, and hiring new staff. Under this strategy, implementing financial incentives, increasing opportunities for promotion and career growth, and providing more flexible work conditions are put into place to recruit, place, and retain staff. School divisions must also provide high-quality, job-embedded professional development aligned with the school's instructional program to enable teachers to successfully implement the reform strategies. According to VDOE (2012), another focal point of the turnaround model is the intense use of data. Schools in the turnaround process are required to use data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research based as well as vertically aligned with the state's academic standards. Data are also to be used to inform and differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students and to provide social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students.

The second mandated strategy for POI requires school divisions to contract with a state-approved turnaround partner to assist with implementation of an improvement model. The Commonwealth of Virginia refers to the contracted entity as the Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP). Lead Turnaround Partners are identified from a list of VDOE-approved vendors then interviewed

and contracted by a team from the individual school and overall division (VDOE, 2013). Each of the schools identified as Priority is required by the federal government to use funds from the School Improvement Grants to contract with one LTP to implement all requirements of the USDOE turnaround principles. A list of approved LTP companies is generated yearly by the VDOE (see Appendix C). Lead Turnaround Partners' contracts can go as high as $750,000.000 per school year for one school, depending on the number of students registered in the school (see Appendix D).

The third mandated strategy of POI requires school divisions to work with a state-assigned VDOE Contractor (VDOEOSI, 2017), in addition to the LTPs. The VDOE Contractor's role is to conduct academic reviews and develop, implement, and monitor intervention strategies. School divisions are required to pay for these services from their local school funds. The cost to the division for the VDOE Contractor is $20,000 for one Priority School plus $10,000 for each additional school within a division. For example, if a division has three schools in priority status, the division would contract for $20,000.00 for the first school and $10,000.00 for each of the other two. Total costs in this example, for one year, would be $40,000.00. Services for the VDOE Contractors are paid from local funds (see Appendix E). Designated Priority Schools are required to remain in the school improvement process for three years, even if they attain accreditation after one or two years.

Virginia identified 36 Priority schools for the first time in the 2012/2013 school year, using the 2011 end-of-year standardized assessment scores. Thirteen of the original Priority Schools exited the program after the first year of implementation, not remaining in the program the full three years as required by the guidelines. Of the twenty-three schools that remained (out of the original 36) on the priority list, ten exited the second year after meeting the AYP requirements, six exited after their third year, and seven remained on the list as of the 2015/2016 school year. The federal government requires states to identify schools in the bottom 15% according to student performance on end-of-year state assessments. As schools exit priority status, new schools are identified to replace them. Between 2013-2015, twenty-eight new schools were added and currently remain on the priority list. A total of 64 schools in Virginia went through state-mandated turnaround reform between 2012-2015. To date there are thirty-five schools currently identified as Priority in the Commonwealth of Virginia (see Appendix B).

According to research, although the federal government has made school turnaround a top priority and funneled millions of dollars into school improvement grants, results do not show the process to be a consistently effective strategy (Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Player and Katz (2016) voiced their concern that "since the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program received significant financial backing, we still know little about how to effectively turn around low-performing schools" and "whether planned and structured turnaround is even possible" (p. 676). Has the investment in money and resources been the catalyst for the change needed to turn around schools? Several studies have noted that there is little evidence that the federal government's models, turnaround, closure, transformation and restart, have consistent and dependable results (Favero & Rutherford, 2013; Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Finnigan, Daly, and Stewart (2012) found in their research that most schools did not improve or exit sanctions in the timeframe mandated by NCLB, but moved into the deepest sanction of *In Need of Improvement (INI)* status. Even with little evidence that turnaround school reform is effective, it is still a high priority in federal education policy, according to Favero and Rutherford (2013). Peck and Reitzug (2013) also voiced their concern that turnaround reforms, as presently implemented, "are based on promotional hyped dreams as much as on research-based, concrete hopes" (p. 19).

One two-year study conducted by Player and Katz (2016) found there were statistically significant changes in student achievement in Ohio schools participating in the turnaround process. It was also noted in their findings that although there was a positive trajectory in student achievement, "schools continued to lag behind the other schools in their districts and are still well behind the other schools in the state" (p. 694). Sustainability of the achievement was not evident. Hamilton et al. (2014) similarly found that although some case studies have shown an increase in student achievement in schools that have undergone turnaround reform, there is a lack of evidence of the sustainability of the improvement. Peck and Reitzug (2013) concluded that significant academic achievement in low-achieving schools was not best accomplished through rapid, intensive interventions as suggested by the term "turnaround" in today's educational usage, but rather by slow and steady growth over time. As further evidence that time is needed to improve student achievement, Peck and Reitzug (2013) pointed out that the time needed for turnaround to be successful created its own conundrum as "our society does not have time to perfect the turnaround reform movement, yet, for the sake of too many urban schools and students, we cannot allow the turnaround movement to fail" (p. 31).

School Organizational Leaders

School leaders in low-performing schools are under immense pressure to make rapid, significant academic improvement in a one- to three-year time-period. Turnaround reform, by its very definition in today's educational world, comes with the expectation of rapid improvement. Hochbein (2010) noted that overlooking the factors or methods accountable for an organization's current condition often is caused by the push to turn around the current performance. Peck and Reitzug (2013) remarked that it is important to recognize that not all low-performing schools are created equally; they have common factors as well as individual histories and sets of circumstances that give each of them a unique set of strengths, liabilities, opportunities, and weaknesses. Accountability measures and strategies set by the federal government under No Child Left Behind (2001) may not be an effective "one size fits all" remedy. Favero and Rutherford (2013) also determined that "public organizations may be underperforming for reasons that may be related to internal structures as well as changes in the external environment" (p. 450). This study also noted that the decline of the organizational performance of a school could be from sources that have deteriorated over time, and the strategies used to remedy the problems need to be individualized to each school's needs. Duke (2006) likewise concluded "knowing more about the factors that contribute to declining performance cannot help but provide a starting place for school turnaround efforts" (p. 731).

In turnaround reform one of the most important practices is the diagnosis of the root causes of low performance and development of an improvement plan which meets the needs of the students. Favero and Rutherford (2013) call this process organizational learning. According to Finnigan et al. (2012) *organizational learning* is defined by organizational theorists as "the process of detecting and correcting problems to improve organizational effectiveness" (p. 2).

Organizational leadership, according to Favero and Rutherford (2013), must be closely linked to organizational learning as school leaders communicate clearly their vision and expectations while helping to strengthen organizational culture by providing structures to support learning throughout the organization. Finnigan et al. (2012) concluded in their study that there was limited evidence of organizational learning in underperforming schools. Evidence also suggested superficial use of restructuring planning, rare diagnosis of the root causes of low performance, and limited engagement in learning processes of school staff, according to the analysis. Finnigan et al. (2012) determined underperforming schools had developed

improvement plans that focused on the symptoms, not the causes of the problems. In drawing their conclusions, they noted identification of problems, strategies, and proper evaluation of progress were primarily engaged at a level of single-loop learning in the underperforming schools. The study identified two levels of organizational learning: the single-loop and the double-loop. *Single-loop learning* is when decisions and actions primarily occur within the existing structure and norms of the organization and represent incremental or routine changes. *Double-loop learning*, per organizational learning theorists, involves examining underlying values or assumptions that at one time may have been supportive of organizational goals, but now inhibit the organization's ability to learn. Double-loop learning is focused on transformational or radical change. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) also concluded that "the leadership supporting an innovation must be consistent with the order of magnitude of the change represented by the innovation and if leadership techniques do not match the order of change required by an innovation, the innovation will probably fail regardless of its merits" (p. 66). Their findings "suggest that low performing schools do not necessarily engage in double-loop learning" (Finnigan et al., 2012, p. 8).

Several low-performing schools in Virginia have demonstrated the ability to raise student performance and exit state-mandated improvement sanctions, yet the path to accreditation is a hard struggle and sustainability is questionable. As a result of the struggle schools undergo to meet the assessment benchmarks and close the achievement gaps, researchers are taking a deeper look into the factors that facilitate or impede the turnaround process. Finnigan et al. (2012) concluded that careful diagnosis of root causes of low performance and clear strategies that address these causes are needed. The organizational function of a school is a predictor of its capacity to self-assess and make the changes necessary to be successful in the turnaround process. According to Cucchiara, Rooney, and Robertson-Kraft (2013), *organizational function* refers to the institutionalization of key values and priorities (culture), the clarity of roles and expectations to all stakeholders (structure), and the smoothness of the operation (practices) evidenced in the organization.

Key to the success of any organization is the strength of its leader. The school leader, or principal, establishes the school culture, defines the roles and expectations for all stakeholders, and creates plans to enable the smoothness of the operation. Cucchiara et al. (2013) noted that since schools were run by a "provider" or school principal, the provider is the catalyst that sets

other supports for school improvement. How a principal leads the school matters, especially through the turnaround process. The school administrator's decisions and practices have a profound impact on teachers, students, and the community. Whitaker (2003) states he is "convinced the principal is the filter for whatever happens in a school". The school leader impacts the culture, structures, and stability of the organization.

School Organizational Culture

The school leader's decisions and actions impact the school's culture and its ability to turn around student achievement. Current studies have found that what influences school culture most is administrative support and communication, trusting relationships, and consistency (Cucchiara et al., 2013; Duke, 2006; Finnigan et al., 2012; Holme & Rangel, 2012).

The first factor that staff reported as influencing the school culture was administrative support and communication. Cucchiara et al. (2013) hypothesized that the working conditions (culture) in turnaround schools in early implementation have implications for the task of turning around low-performing schools. Finnegan et al. (2012) determined an administrator's effectiveness is linked to being able to "understand the important elements of practice and developing underlying beliefs to support those practices to improve organizational performance" (p. 2). Holme and Rangel (2012) identified the structures of internal accountability put into place by the school leader, which contribute to a relatively stable environment, as being a shared sense of norms, goals, expectations, and procedures. They also found that leadership turnover and unclear organizational goals weakened the organizational culture. Hamilton et al. (2014) also noted that the turnover of principals in low-performing schools "caused instability in how reforms and various day-to-day academic and administrative practices were handled" (p. 201).

In a study on the turnaround process, Cucchiara et al. (2013) categorized participating schools into two groups according to their responses to the surveys. One group of schools was labeled *positive responder schools* and the other *negative responder schools*. Teachers' view of reform was favorable in the positive responder schools while negative responder schools' teachers reported they were frustrated by a chaotic and disrespectful working environment. Cucchiara et al. found teachers at the positive responder schools had faith in the reform process, in their own colleagues, and in their administrators being up to the task. Teachers also reported they felt their administrator had a solid rationale for existing rules and regulations. Cucchiara et

al. concluded that teachers in the negative responder schools had weak support for the turnaround model due to instability early in the year and their sense of powerlessness. According to Cucchiara et al., the positive schools had clarity of focus in their instruction and climate, and the leaders put systems into place, such as professional development and evaluation, peer support, and student discipline, to support the teachers' work. Alternatively, Cucchiara et al. stated the findings from the negative responder schools showed a high level of instability and unclear or conflicting expectations from the administrator. Cucchiara et al. reported that across the study, teachers noted "improvements related to school climate, student attendance, teacher dedication, and early academic gains as being successful" (p. 276).

The second factor staff reported as influencing the culture of the school was trusting relationships. Finnigan et al. (2012) stated "trusting relationships are a critical aspect of organizational culture" (p. 3). Cucchiara et al. (2013) concluded that schools cannot succeed without addressing teachers' concerns and creating conditions that make teachers feel supported, respected, and capable in their work. One recommendation from the study was that leaders focus less on convincing teachers that turnaround will work and more on providing a working environment conducive to success. Such an environment includes teachers feeling supported and capable of being effective through a stable system with a supportive culture allowing them to manage intense expectations. Cucchiara et al. (2013) found schools varied regarding the quality of their social relations, particularly between teachers and administrator. *Social relations*, in this study, was defined as the working relationship between administration and teachers. Teachers working in the positive responder schools saw the administrators as supportive, focused on improving instruction, responsive to concerns as demonstrated through use of an "open door" policy, and fostering teacher autonomy. In contrast, Cucchiara et al. noted the response from the negative responder schools showed teachers felt a lack of control over their practices. Negative responses indicated teachers felt they were forced to use prescribed curricula and were under significant management of their classroom practices. The teachers also reported they were being micromanaged as evidenced by being forced to comply with demands about their classroom displays, instructional routines, management, test preparation, and use of data. Cucchiara et al. found teachers in the negative responding schools felt they were disrespected by administrators and held to expectations that were irrelevant to the real work of teaching students. Finnigan et al. (2012) also noted in their study there were significant differences in trust relationships

between groups of teachers and between teachers and administrators. This distrust affected the organization's climate.

In the Holme and Rangel (2012) comparison study of stable and unstable schools in the turnaround process, it was noted that teacher turnover in the stable schools was not a problem and there was a high level of stability within the school's core network members (department chairs, administrative teams, and principal), as relational capital was found to be strong, and there were positive relationships among the staff and between the staff and administrator. They concluded strong relationships at the school likely enhanced teacher retention, reinforcing the school's stability. In the unstable schools studied, the researchers found that "high teacher turnover led to a general lack of connection between the staff and caused low staff morale and was credited for high staff absenteeism" (p. 270). Holme and Rangel (2012) identified one school—which was in a district with one of the lowest per-pupil poverty valuations in the state, severe levels of poverty, and high racial diversity—as being unexpectedly stable. The authors contributed the high stability of the school to the relative stability of the teaching staff and leadership. The principal had been at the school for five years. Holme and Rangel noted teacher stability was connected to the geographical location of the school. The school staff consisted of a high number of alumni that had come to "give back" to their neighborhood. Relationships the staff had with the school administrator contributed to the stability in the school, which was also seen to be a result of high levels of organizational social capital such as organizational resources that facilitate cooperation, increase efficiency, and transfer knowledge among individuals. For the school's relational capital, it was clear the teachers had a commitment to their community and chose to work in the high-poverty, low-performing school. Strunk, Marsh, Hashim, and Bush-Mecenas (2016) noted in their study that overall there was not a great shift in school staff due to turnaround reform, but principals reported the process made it easier to remove teachers who were not effective or not willing to be a part of the reform.

The third factor determined to influence school culture was consistency by the school administrators. Consistency in programming, scheduling, and support of staff were noted to be of importance to school personnel. According to Cucchiara et al. (2013) the factors teachers felt were important were the need for stability and support in the low-achieving schools, consistency in programming, and clarity in instructional expectations. Noteworthy from this study was that although the teachers' experiences with turnaround varied from school to school, the variations

were not linked to school size, school level, or poverty levels. The variations that were cited by the teachers "were related to the characteristics of the turnaround model as it was implemented in each setting, as being stable and organized, and the culture as respectful and supportive" (p. 279). In their analysis, the researchers also noted that in negative responding schools "teachers were frustrated by constant changes to programs and schedules" (p. 266). The positive responding schools reported that "teachers knew what to expect, were able to plan ahead and counted on structures and supports when they needed them" (p. 267). Holme and Rangel (2012) also noted an "environment conducive to success includes teachers feeling supported and capable of being effective through a stable system with a supportive culture allowing them to manage intense expectations" (p. 282).

School Structures

The structures put into place by the school administrator have a profound influence on the organization's ability to turn around student achievement. Some of the structures teachers have reported as being important to their work are time to collaborate, time to review student data, professional development opportunities, ability to participate in professional learning communities (PLC), and defined teacher accountability. Duke (2006) found that all schools undergoing reform efforts established collaboration involving teachers and other staff members, but they determined that the way the collaboration takes place and the focus of the time are most important. They found that if the collaboration focused on instructional adjustments, monitoring and supporting students, and planning actions to correct needs, then turnaround reform was more likely to be successful.

Holme and Rangel (2012) found in stable schools that the principal made an effort to construct relational and cognitive capital within the school by using grant money to give teachers release time for professional learning and community meeting (PLCs). The principal mandated the times be used in PLC for planning and analyzing student data and conducting book studies, and he demonstrated his expectations by attending the meetings to review data and information with the teachers and holding teachers accountable for their performance. The principal's actions led to high levels of professional satisfaction. Also of note in these schools, teachers were involved in regular meetings about student data and operated in a culture of professional support. The administration was able to enforce organizational norms for accountability of

teachers. In contrast, the unstable schools reported they rarely had interaction with the administration, teacher accountability was not enforced, observations were seen as punitive instead of supportive, and organizational norms were weak.

Cucchiara et al. (2013) had similar findings in the positive responder schools where teachers appreciated clear expectations and procedures that were detailed and modeled by the leaders. These same teachers reported that there was a focus on rigorous instruction and classroom time was protected by the administration. The positive responder school teachers reported that the observation process was helpful because it included multiple observations as well as immediate feedback with an emphasis on instructional improvement.

The low-achieving schools in the Cucchiara et al. (2013) study reported that teachers were frustrated by inconsistent and conflicting messages from administrators, challenging work conditions, and frequent schedule and routine changes. Teachers at these schools felt they were in a compliance-oriented culture where they had little power and no input in areas such as classroom displays, instructional routines, classroom management, and test preparations. Some teachers reported they were under constant fear of being reprimanded and that they felt they were in a hostile environment.

Finnigan et al. (2012) also noted in their study that in low-performing schools staff reported they did not have shared learning experiences to strengthen existing knowledge or to develop new knowledge and skills by engaging in joint work. In the surveys, staff also reported they "rarely analyzed student work together, observed other teachers' classrooms, coached or mentored other teachers, or attended professional development addressing their schools' challenges" (Finnigan et al., 2012, p. 8).

Organizational Stability

School culture, as stated previously, depends on stability and consistency. Under turnaround reform that stability is severely threatened by principal and teacher attrition (Bennett, 2012; Cucchiara et al., 2013; Favero & Rutherford, 2013; Holme & Rangel, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Whether voluntary or forced movement among the staff, the replacement of teachers and principals contributes to the instability and low morale of the organization. Key characteristics, identified by Peck and Reitzug (2013) as being employed in turnaround school reform, were the recruitment, replacement, and redeployment of the principal and staff if

necessary. Several studies noted the impact these characteristics had on the morale of the school was seen as punitive and demoralizing (Bennett, 2012; Cucchiara et al., 2013; Hamilton et al., 2014; Holme & Rangel, 2012; Peck & Reitzug, 2013).

To examine organizational instability and its effect on organizational social capital (teachers), Holme and Rangel (2012) used information gathered within the field of organizational behavior and management. *Organizational stability* and *instability* was determined to have a correlation to the rate of principal and teacher attrition. High rates of attrition are labeled as having organizational instability, and stability would relate to low rates of attrition. *Organizational social capital* is defined as being an "organizational resource that facilitates cooperation, increases efficiency, and fosters knowledge transfer among individuals within the organization" (Holme & Rangel, 2012, p. 259).

Holme and Rangel's (2012) analysis of the data from three highly unstable schools "showed how instability in both leadership and teaching positions eroded aspects of relational capital in schools (morale and trust), intellectual capital (teacher knowledge), and cognitive capital (norms and goals)" (p. 279). They noted that these three schools experienced a high level of instability due to the poor economy in their geographical location, a predominately non-White clientele, and increased numbers of immigrants. The three schools were unable to compete for qualified teachers due to a lower salary scale and had to rely on alternatively certified teachers who left as soon as they gained experience. For the schools' relationship capital, high teacher turnover led to a general lack of connection among the staff, caused low staff morale, and was credited for high staff absenteeism. For the schools' intellectual capital, the research found teachers had the content knowledge but were weak in pedagogy and classroom management. It was noted that this could be due to lack of experience, lack of proper training, or inability to dismiss poor performance due to lack of qualified replacements. Efforts to enforce organizational norms and hold teachers accountable were undermined by the reality of high levels of instability and the constant threat of staff loss. Teachers knew they could get better jobs in nearby districts easily, so they resented the norms and accountability.

Holme and Rangel (2012) ascertained that one of the relatively stable schools had documented an increase in diversity as non-Whites and lower income families had started moving into their district. The area was classified as solidly middle class and well resourced. Findings also showed that teacher turnover was not a problem. The school's stable intellectual

capital was attributed to not being reliant on alternatively certified teachers and the ability to recruit teachers from the high-poverty, low-performing districts. This school played a part in the instability of the three low-performing schools by recruiting their teachers. Hamilton et al. (2014) had similar findings in their study of school turnaround reform in the state of Texas. In this study, it was noted that the turnover or release of veteran teachers exceeded 60%, so schools were forced to hire novice teachers, which was reported by responders to the surveys as "one of the most problematic issues fomented by the school turnaround process" (p. 196). The novice teachers lacked training in pedagogy, understanding core content, and managing the classroom.

Peck and Reitzug (2013) identified the characteristics being employed by turnaround school reform as the recruitment, replacement, and redeployment of principal and staff if necessary. This policy in its extreme is "a dehumanized and dehumanizing approach to education, in which all that matters is the mass replacement of defective personnel to increase numerical production by the student laborers, whose test scores define school success" (Peck & Reitzug, 2013, p. 29). Holme and Rangel (2012) stated the newer policy approach aimed at "turning around" lower performing schools through re-staffing or principal replacement causes more instability due to the schools that are targeted for this effort already struggling to fill vacancies in an unstable environment. Hamilton et al. (2014) cited the upheaval of these characteristics as the reason veteran teachers do not want to be a part of turnaround reform. One assistant principal in the study is quoted as calling it the "brain drain" for low-performing schools as "great teachers choose to leave for other schools because they are afraid of what would transpire in the reconstituted schools willingly, by choice, or as a result of a diminished pool of fully certified and great veteran teachers" (p. 196).

The literature on turnaround schooling places a heavy emphasis on distributed leadership, yet the federal government's turnaround policy places the principal in an almost iconic position as the individual fundamentally responsible for school success or failure (Peck & Reitzug, 2013, p. 26). Principals in low-performing schools are to be removed unless they have served in the position for fewer than three years. Instead of the principal leading turnaround through the distributive leadership model, which is proposed by turnaround characteristics, turnaround reform places sole responsibility for success or failure on the principal. Several studies have noted that this policy hinders principals from doing what they know are best practices in school leadership and leads to micromanagement and authoritarianism. In Bennett's (2012) study he

proposed that principals employ a layered leadership approach that would lead to distributed leadership practices and active community involvement. He found that the principal in turnaround reform "was more of a 'top-down manager' who was authoritarian by nature" (p. 449). Bennett (2012) concluded that principals are under great pressure with high-stakes testing and accountability.

Favero and Rutherford (2013) also looked at managerial succession of schools in turnaround reform. The authors noted this was important as managerial succession is the most common form of reorganization (p. 446). They concluded from their study that the replacement of the principal had a negative effect on the organizational performance with respect to standardized test scores (p. 449). The negative effect appeared to be stronger in the first year of managerial change. Favero and Rutherford (2013) determined also from their study that although hiring a new principal had a negative effect on test scores, it had a positive effect on parent satisfaction because they saw the replacement as a step toward improvement. The authors also concluded that short-term reorganization (replacement of the principal) negatively affected performance, by further destabilizing on already unstable organization, but the negative effects lessened over time.

Player and Katz (2016) also looked at managerial succession and noted that only 6 out of the 20 principals in their study, working in turnaround schools, were replaced, leaving the majority still in their position. The 14 that remained in their positions were successful in their turnaround efforts. The authors concluded that the district provided more attention, intense professional development, and external support and were able to help the principals be successful. Player & Katz speculated that successful turnaround reform is based less on changing programs and people than it is on providing support and resources.

Synthesis and Conclusions

School turnaround, as presented under NCLB, focuses on mandating school reform through the turnaround process to raise student achievement in the United States. The goal to ensure that all students receive the level of education necessary to succeed is a worthy endeavor. Focusing on the root causes for low performance has been identified as an area in need of further investigation for learning more about successful/unsuccessful school turnaround. Schools are not all equal in their organizational performance, learning capacity, function, stability, and

external factors. The pressure to have low-performing schools use the same turnaround strategies and practices has been alleged to hinder turnaround success. Efforts to change the organizational structure by ignoring students' personal and socioemotional issues and needs, while basing the success of the turnaround efforts on their test scores, underscores the reality that all that really matters is the test score numbers and not actual student learning (Peck & Reitzug, 2013).

Each public school may be underperforming for several reasons related to internal structures and external challenges. Low-performing schools have common factors, but they also have unique individual histories and circumstances. As noted by Favero and Rutherford (2013) the "one size fits all" turnaround strategy was not shown to consistently produce the results necessary to achieve the desired transformation of low-performing schools. Leadership stability and clear organizational goals are vital for low-performing schools' stability and success.

Missing from the turnaround literature was research on students, specifically the factors they face in their everyday lives. Whether self-generated or a product of their circumstances, these factors may affect the students' achievement capabilities. Peck and Reitzug (2013) noted there was little discussion of student needs in general other than an occasional acknowledgement that students in low-achieving schools often live in poverty. They did not feel any researchers had attempted to understand what student-related factors meant for students' learning experiences. They also found that "the largest number of references to students in the reports refer to their 'achievement', 'performance', 'progress', 'data', and other terms that tie their value to how they do academically as measured by tests" (Peck & Reitzug, 2013, p. 25). A striking conclusion drawn through their study of the turnaround reform was that "under current accountability metrics, students serve as the baseline laborers who will create the product—*test scores*—that determine the success or failure of a school turnaround" (Peck & Reitzug, 2013, p. 25). They felt that policymakers need to move beyond test scores and focus on the child. Noguera and Wells (2011) concluded schools are part of a complex community ecology in which the social conditions that arise from poverty, including poor health, high crime rates, substance abuse, etc., present formidable challenges that affect child development, learning, and performance in the classroom. Turnaround reform would benefit from an examination of student-related factors that may impede learning and the strategies used by successful school organizations to overcome these barriers.

A study of successful turnaround organizations focusing on student-related factors would be beneficial in determining strategies to aid other schools in their reform process and decision-making. Examination of how students' personal needs and issues contribute to the organization's ability to turn around low performance may inform administrators of strategies to overcome barriers.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Purpose

This study examined a selected subgroup of the population of Title I elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia that have been identified for priority status. The focus of this study was to determine the impact of student-related factors on a school's ability to turn around student achievement as well as, the supports needed to exit priority status.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used in the study. The chapter was organized by the following sections: research questions, research design, sample, instruments, procedure, and data analysis plan.

Research Questions

The research question used for this study was: What were the student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process? The research sub-questions for this study were:

1. What were the student- What student learning issues were identified?
2. How were student learning issues addressed to attain learning and achievement goals?
3. What exterior student-related factors were identified as needing improvement? (e.g. attendance, discipline, support, etc.)
4. support strategies implemented to address exterior student factors?

Research Design

The design of this research was a descriptive qualitative study of the Title I elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia identified as Priority Schools between 2012-2016. The descriptive qualitative design was chosen because this method "offers a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 336). The important feature of this approach is that the descriptive qualitative design is "especially amendable to obtaining straight and largely unadorned answers to questions of special relevance to practitioners and policy makers" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 337).

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of four administrators whose schools exited priority status between the years 2012-2016. To get this sample, elementary schools who had participated in the turnaround process between 2012-2016 were identified. In the first year of implementation, 2012/2013, Virginia identified 36 Title I schools as Priority Schools using the 2011 end-of-year standardized assessment scores and the federal governments' AYP guidelines. In subsequent years, as these Priority Schools met the federal exit criteria, they were removed from priority status and replaced by other Title I schools not meeting federal guidelines. The federal guidelines require states to identify their lowest performing 5% schools each year; consequently, as schools exit priority status, they are replaced by other Title I schools that have not met the achievement targets. A total of 64 schools in Virginia were placed in priority status between the years 2012-2016, 38 of which were elementary (see Appendix B). The 38 public Title I elementary schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia identified as Priority Schools between the years of 2012-2016 became the population for this study. Private, parochial, charter, and home schools were not included as they are not held to the federal government's AYP standards. The 38 Priority Schools were subdivided into two subgroups. One subgroup, consisted of schools labeled priority as of 2016 (see Table 1), and the other subgroup consisted of those that had exited priority status (see Table 2).

Descriptive statistics. Demographic data were used to examine commonalities and differences between the two subgroups of schools collected from the VDOE website. Student information was accessed through the VDOE *Statistics and Reports* and *Virginia's School Quality Profile Report* sites. Required Local Effort (RLE) data were accessed through the *FY 2014 and FY 2015 Actual Required Local Effort (RLE) for the Standards of Quality Compared to Actual Local Expenditures for Operations* reports located on the VDOE's website. All data collected are public domain, and permission was not required to access. Data were collected from online reports in correlation with the year the elementary school exited priority status. Data collected included school enrollment, race (minorities percentage), free and reduced-price meals percentages, attendance rates, discipline occurrences, and Required Local Effort (RLE).

Table 1

Descriptive Data for Virginia Elementary Schools Currently Labeled Priority Schools as of 2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Current Priority Year	Enrollment	Race %	Free and Reduced-Price Meals	Attendance Rate	Discipline Occurrences
Accomack County	Metompkin Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	638	79.13%	69.15%	96%	38
Albemarle County	Benjamin F. Yancey Elementary	K-5	2014	2015	119	40.34%	74.58%	95%	15
Alexandria City	Jefferson-Houston Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	528	86.74%	73.81%	95%	41
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Elementary	3-5	2013	2015	465	49.68%	68.97%	95%	11
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Primary	PK-2	2013	2015	506	49.68%	68.97%	95%	11
Danville City	Woodberry Hills Elementary	K-5	2015	2015	461	88.17%	94.90%	92%	166
Franklin City	S.P. Morton Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	591	87.99%	94.08%	95%	210
Halifax County	Sinai Elementary	K-5	2015	2015	235	82.98%	87.97%	95%	0
Hampton City	AWE Bassett Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	498	94.38%	89.63%	95%	223
Lynchburg City	Dearington Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	175	84.00%	95.14%	97%	12
Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	412	73.06%	95.23%	96%	105
Martinsville City	Albert Harris Elementary	K-4	2013	2015	428	87.62%	100%	95%	106
Newport News City	Horace H. Epes Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	548	85.04%	83.00%	95%	99
Newport News City	Newsome Park Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	481	97.92%	100%	95%	194
Newport News City	Sedgefield Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	578	83.56%	100%	94%	441
Newport News City	Willis A. Jenkins Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	435	85.75%	77.37%	95%	71
Norfolk City	Campostella Elementary[a]	K-6	2013	2015	640	99.37%	100%	N/A	N/A
Norfolk City	Jacox Elementary	K-5	2013	2015	722	99.03%	100%	95%	215

(continued)

Table 1 (*cont.*)

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Current Priority Year	Enrollment	Race %	Free and Reduced-Price Meals	Attendance Rate	Discipline Occurrences
Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy	PK-5	2014	2015	488	99.39%	68.37%	96%	140
Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	423	97.64%	97.60%	93%	123
Prince William County	Belmont Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	454	83.48%	68.37%	95%	0
Richmond City	Blackwell Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	680	98.53%	97.60%	95%	187
Richmond City	Ginter Park Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	533	99.06%	97.55%	95%	38
Richmond City	Oak Grove Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	672	98.07%	97.65%	95%	153
Richmond City	G.H. Reid Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	689	98.11%	97.55%	96%	31
Richmond City	Woodville Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	462	99.13%	97.55%	93%	527
Richmond City	Swansboro Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	256	98.05%	97.65%	96%	147

Note: Descriptive data collected from Statistical Reports located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

[a]Campostella Elementary has no data available under Norfolk City Public Schools on the VDOE website.

Virginia Department of Education. (2016a). *Enrollment & demographics: Fall membership* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/enrollment/index.shtml

Virginia Department of Education. (2016b). *School climate reports: Discipline, crime, & violence* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/school_climate/index.shtml

Virginia Department of Education. (2016c). *2016 National school lunch program free and reduced-price eligibility report.* Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia. gov/support/nutrition/statistics/index.shtml

Table 2

Descriptive Data for Virginia Elementary Schools Having Exited Priority Status from 2012-2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Year Exited Priority	Enrollment	Race %	Free and Reduced-Price Meals	Attendance Rate	Discipline Occurrences
Grayson County	Fries School	PK-7	2012	2013	242	4.6%	74.47%	95%	52
Hampton City	Jane H. Bryan Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	406	83.00%	89.72%	95%	151
Norfolk City	Lindenwood Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	393	95.93%	100%	95%	70
Norfolk City	Tidewater Park Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	274	100%	100%	96%	10
Norfolk City	P.B. Young Sr. Elementary	PK-2	2013	2014	550	99.16%	100%	96%	174
Northampton County	Kiptopeke Elementary	PK-6	2012	2014	480	69.18%	79.48%	95%	58
Petersburg City	A.P. Hill Elementary	K-5	2012	2014	465	99.61%	100%	94%	170
Petersburg City	J.E.B. Stuart Elementary	PK-5	2012	2014	536	97.94%	100%	94%	182
Roanoke City	Lincoln Terrace Elementary	PK-5	2012	2014	290	82.03%	94.00%	94%	100
Roanoke City	Westside Elementary	PK-5	2012	2013	751	85.40%	91.10%	95%	11
Sussex County	Ellen W. Chambliss	K-3	2014	2015	175	84.00%	95.14%	97%	12

Note: Descriptive data collected from Statistical Reports located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

Virginia Department of Education. (2016a). *Enrollment & demographics: Fall membership* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/enrollment/index.shtml

Virginia Department of Education. (2016b). *School climate reports: Discipline, crime, & violence* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/statistics_reports/school_climate/index.shtml

Virginia Department of Education. (2016c). *2016 National school lunch program free and reduced-price meal eligibility report.* Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia. gov/support/nutrition/statistics/index.shtml

Student enrollment and race data for each elementary school were retrieved from the VDOE fall membership report, which was collected from each local school division on September 30 of each school year. This report was limited to one active record per student attending the public school. School enrollment data consist of the total number of students enrolled as of the September 30th count, for the latest year the school was in priority status. Race data consist of the percentage of minorities reported by the local school division (see Tables 1

and 2). In order to conduct a more in-depth comparison between the priority schools' race/ethnic make-up, data were gathered on the percentage of each race represented in the total enrollment (see Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3

Race/Ethnicity Data for Virginia Elementary Schools Currently Labeled Priority Schools as of 2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Non-Hispanic, 2 or more races
Accomack County	Metompkin Elementary	PK-5	2014	0%	0.6%	39.8%	37.1%	21.8%	0.6%
Albemarle County	Benjamin F. Yancey Elementary	K-5	2014	0%	0%	21.0%	10.9%	59.7%	8.4%
Alexandria City	Jefferson-Houston Elementary	PK-5	2012	0%	4.7%	30.2%	35.5%	26.8%	2.4%
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Elementary	3-5	2013	0%	0.4%	37.4%	3.9%	50.3%	8.0%
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Primary	PK-2	2013	0%	0.4%	35.6%	3.8%	51.0%	9.2%
Danville City	Woodberry Hills Elementary	K-5	2015	0%	0.9%	81.4%	3.5%	11.8%	2.3%
Franklin City	S.P. Morton Elementary	PK-5	2013	0.2%	1.4%	80.4%	1.2%	12.0%	4.7%
Halifax County	Sinai Elementary	K-5	2015	0%	0.4%	78.7%	0%	17.0%	3.8%
Hampton City	AWE Bassett Elementary	PK-5	2015	0%	0.6%	84.5%	4.2%	5.6%	5.0%
Lynchburg City	Dearington Elementary	PK-5	2014	0%	0%	79.4%	0.6%	16.0%	4.0%
Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary	PK-5	2014	0.2%	1.7%	56.1%	3.9%	26.9%	11.2%
Martinsville City	Albert Harris Elementary	K-4	2013	0.5%	0.5%	69.2%	11.9%	12.4%	5.6%
Newport News City	Horace H. Epes Elementary	PK-5	2014	0.4%	3.1%	52.7%	21.9%	15.0%	6.9%
Newport News City	Newsome Park Elementary	PK-5	2012	0.2%	0.2%	84.0%	9.4%	2.1%	4.2%
Newport News City	Sedgefield Elementary	PK-5	2012	0%	2.1%	66.8%	9.7%	16.4%	5.0%

(continued)

Table 3 (*cont.*)

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Non-Hispanic, 2 or more races
Newport News City	Willis A. Jenkins Elementary	PK-5	2013	0.2%	1.4%	58.4%	16.8%	14.3%	8.3%
Norfolk City	Campostella Elementary	K-6	2013	0%	0%	93.3%	2.7%	1.8%	2.3%
Norfolk City	Jacox Elementary	K-5	2013	0%	0.1%	96.4%	1.7%	1.0%	0.7%
Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy	PK-5	2014	0.2%	0%	94.3%	2.3%	0.6%	2.5%
Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary	PK-5	2014	1.4%	0.5%	88.9%	3.1%	2.4%	3.8%
Prince William County	Belmont Elementary	PK-5	2015	0.4%	7.0%	17.6%	55.3%	16.5%	3.1%
Richmond City	Blackwell Elementary	PK-5	2013	0.1%	4.1%	81.8%	11.3%	1.5%	1.2%
Richmond City	Ginter Park Elementary	PK-5	2013	0%	2.8%	95.6%	0.8%	0.9%	0.9%
Richmond City	Oak Grove Elementary	PK-5	2013	0.1%	3.3%	79.5%	14.1%	1.9%	0.9%
Richmond City	G.H. Reid Elementary	PK-5	2014	0%	0.6%	57.8%	39.0%	1.9%	0.7%
Richmond City	Woodville Elementary	PK-5	2014	0%	0.4%	94.2%	1.5%	0.9%	3.0%
Richmond City	Swansboro Elementary	PK-5	2015	0%	1.2%	9.3%	2.7%	2.0%	1.2%

Note: Descriptive data collected from VDOE School Quality Profiles located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

Virginia Department of Education. (2016d). *Virginia Department of Education school quality profiles* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.schoolquality.virginia.gov

Table 4

Race/Ethnicity Data for Virginia Elementary Schools Having Exited Priority Status from 2012-2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Exited Priority	American Indian	Asian	Black	Hispanic	White	Non-Hispanic, 2 or more races
Grayson County	Fries School	PK-5	2013	0%	0%	0.007%	0.03%	95.4%	0.004%
Hampton City	Jane H. Bryan Elementary	PK-5	2015	0%	4.9%	65.27%	19.7%	9.11%	5.42%
Norfolk City	Lindenwood Elementary	PK-5	2015	0%	0%	87.53%	2.88%	4.56%	4.08%
Norfolk City	Tidewater Park Elementary	PK-5	2015	0%	0%	96.96%	1.10%	0%	1.93%
Norfolk City	P.B. Young Sr. Elementary	PK-2	2014	0%	0%	97.8%	1.0%	0.6%	0.6%
Northampton County	Kiptopeke Elementary	PK-6	2014	0%	0%	41.81%	24.49%	30.82%	2.04%
Petersburg City	A.P. Hill Elementary	K-5	2014	0%	0.79%	97.25%	1.38%	0.39%	0.20%
Petersburg City	J.E.B. Stuart Elementary	PK-5	2014	0%	0.02%	91.01%	5.99%	2.06%	0.75%
Roanoke City	Lincoln Terrace Elementary	PK-5	2014	0.34%	0%	76.25%	5.08%	17.97%	1.36%
Roanoke City	Westside Elementary	PK-5	2013	0.11%	0.001%	0.01%	70.8%	0.145%	0.027%
Sussex County	Ellen W. Chambliss[a]	K-3	2015	---	---	---	---	---	---

Note: Descriptive data collected from VDOE School Quality Profiles located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

[a]Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary School was closed for the 2013-2014 school year and consolidated with Jefferson Elementary School as Sussex Central Elementary School per Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item November 21, 2013.

Virginia Department of Education. (2016d). *Virginia Department of Education school quality profiles* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.schoolquality.virginia.gov

Socioeconomic status was used as a measure of economic advantage or disadvantage within a family structure and was represented in this study as the percentage of students receiving free and reduced-price meals, based on statistical reports from the VDOE. *Socioeconomic status* was defined as the combined total measure of a family's economic and social position in relation to that of others based on income, education, and occupation. In public schools, students qualify for free and reduced-price meals based on the family's socioeconomic

status. When the income of the student's family falls below the federal poverty guidelines, students are determined to be economically disadvantaged and qualify for free or reduced-price meals (VDOE, 2012). The data source for socioeconomic status was retrieved from the VDOE Office of School Nutrition Programs.

The Fiscal Year (FY) Required Local Effort for each Priority School was retrieved from the *Actual Required Local Effort (RLE) for the Standards of Quality Compared to Actual Local Expenditures for Operations*, for each year represented, located on the VDOE website. The RLE is the locality's expenditures and appropriations designated to meet their required local effort in support of the Standards of Quality (Virginia Department of Education Office of School Finance, 2016). The report includes the FY Required Local Effort and the Percent of FY Actual Expenditures for Operations Above RLE (see Tables 5 and 6). The Percent of FY Actual Expenditures for Operations Above RLE shows what percent the locality expended on educational services above what is required by law.

Table 5

Required Local Effort (RLE) Data for Virginia Elementary Schools Currently Labeled Priority Schools as of 2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Current Priority Year	Required Local Effort (RLE)	Fiscal Year (FY) Actual Expenditures for Operations Above RLE	% Above RLE
Accomack County	Metompkin Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	$12,515,873	$ 3,611,261	28.85%
Albemarle County	Benjamin F. Yancey Elementary	K-5	2014	2015	$52,339,980	$62,348,542	119.21%
Alexandria City	Jefferson-Houston Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	$73,646,657	$119,528,252	162.30%
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Elementary	3-5	2013	2015	$4,636,296	$1,417,471	30.57%
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Primary[a]	PK-2	2013	2015			
Danville City	Woodberry Hills Elementary	K-5	2015	2015	$9,968,857	$5,462,347	57.79%
Franklin City	S.P. Morton Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	$2,257,880	$3,147,560	139.40%
Halifax County	Sinai Elementary	K-5	2015	2015	$10,949,254	$1,982,863	18.11%

(continued)

Table 5 (*cont.*)

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Current Priority Year	Required Local Effort (RLE)	Fiscal Year (FY) Actual Expenditures for Operations Above RLE	% Above RLE
Hampton City	AWE Bassett Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	$34,735,414	$38,355,925	110.42%
Lynchburg City	Dearington Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	$18,769,234	$17,756,718	94.61%
Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary[a]	PK-5	2014	2015			
Martinsville City	Albert Harris Elementary	K-4	2013	2015	$3,101,539	$3,147,502	101.48%
Newport News City	Horace H. Epes Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	$48,554,402	$53,643,222	108.25%
Newport News City	Newsome Park Elementary[a]	PK-5	2012	2015			
Newport News City	Sedgefield Elementary[a]	PK-5	2012	2015			
Newport News City	Willis A. Jenkins Elementary[a]	PK-5	2013	2015			
Norfolk City	Campostella Elementary	K-6	2013	2015	$56,091,095	$57,784,950	103.02%
Norfolk City	Jacox Elementary[a]	K-5	2013	2015			
Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy[a]	PK-5	2014	2015			
Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary[a]	PK-5	2014	2015			
Prince William County	Belmont Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	$204,114,476	$195,527,200	95.79%
Richmond City	Blackwell Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	$71,610,118	$59,894,487	83.64%
Richmond City	Ginter Park Elementary[a]	PK-5	2013	2015			
Richmond City	Oak Grove Elementary[a]	PK-5	2013	2015			
Richmond City	G.H. Reid Elementary[a]	PK-5	2014	2015			
Richmond City	Woodville Elementary[a]	PK-5	2014	2015			
Richmond City	Swansboro Elementary[a]	PK-5	2015	2015			

Note: RLE data collected from FY 2015 Actual Required Local Effort for the Standards of Quality Compared to the Actual Local Expenditure of Operations Report located on the Virginia Department of Education website. [b] RLE data correlates to the year the school exited priority status or current year if still in priority status

[a] Data for divisions with multiple schools in the same year – data is listed beside the first school in the division

Virginia Department of Education Office od School Finance. (2016). *FY 2015 actual required local effort (RLE) for the standards of quality compared to actual local expenditures for operations* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/required_local_effort/2015-2016.pdf

Table 6

Required Local Effort (RLE) Data for Virginia Elementary Schools having Exited Priority Status from 2012-2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Exited Priority	FY Required Local Effort	Required Local Effort (RLE)	Fiscal Year (FY) Actual Expenditures for Operations Above RLE	% Above RLE
Grayson County	Fries School	PK-5	2013	2012	$3,687,994	$881,453	23.90%
Hampton City	Jane H. Bryan Elementary	PK-5	2015	2014	$36,142,420	$31,919,152	88.31%
Norfolk City	Lindenwood Elementary	PK-5	2015	2014	$56,091,095	$57,784,950	103.02%
Norfolk City	Tidewater Park Elementary[a]	PK-5	2015	2014			
Norfolk City	P.B. Young Sr. Elementary	PK-2	2014	2013	$52,801,838	$48,864.734	92.54%
Northampton County	Kiptopeke Elementary	PK-6	2014	2013	$5,712,299	$1,731,255	33.31%
Petersburg City	A.P. Hill Elementary	K-5	2014	2013	$6,207,641	$2,760,630	44.47%
Petersburg City	J.E.B. Stuart Elementary[a]	PK-5	2014	2013			
Roanoke City	Lincoln Terrace Elementary	PK-5	2014	2013	$26,573,606	$35,411,387	133.26%
Roanoke City	Westside Elementary	PK-5	2013	2012	$2,545,468	$5,626,620	221.04%
Sussex County	Ellen W. Chambliss[b]	PK-5	2015	2014			

Note: RLE data collected from FY 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 *Actual Required Local Effort for the Standards of Quality Compared to the Actual Local Expenditure of Operations Reports* located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

[a] Data for divisions with multiple schools – data is listed beside the first school in the division. [b]Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary School was closed for the 2013-2014 school year and consolidated with Jefferson Elementary School as Sussex Central Elementary School per Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item November 21, 2013.

Virginia Department of Education Office of School Finance. (2013). *FY 2012 actual required local effort (RLE) for the standards of quality compared to actual local expenditures for operations* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/RD192013/$file/RD19.pdf.

Virginia Department of Education Office of School Finance. (2014). *FY 2013 actual required local effort (RLE) for the standards of quality compared to actual local expenditures for operations* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/required_local_effort/2013-2014.

Virginia Department of Education Office of School Finance. (2015). *FY 2014 actual required local effort (RLE) for the standards of quality compared to actual local expenditures for operations* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/required_local_effort/2014-2015.pdf

Virginia Department of Education Office of School Finance. (2016). *FY 2015 actual required local effort (RLE) for the standards of quality compared to actual local expenditures for operations* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/required_local_effort/2015-2016.

Student attendance rate was defined as the aggregate number of days of attendance of all students during a school year divided by the number of days school is in session during the year (VDOE, 2016a). Once the average daily attendance was determined, it was divided by average daily membership (ADM) for each elementary school identified in this study. Average daily membership was the aggregate number of days of membership of all students during a school year divided by the number of days school was in session during the year (see Tables 1 and 2). A further breakdown of the attendance data, as reported in the *Virginia's School Quality Profile*, identifies the percentage of students who have missed 0% to 10%, 10% to 15%, 15% to 20%, and greater than 20% of the school days (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7

Attendance Data for Virginia Elementary Schools Currently Labeled Priority Schools as of 2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Current Year Priority	Attendance Rate-State Formula	0%-10%	10%-15%	15%-20%	>20%
Accomack County	Metompkin Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	96%	90.0%	5.0%	2.8%	1.5%
Albemarle County	Benjamin F. Yancey Elementary	K-5	2014	2015	95%	90.3%	6.7%	1.5%	1.5%
Alexandria City	Jefferson-Houston Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	95%	83.0%	9.0%	3.4%	4.6%
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Elementary	3-5	2013	2015	95%	65.3%	12.3%	6.9%	6.5%
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Primary	PK-2	2013	2015	91%	75.0%	13.4%	6.7%	4.8%
Danville City	Woodberry Hills Elementary	K-5	2015	2015	92%	87.2%	7.7%	2.8%	2.2%
Franklin City	S.P. Morton Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	95%	83.4%	9.9%	2.7%	4.0%
Halifax County	Sinai Elementary	K-5	2015	2015	95%	88.7%	7.8%	2.7%	0.8%
Hampton City	AWE Bassett Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	95%	82.1%	10.5%	3.3%	4.0%
Lynchburg City	Dearington Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	97%	90.8%	5.8%	2.4%	1.0%

(continued)

Table 7 (*cont.*)

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Current Year Priority	Attendance Rate-State Formula	0%-10%	10%-15%	15%-20%	>20%
Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	96%	92.8%	4.8%	1.2%	1.2%
Martinsville City	Albert Harris Elementary	K-4	2013	2015	95%	86.5%	7.8%	2.0%	3.6%
Newport News City	Horace H. Epes Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	95%	83.7%	8.9%	3.6%	3.8%
Newport News City	Newsome Park Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	95%	81.6%	9.8%	3.6%	5.1%
Newport News City	Sedgefield Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	94%	79.3%	10.2%	4.2%	6.3%
Newport News City	Willis A. Jenkins Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	95%	82.9%	9.2%	3.3%	4.1%
Norfolk City	Campostella Elementary[a]	K-7	2013	2015	95%	92.7%	4.4%	2.0%	0.9%
Norfolk City	Jacox Elementary	K-5	2013	2015	95%	84.5%	9.2%	2.3%	4.0%
Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy	PK-5	2014	2015	96%	81.3%	4.8%	2.8%	1.1%
Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	93%	76.0%	10.8%	7.4%	5.8%
Prince William County	Belmont Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	95%	87.9%	7.8%	2.5%	1.8%
Richmond City	Blackwell Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	95%	85.1%	7.0%	2.8%	5.1%
Richmond City	Ginter Park Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	95%	84.0%	8.7%	2.7%	4.6%
Richmond City	Oak Grove Elementary	PK-5	2013	2015	95%	83.9%	7.4%	4.0%	4.7%
Richmond City	G.H. Reid Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	96%	91.5%	4.2%	1.9%	2.4%
Richmond City	Woodville Elementary	PK-5	2014	2015	93%	76.7%	7.8%	7.9%	7.6%
Richmond City	Swansboro Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	96%	88.1%	5.3%	3.5%	3.2%

Note: Attendance data collected from VDOE *School Quality Profiles* located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

Virginia Department of Education. (2016d). *Virginia department of education school quality profiles* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.schoolquality.virginia.gov

Table 8

Attendance Data for Virginia Elementary Schools Having Exited Priority Status from 2012-2016

School Division	Priority School	Grade Levels	Year Entered Priority	Year Exited Priority	Attendance Rate-State Formula	0%-10%	10%-15%	15%-20%	>20%
Grayson County	Fries School	PK-5	2012	2013	95%	85.1%	9.2%	3.1%	2.6%
Hampton City	Jane H. Bryan Elementary	PK-5	2012	2015	95%	78.4%	9.3%	5.9%	6.4%
Norfolk City	Lindenwood Elementary	PK-5	2015	2015	95%	79.7%	12.9%	5.5%	2.0%
Norfolk City	Tidewater Park Elementary	PK-5	2012	2014	96%	93.2%	3.8%	1.8%	1.2%
Norfolk City	P.B. Young Sr. Elementary	PK-2	2013	2014	95%	83.9%	9.1%	3.8%	3.1%
Northampton County	Kiptopeke Elementary	PK-6	2012	2014	95%	85.3%	9.2%	2.9%	2.7%
Petersburg City	A.P. Hill Elementary	K-5	2012	2014	94%	77.2%	11.1%	6.8%	4.9%
Petersburg City	J.E.B. Stuart Elementary	PK-5	2012	2014	94%	80.3%	11.5%	3.7%	4.5%
Roanoke City	Lincoln Terrace Elementary	PK-5	2012	2014	94%	79.3%	9.5%	3.0%	8.2%
Roanoke City	Westside Elementary	PK-5	2012	2013	95%	83.6%	10.4%	2.6%	3.4%
Sussex County	Ellen W. Chambliss[a]		2014	2013	---	---	---	---	---

Note: Attendance data collected from VDOE School Quality Profiles located on the Virginia Department of Education website.

[a]Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary School was closed for the 2013-2014 school year and consolidated with Jefferson Elementary School as Sussex Central Elementary School per Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item November 21, 2013.

Smith, K. M. & Jarrett Jr., A.L. (2013, November). *First review of updated corrective action plan and memorandum of understanding with Sussex County School Board and the Virginia Department of Education.* Presented at the Virginia Board of Education Meeting, Virginia Department of Education, Richmond, VA. Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2013/11_nov/agenda_items/item_i.pdf

Virginia Department of Education. (2016d). *Virginia Department of Education School quality profiles* [Statistics & reports]. Retrieved from www.schoolquality.virginia.gov

Discipline occurrence data were retrieved from the *VDOE Discipline, Crime, and Violence Annual Report*. This report was compiled of data gathered from local school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia, including all incidents of discipline as required by the *Code of Virginia* §22.1-279.3:1. *Discipline occurrences* was defined as the number of individual

referrals reported by the school for a one-year time period. The division superintendent annually reports all discipline offenses to the Department of Education.

Descriptive statistics analysis. In order to determine if there were any significant differences between the two subgroups that would account for the ability to exit priority status, an examination of the descriptive statistics was conducted.

Enrollment data were retrieved from the VDOE fall membership report (see Tables 1 and 2). The schools that remain in priority status had enrollments that ranged from 119 to 722 students. The average enrollment for this subgroup was 592.6. The schools that exited priority status had enrollments that ranged from 175 to 536. The average enrollment for this subgroup was 396.6.

Race data consist of the percentage of minorities reported by the local school division as seen in Tables 1 and 2. Data show the percentage of minority students in the schools currently labeled Priority Schools ranging between 73.06% to 99.13%, with two outliers in the 40% range. Schools having exited priority status ranged from 69.18% to 100% minority. In order to conduct a more in-depth comparison between the priority schools' race/ethnic make-up, data were gathered on the percentage of each race represented in the total enrollment (see Tables 3 and 4). Data for the schools labeled Priority Schools as of 2016 shows the breakdown of minority percentages as follows American Indian 0% to 1.4%, Asian from 0% to 7%, Black 9.3% to 96.4%, Hispanic 0% to 39.0%, White 0.6% to 59.7%, and Non-Hispanic (2 or more races) 0.6% to 11.2%. For schools having exited priority status, the breakdown of minority percentages shows American Indian 0% to 0.34%, Asian 0% to 4.9%, Black 41.81% to 97.25%, Hispanic 1.10% to 19.7%, White 0% to 30.82%, and Non-Hispanic (2 or more races) 0.2% to 5.42%.

Socioeconomic status was used as a measure of economic advantage or disadvantage within a family structure and was represented in this study as the percentage of students receiving free and reduced-price meals (see Tables 1 and 2). Data show the percentage of students in the schools labeled Priority Schools as of 2016 who qualified for free and reduced-price meals ranged from 68.3% to 100%. Schools having exited priority status had a percentage range of 79.48% to 100% for students who qualified for free and reduced-priced meals.

To further examine the socioeconomic factors that may impact the schools that have undergone the turnaround process, the Required Local Effort (RLE) was examined (see Tables 5 and 6). The RLE for the divisions of the schools labeled Priority Schools as of 2016 ranges from

$2,257,880 to $204,114,476. The actual expenditures for these same divisions range from $1,417,471 to $195,527,200. The percentage above RLE these districts expend ranges from 18.11% to 162.30%. For schools having exited priority status, the RLE for the divisions range from $5,664,869 to $34,735,414. The actual expenditures for these same divisions range from $1,782,145 to $57,784,950. The percentage above RLE these districts expend ranges from 31.46% to 132.74%.

Average daily membership (ADM) was the aggregate number of days of membership of all students during a school year divided by the number of days school was in session during the year (see Tables 1 and 2). The ADM for schools labeled Priority Schools as of 2016 ranges from 93% to 97%. For schools that have exited priority status the ADM ranges from 94% to 97%. A further breakdown of attendance data, as reported in the *Virginia's School Quality Profile*, identifies the percentage of students who have missed 0% to 10%, 10% to 15%, 15% to 20%, and greater than 20% of the school days (see Tables 5 and 6). For schools labeled Priority Schools as of 2016 students who have 0 to 10% missed days of school range from 76.0% to 92.8%, 10% to 15% days missed range from 4.2% to 13.4%, 15% to 20% days missed range from 1.2% to 7.4%, and greater than 20% days missed range from 1.0% to 7.6%. For schools that have exited priority status students who have 0 to 10% missed days of school range from 77.2% to 93.2%, 10% to 15% days missed range from 3.8% to 12.9%, 15% to 20% days missed range from 1.8% to 6.8%, and greater than 20% days missed range from 1.2% to 8.2%.

Discipline occurrence data were retrieved from the *VDOE Discipline, Crime, and Violence Annual Report*. The division superintendent annually reports all discipline offenses to the Department of Education (see Tables 1 and 2). Reported discipline occurrences for schools labeled Priority Schools as of 2016 range from 0 to 527. Schools that have exited priority status had a range of 10 to 182 reported discipline occurrences.

In summary, schools that had exited priority status had lower enrollment averages, higher free and reduced-price meal percentage ranges, lower RLE and actual expenditure ranges, and lower discipline occurrences than schools labeled priority as of 2016. Data on the percentage of minorities and attendance were similar for both groups. There was not a critical difference in the data points that could be determined as the main reason schools were able to exit priority status.

The subgroup examined in this study was selected using comprehensive sampling "which examines every case, instance or element in a given population" (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana

2014). After a review of the descriptive data it was determined to do a further study on the schools that had exited priority status between 2016-2016 to gain a deeper understanding of each school's experience with the turnaround process. The selected subgroup of the population identified for this descriptive qualitative study consisted of 11 Virginia Title I elementary schools that had exited priority status within the three-year turnaround process between 2012-2016. Two elementary schools from Table 2, Fries and Westside Elementary, were excluded as they did not meet the criteria for this study of participating in the turnaround process for two or more years. Both were in priority status for just one year and exited without completing the process. Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary School was excluded due to being consolidated with Jefferson Elementary School in 2013-2014 as Sussex Central Elementary School per Virginia Board of Education Agenda Item November 21, 2013. P. B. Young Elementary School is also excluded from the study as it was a PK-2 grade school and did not participate in end-of-the-year standardized testing. Accreditation for this school was dependent upon the achievement of Tidewater Park Elementary, grades 3-5, which was included in the study.

The seven schools that met the criteria for the study represented five divisions across Virginia. The five divisions represented in Table 2 consisted of Hampton City, Norfolk City, Northampton, Petersburg City, and Roanoke City. Two of the divisions, Norfolk City and Petersburg City, have multiple schools which have exited priority status, as seen in Table 2. Five of the seven schools were purposefully chosen to participate in this study according to their geographic location. The decision to choose schools geographically aided in obtaining a broader representation of the Commonwealth. One school was chosen from each of the five divisions for the initial interviews. Inclusion of more than one school from each division was dependent upon agreement of principals to participate and information gathered from the initial interview. If the initial interview, with one school from the division, yielded information that turnaround success was accomplished through individualized initiatives rather than division-wide mandates, then the other qualifying school in the division was included in the study.

The sample for this study consisted of four principals in leadership the year the schools exited priority status. Four of the subgroup school principals accepted the invitation to participate in the study and were interviewed.

Instrument

The instrument used to gather data in this descriptive qualitative study was an open-ended interview conducted by phone and recorded digitally. Using an interview format modeled after Creswell's (2014) interview protocol, a template was created to assist in asking questions and recording answers during a qualitative interview. The interview protocol included a heading (date, place, interviewer, interviewee), instructions for the interviewer to follow, a brief description of the study, a central interview question, probing questions, and a thank-you statement (see Appendix L).

The central interview question was used "for an explanation of the central phenomenon or concept in a study" (Creswell, 2014). For this study the central question of the interview, I began with: Could you discuss with me the factors you feel most impacted your school's ability to exit priority status within the three-year time-period? Sub-questions were planned to probe deeper into the topic if needed. Those sub-questions were as follows:

1. What student learning issues were identified as needing improvement? What evidence/data was used to identify these issues?
2. What were some of the challenges to achieving student learning and achievement goals your school encountered?
3. What exterior student-factors were identified as needing improvement at your school? (e.g. attendance, discipline, supports, etc.)
4. What student support systems were in place or did your school implement to address exterior student factors?
5. What types of support did you receive from the division to aid in your turnaround effort? (e.g. personnel, fiscal, materials, etc.)
6. How did the support allocated by the division address the student factors and challenges in your school? What evidence/data was used by the division to determine the school's needs?

The interview questions were constructed using a central question and probing sub-question format in order to get diverse perspectives to the phenomenon and not limit the responses. As Creswell states, "The intent is to explore the general, complex set of factors surrounding the central phenomenon and present the broad, varied perspectives or meanings that participants hold" (p.140). The sub-questions enabled the interviewer to narrow the focus of the

study. The central question opens the discussion and invites the principal to give his/her perception of the factors that impacted the school's ability to exit priority status. The sub-questions were designed to narrow the discussion to the student-related factors that impacted the turnaround process as this was found to be missing from the literature.

Procedure

Upon approval of the prospectus by the researcher's committee, permission to initiate the study was requested from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After the IRB process was completed (see Appendix G), permission was sought from the school divisions' superintendents, in the selected subgroup, for principals to participate in the study (see Appendix H). A letter was sent to the superintendents of the divisions identified for the study, requesting permission to invite the principal and/or designee to participate in the study. Included with the consent letter was a response card and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. In addition, a letter of support from the Virginia Department of Education Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Steven R. Staples, was included in each packet (see Appendix I). If no response was received after three weeks, from the day the initial letter was sent, an email was sent to the superintendent to request permission. The original paper materials were attached in electronic form in this email. If three weeks after the email was sent there was no response, a phone call was made to the superintendent requesting permission to invite the principal to participate in the study and offering to resend the paper materials.

Once permission was obtained for participation in the study, the schools' leaders or designees were contacted by phone, email, or letter to schedule an interview appointment. The same follow-up procedure was used as with the superintendent requests. The principals or designees who agreed to participate in the study received a thank-you letter and an interview appointment confirmation (see Appendix J).

Phone interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewees. Interviews were conducted with the school leader or designees in leadership at the time the school exited priority status. Four of the principals consented to be interviewed. These four made up the sample for the study.

The interviews were conducted by phone and were recorded using a wireless digital voice recorder. Each interview began with a review of the Consent-to-Participate Form (see Appendix K). The consent-to-participate form informed the potential participant of the absence of compensation, the ability to withdraw from the study at any time, the method of recording the interview, and the disposal procedures of recordings. Upon review of the form, the interviewee was asked to give a verbal consent to be digitally recorded. Once the permission was granted to record the interview, the voice recorder was turned on.

Verbal permission to record and agreement to participate were requested and captured the responses digitally in order to preserve the integrity of the study. Interviews were recorded with the full knowledge and agreement of interviewees. The central question was presented to the interviewee, and the sub-questions were used throughout each of the interviews. The same protocol was followed for each interview conducted. At the end of the interview, the interviewee was thanked for his/her participation and time. The interviewee was informed that a copy of the transcribed interviews would be emailed for approval. Each transcript included a form to be completed with suggested changes or permission to use as is (see Appendix L). The interviewees were instructed to complete the form if there were any corrections or additions to the transcribed interviews and return via email. They were informed if there was no response after a week from the date the email was sent, it would be assumed there were no changes and the data were included in the study. The digital recording device was stopped upon completion of the interview.

The recorded interviews were transcribed for analysis into document form using *TranscribeMe*©, an online transcription service. Each participant was emailed a copy of his/her transcript to review and edit. No corrections or additions were returned. To protect the confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms were used for schools, districts, and participants. The four principals interviewed were identified as Principal 1, Principal 2, Principal 3, and Principal 4. Pseudonyms were assigned randomly without any criteria attached.

All data were secured on the researcher's personal computer, protected with an entry password. Back-up of the data was stored on a portable storage device which was secured in a locked drawer in the researcher's home. According to the standard data use policy, digital and transcribed versions of the interviews were stored until the completion of the study and then purged.

A data accounting log was maintained by the researcher to document who was being interviewed, when the interview would take place (date and time), location, and other notes (see Appendix M).

Data Analysis Plan

Data from the interview questions were examined to identify emerging themes using provisional coding which, "begins with a "start list" of researcher-generated codes, based on what preparatory investigation suggests might appear in the data before they are collected and analyzed" (Miles et al. 2014, p. 77). In the case of this study, the data were derived from transcribed interviews. The transcripts from the digitally captured interviews were coded using a system of meta-codes, sub-codes, and reflective notes.

Meta-codes were used to define basic topics in the data. The meta-codes developed by the researcher for this study consisted of the following: READ-Reading Issues, ADM-Administration, TCH- Teachers, STU- Students, PD- Professional Development, COM-Community, ATT- Attendance, and DIS- Discipline. These codes represented themes the researcher presupposed would develop from the conversations with the principals. Although these codes were pre-determined, it was understood that these themes may or may not be present or other themes may develop through analysis of the transcripts.

After initial coding was completed sub-codes were assigned for each of the meta-codes. *Sub-codes* are "second-order tags assigned after a primary code to detail or enrich the entry" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 80). Meta-codes and sub-codes were used to identify themes which were generated from the interviews and compared for commonalities and patterns after initial coding was completed. Reflective notes were added to each coding strand to capture further details.

Color coding was used as an organizational system to separate different types of data and for ease of analyzing the results. A coding matrix was developed and organized by principals' responses (see Appendix N).

Validity of the coding was conducted through use of a *coding consistency check* which involved "giving an independent coder both the initial categories and some of the text that has not been coded and asking them to assign sections of the new text into the initial categories" (Thomas, 2003). Results of the coding consistency check were compared with the researcher's, to validate consistency of the codes.

The themes identified from the interviews were examined in relationship to the research questions, and a narrative was created. The detailed description was an interpretation of the research findings as they pertained to student-related factors that impact a school's ability to turn around student achievement. The results and a summary of the study were shared with the principals of each of the schools interviewed through email.

In order to ensure internal validity, a peer examination was conducted. A *peer examination* is a process that "involves locating a person (peer debriefer) who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than a researcher" (Creswell, 2014, pg. 202). For this study, two peer examiners were consulted to review the study.

Limitations

Limitations existed that impacted the validity and reliability of this descriptive study. Restricting the sample to elementary schools limited the findings for middle and high school settings. Also limiting the sample was the relativity small number of Priority Schools which accepted the invitation to participate. Of the 34 elementary schools identified for priority status between 2012-2016, seven qualified to be included in this study and four of those seven accepted the invitation to participate. The small sample size limited the ability to generalize the findings.

Another possible limitation was inaccuracies in the demographic data. The information gathered from the Virginia Department of Education reports was compiled from each of the divisions in Virginia. The data were certified by local school superintendents to be accurate, however, inaccuracies may have occurred due to human error in input and interpretation of reporting regulations set by the Virginia Department of Education.

A second limitation was limiting the participants to principals of the schools that had exited priority status. As the participation was on a volunteer basis, this study represented their experiences exclusively. The perspectives of other stakeholders could provide more insight into the phenomena by corroborating or diverging from the school leader's.

Participants in this study were offered two options for participating in the interviews: person-to-person meetings or phone calls. Each of the four principals chose the phone interviews, mostly due to time factors as each were getting ready to begin a new school year and had many other commitments. This option limited the visual aspects of interviewing such as

facial and body expressions which could contribute to the richness of the data collected. In today's 21st century world, with the wide accessibility to the internet, not including Skype© or other electronic video options may have limited the participation rate of the study. Principals who are internet literate may have chosen to participate in the study if this had been an option.

Finally, another limitation to the study was not having access to data sets to corroborate the principals' perception that attendance, behavior and reading achievement had improved. There was no check and balance system in place for authenticating the information given by the principals. Although, a decrease in behavior issues, attendance issues, and an increase in reading achievement was referred to by each of the participants, there was no specific data presented. Judgement, on the part of the researcher, was suspended and assumptions were made that everyone would answer authentically and accurately. This could limit the validity and reliability of the study.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Overview

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study, was to investigate school turnaround reform by identifying factors from the perspective of successful turnaround leaders that hinder or aid the process. The driving problem for this study was a lack of research on the student factors that may contribute to the success or failure of the turnaround process.

One research and four sub-research questions guided the study. They are as follows:
Central research question:

1. What were the student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process?

Research sub-questions:

1. What student learning issues were identified?
2. How were student learning issues addressed to attain student learning and achievement goals?
3. What exterior student factors were identified as needing improvement? (e.g. attendance, discipline, support, etc.)
4. What were the student-support strategies implemented to address exterior student factors?

The research central and sub-questions have been addressed through analysis of qualitative data, gathered from principal interviews, using a provisional coding system to identify themes. Transcripts of the interviews were examined through using a system of meta-codes, sub-codes, and reflective notes. Meta-codes identified the major topics in the data. The meta-codes developed by the researcher for this study consisted of the following: ADM- Administration, TCH- Teachers, STU- Students, PD- Professional Development, COM- Community, ATT- Attendance, and DIS- Discipline. These codes represented themes the researcher presupposed would develop from the conversations with the principals. Two additional themes were uncovered through the coding process. The new themes were FUND-funding and EXT- External Lead Partners. Sub-codes were assigned to each of the meta-codes to gain a deeper

understanding of the topic. Themes generated from each of the interviews were compared for commonalities and patterns after initial coding was completed.

Validity of the coding was conducted through the use of a coding consistency check with a peer reviewer. A list of the initial meta-codes was given to the reviewer along with one page of text from two different interviews. The two pieces of data were free of coding. She was asked to assign the meta-codes and develop sub-codes to the two text samples. Results of the coding consistency check and the researcher's original coding of the same texts were compared for validity. The peer reviewer's and researcher's coding were consistent 15 out of 21 and 17 out of 19 times respectively (see Appendix O).

Participants

The collection of data occurred between August 10, 2017, and September 29, 2017, through individual interviews conducted with principals from the selected subgroup of the population representing schools that exited Priority Status between 2012-2016. As of 2016, 21 Virginia elementary schools were in priority status, and 11 had exited. Of the 11 schools that exited priority status, two participated in the turnaround process for only one year. These schools were Fries School and Westside Elementary. As the turnaround process requires a school participate for two to three years once it has been identified, data for these three schools was excluded from the study as they do not fit the stated criteria. Ellen Chambliss Elementary was excluded from this study due to being closed in 2013 and consolidated with Jefferson Elementary to become Sussex Central Elementary School. One school, P.B. Young Elementary School, was also excluded from the study as it only services children in grades pre-kindergarten through second grade. Accreditation for this school was dependent on the grades 3-5 school that P.B. Young Elementary students attend after second grade. Of the remaining seven schools invited to participate in the study, three did not respond to the invitation. The sample for this study consisted of the four turnaround school principals who accepted and participated in the interviews. The four schools interviewed represented four different divisions across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Three of the principals interviewed represented schools that were within incorporated city school divisions, and one was located in a county school division. Three of the participating principals were from eastern Virginia, and one was from western.

Enrollment for the four schools ranged from 274 to 536 students. Three of the schools had free and reduced-price meal averages above 94% while one was at 69%. Two schools reported more than 100 discipline occurrences while the others reported 58 and 10 respectively. Race and ethnicity data indicated minority percentages ranging from 82.03% to 100% in three of the schools. The fourth school's minority percentage was 69.18%. The percentage of expenditures above Required Local Effort for two of the divisions was reported at 103.02% and 132.74%, while the other two divisions were at 31.46% and 44.38% respectively.

In order to protect the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to the sample participants. The four principals were identified as Principal 1, Principal 2, Principal 3 and Principal 4. Pseudonym were assigned randomly without any preset criteria.

Discussion of Results

Central research question. What are the student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process?

Data, collected from the interviews conducted with successful turnaround principals, revealed some telling information about student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process. The themes that emerged as student-related factors were reading issues, teacher issues, student issues, students' needs, attendance issues, and discipline issues. The themes were categorized into two groups: student learning issues and exterior student factors. The student learning issues were perceived to be those that were within the curriculum and instruction scope of the school while exterior student-factors were observed to be those that originated outside of the school setting. Reading issues, teacher issues, and student issues were identified as themes representing student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement. Attendance issues, discipline issues, and students' needs emerged as exterior student-factor themes. All of the themes identified from analysis of the interviews were addressed in the narratives for each of the research sub-questions.

Research sub-question 1. What student learning issues were identified in turnaround schools? Relevant themes pertaining to student learning issues identified in turnaround schools included reading issues, teacher issues, and student issues. These were the areas identified by principals as having a major impact on a school's ability to increase academic

achievement. The sub-codes that emerged which gave further details on student learning issues were students' accessibility to books, comprehension issues, low background knowledge, test-taking skills, teachers' instructional competency, teachers' effort, frequency of change in curriculum, and students' test-taking skills.

Reading issues.

All of the principals in the study reported student reading issues as having an impact on student learning. Each of the principals cited reading as being the target area for their turnaround efforts as their school had not reached the state assessment benchmarks. Although math and science were referred to as problem areas also, by one of the principals, reading was the dominant target area in all of the interviews. The students were reportedly struggling in reading and writing, thus making it difficult to for them to pass the state assessments. Specifically, the learning issues in reading identified as impacting students were students' accessibility to books, comprehension issues, and low background knowledge.

The first issue identified by three of the principals was the students' accessibility to books. Each of the principals felt that in order to become better readers, students needed to have access to books. Principal 2 suggested that the way to get students to appreciate reading and getting them to want to read was to expose them to books.

> Part of the [Virginia] curriculum framework states that students should appreciate or at least develop a love for reading. It's hard to do that if you don't read a lot or if you're not exposed to a lot of different books, different genres.

Several noted that when students increased the time spent reading books, their state assessment scores increased. Getting books into the hands of students became a priority at each of these schools.

The philosophy for one of the principals was "if you can read you can do everything else". Reading books and becoming immersed in books was key to student learning. Not only being immersed in books at school, but also having access to books at home was felt to be an issue impeding student learning. Principal 3 stated, "they have a lot of books at school but didn't spend time in text at home. Having text was definitely an issue.".

Reading comprehension was the second issue identified as impacting student achievement. Of particular concern to the principals was that students were struggling with vocabulary issues and were reading text at an inappropriate level to advance learning. These two

issues were reported to hinder reading comprehension. Not knowing the vocabulary was determined to prevent the child from comprehending the story. When students struggle to decode or figure out the meaning of words, that causes an interruption in the flow of the story and comprehension. If a child has to stop several times as he/she is reading to make sense of a word, they lose their train of thought and understanding of the text suffers according to Principal 1. Principal 4 stated their slogan was, "Focus on vocabulary every day building super readers one word at a time." Having vocabulary words their word bank helps students to read more fluently.

Another concern that impacted comprehension was the level of the books students were reading. Choosing the appropriate level book for each child for instructional and independent reading was thought to help limit the student's frustration level and raise comprehension. According to Principal 1, a child who is not reading books on their independent level becomes frustrated. "They're basically struggling over how to pronounce a word. Therefore, they're not going to get a clear understanding or comprehend what the book was saying." Principal 2 felt it was important for teachers to choose the appropriate level of books being used in their classroom instruction along with input from their students. Principal 1 also felt parents struggled with knowing what the appropriate level of text was for their child to be reading. The principal found that parents would give their child a book and find out the students could not read a majority of the words. Choosing the right books was thought to be very important to reading success. Principal 1 stated, 'in order for a child to improve his reading, you have got to find that just right book. Have that child continue to read those books that are at the just right point and then you will see improvement in their reading levels." Both Principals 1 and 2 felt it was important to help the parents learn how to pick books at that just right point for their children.

The third issue principals felt impacted student reading learning was the students' lack of background knowledge. Schools involved in the turnaround process usually serve low socioeconomic areas. This was reported to be the case in each of the schools participating in this study. Students in these schools did not have access to the resources or experiences that would help them build background knowledge to connect to the text they were reading. Principal 1 felt their teachers had to do a lot of teaching prior knowledge to the students in order for them to connect to their reading. "So, if they're reading a passage that deals with…and our kids have not had any experience with that, it makes it hard for them to connect, so to have a true

understanding of what the passage is, they need that [teaching prior knowledge]." Being able to access the text and make connections to what was being read was important to the principals.

Teacher issues.

The second theme to emerge as having impacted student learning was teacher issues. Principals were mostly concerned about teachers' instructional competency and effort. The concerns surrounding teacher competency ranged from having inexperienced new teachers to having noncertified personnel in the classrooms. Several principals reported that their schools had issues recruiting and retaining teachers, which led to a high rate of turnover. Principal 1 reported that over one-half of their staff was new for the present school year. Two of the principals felt student learning was impeded by the inexperience of first-year teachers because they must learn the curriculum along with the students and are not content experts. Principal 1 suggested, "most new teachers, they're new so they're just coming into themselves, learning." To this principal, the new teachers were not as effective as veteran teachers. Principal 2 felt "the lack of experience needed to work with different types of students and be able to identify different strategies to help those students" was of particular concern. For instance, this principal noted, "their toolbox had no tools in it but the few they came with from college, which were textbook tools, and the few they learned from student teaching." Waiting for new teachers to gain these skills was thought to put the students at a disadvantage in academic achievement.

The number of non-certified personnel or career switchers in the classrooms also contributed to weak teacher competency. Two of the principals felt they were forced to place long-term substitutes in classes due to a shortage of certified teachers. Principal 4 was of the opinion that long-term substitutes, who did not have an educational background, had little college background, and lacked core curriculum knowledge, impacted student learning. This principal also felt placement of long-term substitutes was unavoidable as there was a shortage of teachers and staffing across the state. Alternative-licensed teachers, or career switchers, were also seen as having instructional and managerial challenges. According to Principal 4, "They do not have the core curriculum classes we all had to prepare for education." Due to the lack of an educational background, these alternative-licensed teachers had a learning curve similar to that of the long-term substitutes, and student learning suffered from this deficiency.

Not only were new teachers and non-certified teachers impacting schools' ability to achieve academically, veteran teachers brought certain issues to the equation also. The second

teacher issue impacting student learning was a lack of teachers' effort which was seen as stemming from loss of desire to teach due to the strain of the job and frustration with constant changes. This issue was mainly attributed to teachers who had been in the profession for a longer period of time. Discussion of the lack of teacher effort centered around those that had lost the desire to teach and those frustrated by constant change. According to Principal 2 some teachers lost the desire to teach and were frustrated. Teachers who lack the desire to teach don't relate to the students, can't connect with them, and don't try to get student buy-in. According to Principal 2:

> I think anyone can teach, provided they are supported. But you have to want to teach these students. If you get to a point where you're frustrated, and you've been in education for a while, and because there's been ten different programs that have come through and something new, you tend to half teach and it's no longer about the students.

Frustration in the job was determined to be a result of lack of support, pressures of the job, and constant change in programming and curriculum.

Veteran teachers were also most likely to resist any change put in place to help students according to Principal 2. This reluctance to change was also considered a factor that impeded student achievement. This principal felt

> When you [the school] starts to change, it's very difficult to get teachers to do anything different because you'll hear comments like, 'Oh, a new program, mm-hmm, that last one lasted for two years'." They don't really do it because it's something new.

Because of the frequency in instructional changes, teachers have learned that if they wait long enough to learn the new process or strategy, in a short time it will change again so it was not worth the effort to change. Inconsistency in fidelity to programs and constant change was determined to hinder student learning because teachers were unwilling to put time into something new if it was not going to stay around.

Student issues.

Another theme that emerged from the interviews was student issues. Specifically, the issues determined to impact learning were frequency of change in curriculum and students' test-taking skills. One of the student issues felt to impact student learning was the frequency of program and curriculum changes in the schools. Principals considered this an issue for both the teachers and the students. Principal 2 felt strongly about the effects of frequent change on

student learning. "I think change definitely impedes student learning when change happens quite frequently." This principal gave an illustration of the impact of change by describing a scenario where a student who has been in elementary school for six years may see a new program put into place every couple of years. As a result, the student doesn't have time to learn one program before it is replaced with a new program. Learning suffers in this scenario. Principal 1 had a similar response, "The total lack of consistency when they are trying to learn. That's not good for the students."

The second student issue felt to impact student learning was weak test-taking skills. Only Principal 3 put an emphasis on test-taking skills and seeing that as a barrier to successful student learning. The focus at this school was to help students in grades three through five understand the test-taking strategies and how to build their stamina. Principal 3 felt this was necessary because their data showed that the students did well on the first few passages of the test, but the last few passages were not answered correctly. "Making them [students] become prepared for the test so that they understand the test-taking strategies, and understand how to build their stamina" was important to Principal 3. Also noted by Principal 3 was the connection between reading and testing stamina:

> The students' lack of stamina was attributed to "kids aren't reading outside of school, then the passages---some of our data has shown, the first couple of passages, our kids are rocking it out… they get to the fourth passage in the [state] test and they're done. They don't read clearly. They don't use their strategies."

This principal felt that as the testing went on, the students became fatigued and stopped using strategies and putting forth effort. Building stamina for test-taking was seen as an important strategy to help with achievement scores by one of the principals.

Research sub-question 2. How are student learning issues addressed to attain learning and achievement goals?

The reading, teaching, and student issues identified as impacting student learning were addressed using a variety of strategies, as seen throughout the principals' conversations. The sub-codes derived from the interview data gave more insight into how each of the principals handled the challenges at their schools. The sub-codes identified to further describe how student learning issues were addressed were reading strategies, reading programs, administrative support, professional development, and community involvement,

Strategies to address reading issues.

The resounding theme throughout each of the interviews was that students needed to read more in order to become better readers. Each principal identified different strategies used at their schools to address their reading issues, but the focus was the same, to develop better readers. These principals surmised, if students were better readers the test scores would take care of themselves. Principal 3 summed it up by saying, "if you can read you can do everything." Principal 4 focused on improving instruction through isolated reading skills instruction while the others concentrated on getting students into books and reading more. Interestingly, one of the principals who placed a priority on students reading more books, also reported using after-school time to focus on test-taking skills strategies as a way to address the reading issues. These test-taking skill strategies seemed to contradict the philosophy of this principal and the others interviewed, that students become better readers by reading more and the rest [assessments] will take care of themselves. Principal 2 felt as a result of the students being more involved in books "we saw reading increase." None of the principals interviewed stated that reading increased due to better test-taking skills. Although one principal felt it was important to help students learn test-taking skills to help them feel comfortable with the test and build testing stamina, it was not chosen as a strategy to increase reading achievement.

The principals determined the following strategies were effective in addressing the reading issues at their schools: time in text, access to books, and targeted professional development. The major issue each of the principals addressed in reading was the students' lack of time in text. This issue had two prongs. The first was, students did not have a time set apart to just read and be exposed to different genres. The second prong was that students did not have access to books at home.

Time in text.

Strategies such as novel studies, guided reading instruction, Count Words and DEAR time were reported to have been helpful in getting students more time to read, increase exposure to different genres and therefore raise reading comprehension. Guided reading, according to one principal, had not been effective for helping students improve their reading skills, in the past, because the skills were taught in isolation. A change in the way guided reading and skill acquisition were accomplished was needed according to Principal 2. This principal felt that giving the teachers the freedom to be creative and develop novel studies for their classrooms as

opposed to using a scripted reading program was key to improving their guided reading program. The teachers were asked to do common class novel studies that involved "picking the book apart, giving their opinions, relating to the character and a lot of writing" (Principal 2). Guided reading was changed from using a basal reader and teaching reading skills in isolation, to learning and transferring skills throughout the reading. The books were to be chosen according to student input and appropriateness of level. Two goals where focused on using this strategy: to improve reading skills through guided reading and to get students into reading more authentic text.

Principal 3 increased the time their students were reading by setting aside time for guided reading every day. This principal revamped guided reading at their school. The students were given more time in text at their appropriate reading levels by building in time during reading instruction for students to work with the teacher in a book at their instructional level and then practicing their skills in a book on their independent level. By choosing books at the appropriate level the teachers helped students void frustration and not stop reading.

Another creative way used to get students more time in text, used by Principal 1, was partnering with community groups to incorporate a reading activity into everything they did with the students. "It takes a whole village to raise a child, so we partner with several of our local organizations…when our kids went out to visit at their location, they incorporated reading into one of their activities that they were having on site" (Principal 1).

Creating school-wide programs was also seen as helping to increase students' time in text. Programs such as Count Words and Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) were implemented to get students reading more. Count Words was similar to a popular reading program called Accelerated Reader which has students read books, take a quiz, and earn points that go towards rewards. Instead of counting books read, this school had the students keep count the number of words read. Time was set aside each day for the students to read their books. The school set up a huge chart in the hallway with the students' names on it and charted the number of words read by each child. "We were amazed at how much reading our students started to do, and we were amazed at when kids got upset if we couldn't read that day due to an assembly or something," noted Principal 2.

Principal 3 implemented a similar program called DEAR. For fifteen minutes, once a week everyone in the school stops what they are doing and reads a book. The principals, teachers, and students all participated. The school had implemented this practice in the past, but

it had not been a priority for several years. The students requested DEAR be brought back to the school. Principal 3 felt this strategy was effective because the students picked their own books and they saw that reading was thought to be important enough that everyone stopped everything to read. "We believe that when they see us read and see how important it is, maybe to us, then they'd like to read as well" (Principal 3).

Although there were differences in the strategies used by the principals each had the common goal of increasing student reading achievement through engaging them in reading more, authentic text. Commercial reading programs were not reported as a resource that helped turn around reading scores.

Access to books.

The second prong hindering students having more time in text was the lack of books in their hands, especially at home. Family Literacy Nights, community partnerships, and summer reading programs were some of the strategies used to ensure students had access to books. Involving the parents in the reading effort was the main objective of parent nights for two of the principals. One strategy Principals 1 and 3 used to overcome the challenge of not having books in students' hands was to conduct teaching-type workshops at Family Literacy Nights. At each of the parent nights books were given away so parents could practice the strategies they learned with their children. Parents were taught to assist their child with reading. "Getting our families involved—not just their participation, the family engagement, holding workshops in which parents are actually taught how to assist their children in reading" (Principal 1). "Teaching [our parents] what to do to help your child have an all-around literacy basis or background" was the focus of their Family Literacy Nights for Principal 3. The parents were taught how to read to their children and how to have children read to them. They were able to practice the strategies before leaving the workshop.

One of the workshops focused on how parents could choose the right books for their child's reading ability. The Five Finger Strategy, introduced at one of the workshops at Principal 1's school, helped parents determine if a book was too hard or easy for their child. For this strategy parents learned to count the number of words missed as a child reads. If more than three words were missed the book was determined to be too hard for the child. The words missed were kept track of by using their fingers. Parents were able to help their child choose the proper book by the number of words the child read correctly. Principal 1 stated "it was a real eye

opener for the parents. They [parents] selected a book, presented it to the child and then after reading through it realized that they were having to tell the kid every single or every other word." Teaching the parents to find just the right book was important to Principal 1 as she felt "if you have the child read those books at the just right point, then you will see the improvement in their reading level. That was key to the parents."

Another reading strategy introduced during the Family Literacy Nights at Principal 3's school was the 100 Book Challenge. This program challenged students to read 100 books during the school year. Parents were invited to read with their student and attend the celebration day for those students who had read the 100 books. Another strategy Principal 3 used to overcome the challenge of getting books into the hands of students was to initiate a summer program where every child took home books. "They have a lot of books here at school, but didn't spend much time in text at home, so we make sure we do reading in the summer." The school sent home eight books with each child. If they finished reading those books they could trade them in for eight more.

Several principals reported they had worked with community partners to get more books in the hands of students. Star City Read, local libraries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency and Barrister Book Buddies were some of the partners mentioned that supported reading schools. "Every month they [volunteers] come in with our Barrister Book Buddies. They often bring books to our children, so whatever books they're reading then the kids also get copies of those books as well." As a result of the success of working with community partners, several principals mentioned one of their goals was to increase the number of volunteers that come to the school to help students "so they know that not just the people within the building are here for them, but the people outside of the community want them to be successful as well" (Principal 3).

Professional development.

Student reading issues were also addressed through targeted professional development (PD). The PD ranged from school-led, targeted, skill-specific training to state-led trainings on the use of data to determine students' areas of strengths and weaknesses. Professional development related to reading improvement was conducted in-house by Principals 3 and 4. Principal 3 reported that "not a lot of professional development came from the division. We like to handle that." Even though most of the professional development was directed by the school, Principal 3 stated that if they wanted a certain person to come and lead a professional

development the division would help make that happen. The ultimate decision as to what was needed and the best way to present the training was left for the school to decide, according to their needs.

Professional development was conducted monthly at teacher meetings, in several of the schools, and each had an instructional focus. For instance, Principal 4 created a targeted professional development plan, focused on vocabulary instruction, that outlined what teachers were to do, how they were to do it, and what to expect for monitoring. Two strategies, introducing vocabulary and using vocabulary, were introduced at monthly teacher PD to help overcome reading issues. In order to have consistency among the teachers, "we did professional development repeatedly on those strategies to make sure that every [one understands], it's not necessarily about a specific text that we're using. It's about the strategies that we're using and making sure that everybody understands what those strategies are." A campaign was created to help the teachers and the students understand the instructional focus for reading. Students were involved in creating a slogan, "May I have a Word," and it was displayed throughout the school "to help make sure everyone understood, this is our focus, this is where we are going. You'll see it in all of our newsletters that go home once a month to both staff and parent." Principal 4 felt reading improved because they had professional development that focused on their reading needs and "we did professional development repeatedly on the strategies to make sure that everybody understands what those strategies are."

Reading comprehension was the second instructional focus at this school, and PD was handled the same way according to the principal. Through their monthly PD sessions teachers were taught strategies to improve reading comprehension, and then the training was repeated throughout the year and monitored for fidelity.

Strategies to address teacher issues.

Teachers have a profound effect on student learning. One of the first places principals looked when issues arose in student learning was the effectiveness of the classroom teacher. The students generally only have one chance at each grade level to master the material. A top priority for each principal was to ensure that instruction was at the level of rigor needed for students to be successful. Principals reported the teacher issues affecting student learning were addressed using the following strategies: administrative support and teacher autonomy.

Administrative support.

Administrative support had a huge impact on teacher instruction and student learning according to three of the participating principals. Administrative support came from the state, division, and building levels. The level of administrative support necessary was determined by required state trainings, data gathered during observations, and instructional walk throughs.

The state department provided professional development to building administrators on conducting administrator walk throughs, reviewing lesson plans, and giving specific feedback to teachers after observations. An administrator from each Priority School and the division support team attended Aligning Academic Review & Performance Evaluation (AARPE) sessions led by the VDOE Office of School Improvement. The AARPE trainings were mandatory and were focused on school improvement, specifically in the areas of curriculum alignment, instruction, lesson plans, observations with feedback, and classroom management.

Principal 4 felt these trainings were not effective as they were a one-size fits all and did not address their specific needs. This principal felt that their school was already doing what AARPE was trying to initiate and it was taking them backwards. Principal 4 felt the trainings were helpful.

> We were given the opportunity to participate in several professional developments under the [VDOE] Office of School Improvement…helped us with the alignment of our curriculum as well as our assessments. [They] made sure we were providing instruction that was aligned with the assessment... looking at lesson plans and giving feedback to teachers. (Principal 4)

One principal reported that the most effective component of the state professional development was the Internal Lead Partner (LP) assigned to each of the schools. The LP conducted classroom observations, provided feedback, and held monthly meetings with administration. As part of the VDOE requirements for Priority schools, each had to work with a state-contracted partner who was assigned to each division. The state contractor would come to the school and conduct instructional rounds with the principal, give feedback, and help develop a plan of action. Three of the principals found this support to be helpful.

Principals 2 and 4 talked about the benefits of learning to do observations and giving feedback to the teachers. According to Principal 2, “As an administrator you go in and you start to really use your observations to support the teachers to engage students better.” Principal 4

stated they were constantly monitoring and looking for what was working and what supports were needed.

> When I do my walk throughs as well as my AP [assistant principal], and my instructional leadership team, when we are visiting classrooms and giving feedback, they're around those instructional strategies. Making sure that they are being used with fidelity.

Another benefit to the observations and walk throughs, according to Principal 4, was how it impacted the students. "Kids realized, "Hmm, the assistant principal, the reading specialist, all these folks, they really do know what we're doing in our classes. We've got to do the right thing when they focus on us. They really try for us."

Principal 2 felt that administrative support on a one-to-one basis with teachers produced a lot of change in teachers. "I met with teachers one-on-one, in areas to grow and how to structure things. I started to see a lot of change." This principal would meet with the teachers needing support weekly to go over lesson plans, teaching strategies, and classroom management strategies. As the time went on, teachers would start to come less frequently as they realized they could do it on their own. Principal 2 reported teachers would back away but felt secure enough to come back and ask for help when something did not go as planned. She felt this having a safe place to learn made a difference in the teacher's instructional competency. Taking the time to work with teachers was reported as an important way to support them and strengthen instruction so students did not lose a year of growth.

Teacher autonomy.

Giving teachers the freedom to be creative and incorporate new ideas into their instruction was presented by Principal 2 as a way to alleviate teacher apathy and frustration. "Teachers come in to teach and they have a vision and this dream to be creative…when they are given the freedom to be creative, as long as it is within the curriculum framework, they are more than willing to do more. And that is what we did see" (Principal 2). Giving the teachers the freedom to choose novels for their class, plan instruction, and bring in their ideas were all thought to be ways to have teacher buy in and keep their instruction at high levels.

Strategies to address student issues.

In order to help students be successful, it was deemed important that educators really get to know students according to two of the principals in this study. In today's data-rich environment it is easy to be so focused on the students' achievement scores and never get to

know them personally. Uncovering and addressing students' academic needs was believed to be vital to their success. Students' needs that impacted student learning were addressed using the following strategies: using data and building relationships.

Using data.

The use of data to impact student learning was a strategy used by all four of the principals interviewed to get to truly understand the students and their needs. As schools are in the business of teaching students, assessing their progress is important, but knowing where students are in their learning continuum and what their specific needs are is just as important. Data was used to monitor students' progress and engagement. Instructional, behavioral, achievement, and progress data were all identified as strategies to improve educational outcomes.

In order to better understand students and their needs, Principal 1 felt that the implementation of the Virginia Tiered System of Support (VTSS) was an effective process for addressing student learning issues. VTSS is a Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) framework for decision-making which uses data to identify areas of weaknesses and create an intervention plan to support the areas of need for each student.

> Just being able to have our teachers understand that system, getting our students into the proper tiers and then providing those interventions for the tier two and tier three students. It was truly an eye opener for us as well as the teachers. It was a big help especially in reading (Principal 1).

Using the data to help student learning required a lot of training, but the teachers were willing to put in the hard work and saw results according to Principal 1. To collect base-line performance data on students, the school used a progress monitoring tool called Measures of Academic Performance© (MAP), which is an on-line assessment tool that measures academic performance in all content areas. The assessment can be used to measure student progress or growth. Principal 1 reported using this tool to identify students in need of interventions to support their learning. The data gained from MAP helped the school to identify areas of weakness and assign interventions to close the learning gap. The interventions were monitored for effectiveness. While other principals discussed using data, only one mentioned using the VTSS framework.

Principals 2 and 3 also cited using data to pinpoint weaknesses and improve student learning as helping to address student learning issues. Principal 2 considered a training conducted by the National Institute for School Leadership© (NISL) as a huge help for the staff.

The training was centered around taking a deep dive into data to pinpoint what was going on and what was needed to engage students in learning. Principal 2 felt this training was huge because "it helps you look at things differently and we are still using the strategies we learned." Principal 3 used Title I federal funds to "…hire an instructional coach, who… looked at our data to really know what our children were missing and make sure that we included [that] in our everyday lesson plans."

Principals 1, 2 and 4 gathered data through walkthroughs and observations to monitor student engagement and learning. All felt this data helped them to support instruction and focus on student learning.

Building relationships.

Focusing on the students' needs means getting to know them, not only academically but socially also. Principal 2 felt very strongly about teachers building relationships with the students to help meet their academic needs. Knowing what students liked, disliked, how they connected to the learning and what resources would interest them could help an educator make better informed decisions. "Students need a relationship with the teacher so they can connect and relate to what is going on in the classroom," according to one of the principals. Principal 2 believed the best thing a teacher could do to help students learn and address student needs was to show them they care. Building relationships with the students helped develop that sense of caring, one principal stated. "The best thing a student can have is a teacher that cares and believes in them. You can be a mediocre teacher and you can get the world out of your kids provided they know that you care and believe in them" (Principal 2).

Holding students to high expectations was also reported as one way teachers helped meet students' needs. One principal felt that if a teacher cares about the students, he/she will hold them to high expectations and let them know they cared about their learning. "Students want to be held to high expectations. They're going to try to meet and exceed them. When you do not hold them to those high expectations that you set, they will not work for you. They will not work" (Principal 2). Also, this principal felt it was important for teachers to "focus and see learning through the lens of a child". Putting themselves in the place of their students and truly understanding their needs was believed to be a way to help students learn.

Research sub-question 3. What exterior student-related factors are identified as needing improvement in a turnaround school?

Significant themes emerged which represented the exterior student-related factors needing improvement in turnaround schools: students' needs, attendance issues, and discipline issues. These were the themes identified by principals as needing to be addressed in order for school improvement to move forward. The sub-codes that emerged to give further details to the exterior student-related factors were community involvement, community partners, low socioeconomics, tardiness, neighborhood issues, and classroom disruption.

Students' needs.

A great deal of focus was placed on discussing students in the interviews. Students' needs were identified as one of the exterior student-factors impeding the turnaround process. Although the students' needs originate from outside of the school setting, they need to be addressed in order for students to be successful. Principals voiced their concern about the low socioeconomic status of the community from which these students came and how that placed their students at risk for failure. One principal was quick to say, "I don't like to use the social-economic status because I was one of those students, and I don't think that really has the strongest impact on a student's learning, but I will say it's our location that puts us at risk." The location of their community limited the resources and experiences available to the students. Principal 2 reported that their school community had a lot of displaced families that were unable to afford a place to stay. Their home-life was challenging, and there was drama all around them on a constant basis.

Principal 1 felt the low socioeconomic make-up of the children's neighborhood placed their students at risk for dropping out and struggling in school, but that the school could overcome those obstacles. This principal felt students came to school with a variety of needs that must be met in order to be able to teach them. Principal 2 felt in order to talk about students' needs, getting to know the children is important.

> It's not about anyone else but the students. My take on it is that they're definitely our future. Doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers—they're the future, and we have to provide them with the best, and we have to give them every opportunity to succeed.

When students are disengaged, bored, and unable to relate to the materiel Principal 2 felt it was important for teachers to get know their needs and challenges. "It is a focus on the student but it's looking at what support or what other resources do we need to make sure the student is supported."

Principal 4 discussed another issue that arose from living in a low socioeconomic area was that parents must work multiple jobs to support their families. This left parents with little time for anything else. Students were not getting the support they needed at home because parents were stretched.

Due to the limited income of families, students were not getting enough food to function at school. Not having enough food was thought to be the catalyst for not being able to focus on learning and for misbehavior in the classroom. Principal 2 felt that if the students had not been fed or were worried about when they would eat next, they were unable to concentrate and do well in school.

Attendance issues.

Another exterior student-related factor identified as needing improvement, was attendance. This was identified by three principals as having had an impact on academic achievement. Principal 2 was the one participant who felt that attendance was not an issue for their school. "I believe the children want to be there and our parents wanted them there so that is not an issue." Principals 3 and 4 shared that missing school was not as big a problem as students coming to school late and missing instructional time.

> Attendance is not a big issue. Most of ours [issues] is the time that students come in. I mean we have a few students that are regularly absent and so that was a very big problem for us and our school, [but] a lot of it was more tardies … (Principal 3).

For this principal, tardiness was more of an issue than absences. The schools still had children with chronic absenteeism that needed attention, but tardiness had just as much impact on learning as absenteeism according to this principal.

Absenteeism in the form of tardiness was also reported by Principal 4 as a factor impacting achievement. "Attendance impacts student learning at [school] because our parents are notoriously late for school" (Principal 4). This principal related that when students are tardy, they are missing instructional time, and it is usually reading instruction as that is traditionally conducted at the beginning of the day.

Virginia has now tied absenteeism to the accreditation formula, especially chronic absenteeism. Principal 1 stated "We were just in a meeting yesterday, discussing what the state is looking at for its new indicators and I thought, 'Oh my goodness.' I mean absenteeism

[exceeding] 10% of days in school. So yes, I would definitely say attendance is a major issue here at our school".

Discipline issues.

The third exterior student-related factor identified as needing improvement was discipline issues in the school. Discipline was noted by all four principals as a factor that impeded the turnaround process. Specifically, principals attributed the discipline issues to classroom management concerns and neighborhood concerns.

Classroom management was identified in several of the principals' discussions as being challenging especially for new teachers. Classroom management comes from experience, and building strategies to prevent classroom disruptions takes time. New teachers need time and strategies to be effective. Classroom management issues can be directly related to lost instructional time due to the disruption of the learning environment. It takes time to address each issue, and that time is taken from instruction. As noted by one of the principals, "We had disruption of the learning environment where teachers were struggling with classroom management—and I'm going to be honest—having control" (Principal 1). The students not misbehaving are losing as much instructional time as the student who is causing the disruption.

Principal 3 felt hunger was not only a factor that hindered student learning, but also created discipline issue. Students were coming to school hungry and they could not focus and acted out in class.

> I would say, when you come to school hungry that within itself is tremendous. And when you go home knowing there may not be food at home, and kids, they'll articulate that, they tend to act out. ---You can't expect a child to sit down, that's so young, to be focused when they're hungry (Principal 3).

Principal 4 felt they did not have big discipline issues at school, but it was the incidents happening outside of the school's control that impacted student learning more. This principal related that "things [discipline issues] happen that then impact us. It's not necessarily what happens—there are some things that happen in the building, but the community itself and the things that go on outside really do impact our kids." Principal 2 saw discipline as a definite challenge and like the other principals attributed it to the neighborhood issues surrounding the school. The principal identified the structured environment of the school as hard for the students to handle.

> When you think about the community and where the community is located, it's a lot of low socioeconomic status. Lots of drama. As well as a lot of crime. So, the students were exposed to a lot of negative things or I would say environmental situations and for a young child to be exposed to that or having to kind of take on some more adult things at such a young age causes them to be a little bit more mature than their age, but at the same time, they're still children and they act as such. So, they come to a school in an environment that is really structured, they struggle because their outside environment may not be as structured.

Two of the principals felt strongly that the students' neighborhood issues had an impact on student learning. The neighborhoods in which the schools were located were challenging, and crime was frequent according to the principals.

> … crime is frequent, and our teachers and staff are always on alert because we do have break-ins frequently. And please do not be alarmed by this, but we have had several shootings and murders in our neighborhood, including a few where we have had to keep the kids after school. We can't let them go because things are happening in the neighborhood. Those are the things that impact us. It's not necessarily what happens—there are some things that happen in the building, but the community itself and the things that go on outside really do impact our kids (Principal 4).

The depth of how concerned Principal 4 was for the students' welfare, and how to her it is much more than the scores, was evident as she voiced her concerns:

> It always amazes me how they bounce back. I mean, I've had kids whose houses have been shot up at night, but they're still in school the next morning. And you ride past and you see bullet holes and you are praying as you're driving to the building, like "Oh my God. Please let them be ok. Please let them be okay". Then you see them and they're fine. And they'll tell you, "Well, yeah. Things happened and we're not going to stay there anymore. We're staying with my aunt". Okay, I mean, we have that kind of thing.

Discipline issues were reported by each principal to one degree or another. Although some principals felt they did not have big issues with discipline, there was still lost instruction time due to teachers having to deal with the issues.

Research sub-question 4. What are the student-support strategies turnaround schools have implemented to address the exterior student-related factors?

According to the principals in this study, exterior student-related factors were addressed through the implementation of a variety of different strategies. Sub-codes were identified to give further substance to the themes. These sub-codes included community involvement, community partners, attendance policy, attendance improvement strategies, discipline plans, discipline improvement strategies, and discipline supports.

Community involvement.

Community involvement was emphasized in each of the interviews and given considerable amount of discussion as to ways to address students' needs. Community involvement encompassed parental engagement and community support, all of which were seen as ways to meet students' needs. All four of the principals interviewed discussed the importance of getting parents involved and coming to the schools.

Many of the principals provided events to get the parents to come to the school, interact with their child, and see it as a welcoming place. The goal was to build up the parents' comfort level with the school so that they would be more willing to share their needs and support their child. Some of the issues principals felt parents had with the school were having negative past experiences, not having the skills to help their students, and having a work schedule that did not permit them to participate in school events. Principal 1 felt family engagement was one of the primary factors that impacted their ability to exit priority status. "Getting families involved—not just their participation, the family engagement, holding workshops in which parents were actually taught how to assist their child in reading was a factor." Principal 3 used Family Literacy Nights and newsletters to highlight the focus of the school and the expectations for student behavior and attendance. Principal 2 found that the more events parents participated in, the more supportive they were when issues arose. This particular school used not only training workshops, but also fun events such as father/daughter dances, mother/son dances, Thanksgiving dinners, Easter Bunny and egg hunt, etc. to bring parents to the school for something other than a conference. Principal 2 felt

> … getting our families into the building and to be a part of our school… we could have more open conversations that were, I would say, mutually agreed upon and understood

about academics. And you would find more parents coming in and willing to talk, being more supportive.

One principal laughed and stated that the community was so used to being involved in the school and having parent events that they would be upset if it stopped.

Community partners.

Community partners also played a vital role in meeting students' needs, both learning and social. Principal 4 did not feel there was much support from parents, most of whom were working multiple jobs and did not have time to come to the school. This school was in a high crime area with lots of needs. The principals relied heavily on community partners to assist with students' needs. Some of the partners the principals reported working with were tutors/mentors, community resource officers, social workers, school psychologist, and therapeutic day treatment personnel. "If I could, I would form one of those big wraparound service centers… where you have social workers that go to the homes… working with our kids in house, we need medical, the dental, everything" (Principal 4). In order to address students' needs two of the principals reported that they were focusing on much more that academic needs. They were taking on all of their issues just so the students could focus on learning.

Principal 3 used community volunteers to show students the community cares and wants good things for them. "We hope to increase that [volunteers] this year so that students know that they have a whole community of people that want them to be successful" (Principal 3). Principals 1 and 2 also related that their goal was to get more of the community involved to help their students. Several of the principals felt there was a negative perception of their schools in the community because of their low test scores and low socioeconomic status. Several principals related that until they could get people in to see what was really going on with the students the community would think negative thoughts about the school. The need to get more people to come and see how the students were being helped, what the students' needs were, and to become a part of the school was very important to these principals.

Attendance policies.

One of the student-support strategies related by all of the principals in their interviews as being effective was the use of a division-wide attendance policy. Three principals mentioned the division plan briefly. Principals 2, 3 and 4 felt their attendance policies were the same as the policy used across the Commonwealth of Virginia. Principal 4 observed, "There are some things

that are put into place on a division-level, but then each school has to tweak it and make it fit for them." This principal felt their attendance issues were low because they had a strong Truancy Court working with them. She outlined what it looks like in her division if you take a parent to Truancy Court.

> We have a couple of students who their parents have a grievance with the court to make sure they will get to school and get to school on time. Majority of the time, you see an immediate change because—the judge who oversees Truancy Court for [city] at the elementary level… he's going to give you a stern talking to and he's going to sign an agreement with you. The second time, you're going to jail. The third time, he will remove your child from your custody.

Principal 2 also noted being consistent with the attendance plan helped alleviate issues. She determined that "we had very few people who did not follow the attendance policy. But once you had the conversation and you [parents] start to get letters, they're all on board."

Principal 3 reported that attendance was to be the division focus for this school year. The principal reported that since the VDOE has added attendance as one of the measures tied to state accreditation, the division was making it the focus for all schools. "As a district this year, attendance is our other factor for success and achievement. Usually we get to pick as a school which one we want to use, but this year the district has decided that attendance is our focus."

Principals 3 and 4 had support personnel in place to assist in identifying students with high-frequency issues and creating attendance plans with the parents. The support personnel would go to the homes and help parents and kids understand the importance of coming to school and being on time. When the home visit was not enough, the personnel would take the families through the other processes in place to get the parents to get their children to school and to be on time.

In order to address attendance issues, several of the principals explained the attendance improvement strategies that were already in place or were refined under their tenure. Principal 1 credited the VTSS process with helping their attendance issues. VTSS has two branches. One branch focuses on academics and the other on behaviors. The behavior side of VTSS dealing with discipline and attendance issues is called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The goal of PBIS is to build the systems' capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional, and behavior support.

> As part of our VTSS we have … a group of teachers and administrators get together and problem-solve. We may find that there's something we need to refer to our guidance counselor. We have some school-wide PBIS goals for attendance and improving attendance overall for the school. And then breaking it down more to individual students. We had PBIS goals at the school. We have data that shows that our student attendance increased, as well as our staff attendance. Not only did we have a goal for the students, we also had a goal for the teachers. (Principal 1)

Attendance Improvement Strategies.

Several strategies were discussed to address the attendance issues at the schools represented in the interviews. Principal 3 used several strategies to increase awareness of the importance of attending school. The main goal was to have parents understand, "we can't help them if they're not here and when their kids aren't here." In the monthly newsletter this principal would highlight tips to parents on how to help their children be successful, and attendance was always mentioned in the tips. At every family night they always talk about the importance of attendance. They have also incorporated "some things [such as incentives] to make sure the parents understand the importance of their students being in school" (Principal 3).

Three of the principals reported the use of incentives as a student-support strategy to address attendance issues. One of the principals used a PBIS goal, a banner with the letters "perfect attendance." For every homeroom class that had perfect attendance, they would shade in a letter and after their word was completed they would receive some type of reward or incentive. Another principal's leadership team felt it was important to recognize perfect attendance every nine-weeks period rather than wait until the end of the year.

> "You want it in little steps instead of these gigantic, perfect attendance for the whole year. Because, quite frankly, that's just hard. [We will celebrate] if he had perfect attendance for a whole nine weeks or the first half of the nine weeks, just little things that we will start to recognize students for being here and being here on time. (Principal 3)

Breaking up the time period to earn attendance rewards into manageable time periods, gives the students a better chance to be successful.

Principal 4 also had an attendance incentive plan similar to Principals 1 and 3. This school had charts outside of each classroom and when the class had perfect attendance, including no tardies, they received a star for the chart. At the end of the month, if the class' chart was full,

their class was announced on the morning news show and placed in a hat for a drawing. If the class name was chosen, they would receive prize. The prizes ranged from ice cream to pencils to an extra 30 minutes in the computer lab. For individuals who were struggling with attendance issues, the principal would meet with the student and the parent and create a contract. If the child followed the contract for one month, he/she would receive a certificate or another prize.

It was noted that in all of the interviews, when talking about attendance, the focus was on positive strategies. The principals only discussed the punitive side of dealing with attendance issues when probed about the attendance policy and when the parents had to go to court. Each of the principals reported their attendance issues had decreased in comparison to past years' data.

Discipline plans.

Student-support strategies implemented to address discipline issues included discipline plans, discipline strategies, and discipline supports. All of the principals reported using a school-wide discipline program to decrease discipline issues. Two used the PBIS system, one used ClassDojo, and the fourth used the Aggressive Discipline Plan (created by the school). All four of the discipline plans focused on reinforcing positive behaviors, explicitly teaching the school's expectations and extensive teacher training. "After implementing PBIS--teachers were better able to have control over the classroom, which allowed for more engaging activities, which is the key of student engagement" (Principal 1).

Teaching the school-wide expectations was felt to be key to the success for all of the school-wide discipline plans. Lesson plans were created for instruction of the expectations for behaviors in the classroom, cafeteria, hallways, playground, and buses. After the lessons were taught, teachers would reinforce the expectations by revisiting the lessons when issues arose. The expectations were posted throughout the school and classrooms. They were also sent home for parents to be aware of what was expected for school behavior.

The differences in the programs were how positive behavior was tracked. PBIS and the Aggressive Discipline plan used some type of fill-in banner or chart to earn rewards. ClassDojo is web-based, students have a visual to monitor their own behavior, and parents can access the program from home to monitor their child's behavior during the day.

Discipline strategies.

Explicitly teaching the school-wide expectations for the cafeteria, hallways, classrooms and buses had the most impact on student discipline according to the principals. In some schools

there were expectations set for teachers. When students and teachers are "caught" doing good, they are rewarded with a positive behavior referral.

To address discipline issues in the classroom, several principals created a list of standard behaviors and interventions to help teachers understand when to write a referral, when to contact the parent, what to contact the guidance counselor, and when to send a child to the office. "We were making sure that we were not just sending children home because they're on our last nerve kind of thing, but that it [discipline] really matched the infraction" (Principal 3). Teachers were required to take several steps before they could refer to the office; they had to conduct three teacher-managed behaviors, assign consequences, and speak to the parents. Principal 3 felt this helped the teachers "find out the real cause why the child is having these behaviors, if it's for attention, is it because they don't know how to do the work, so that we can get to the root cause and then, hopefully eliminate that."

Keeping students in her office or making the students stay after school to make up the time they missed due to their behavior was one strategy Principal 3 used to address discipline issues. The students did their work with the principal, and she noted "they're going to have to work with me and I'm not as nice as your teachers are at times when it comes to getting your work done. It's not as fun as when [they] are with friends and [they] could be learning a different way." She felt this helped cut down on discipline issues as the students did not want to repeat staying with the principal. She would also make them stay after school to make up the time they took away from learning. The parents were very supportive and would make sure the students stayed, according to Principal 3. Staying after school without their friends was definitely a deterrent for misbehavior.

Discipline supports.

Several of the principals had supports in place to help the students with discipline issues. Hunger was one of the issues thought to contribute to students acting out. "When you go home knowing there may not be food at home, and kids, they'll articulate that, they tend to act out" (Principal 2). In order to support the students, this principal started sending backpacks of food home with the students on weekends. This school also became part of the "all students eat free" program for Virginia schools, where every child gets breakfast and lunch free.

Another support reported in two of the schools by Principals 3 and 4 was a Therapeutic-Based Treatment program. This program trained individuals to help students work through

social and emotional issues. These adults were in the classrooms as extra support for the teachers to proactively deal with behaviors before they get out of hand and work with children to change unwanted behaviors.

Parent support with discipline issues was considered a big factor for some of the principals. "Parents wanted their child to learn and be successful, so cutting up in school and misbehaving in school was not an option… they would come up to the school" (Principal 2). Part of the goal of the community events was to get parents into the schools and feeling comfortable so that they would be more open to discussing issues as they arose. This was particularly helpful with discipline issues according to Principals 2 and 3.

Each of the principals saw community partners as valuable resources. Most felt they needed more volunteers to address the growing needs of their students. Some of the community partners helping with student issues were VSU male mentor, Life Enrichment Center, YCAP Therapeutic Day Treatment Group, and Community Resource Officers (CRO). These agencies help students deal with the issues they are having through tutoring, mentoring, and making connections.

Subsequent themes.

Two subsequent themes emerged through the examination of the interview data: FUND-Funding and EXT-External Lead Partners. Neither of the codes were included in the initial list of provisional codes, but developed through the analysis process. As the examination of the data progressed, it was noted that several of the participants discussed the funding or the lack of funding and their turnaround effort. Principal 3 implied that funding was not an issue. "They [division] looked at your data and as you asked for the supports that you thought you needed, that would be extra staffing and materials or things like that, that we were able to get from the division. Pretty much anything we asked for, we could get once we have identified exactly what we needed." Principal 3 also noted that funding was available through federal title funds to hire an instructional coach. The instructional coach was an extra pair of eyes to look at instruction, work with teachers, model best practices, and dig down into the data. Principal 2 reported the division was "willing to pay for that [professional development], that was tremendous because it was expensive." The theme of funding was not present in Principal 1 and 4 interviews.

The second theme that emerged from the interviews was EXT-External Lead Partners. The External Lead Turnaround Partners (LTP) were services contracted through the use of

Federal School Improvement Grants (SIG). The LTPs were chosen from a VDOE list of approved entities and contracted, after an interview process was completed, to work with the Priority School. Principal 1 did not discuss LTPs. Principal 2 stated the LTP worked at the school prior to her becoming the principal. The LTPs played no part in exiting priority status at this school according to Principal 2.

Principal 3's school had an LTP for three years. Two of the years were prior to this principal coming to the school. After one year with the LTP, the contract was not renewed. "We didn't yield huge results for them to have been in the building for three years." Not willing to cooperate, not having the same focus as the principal, and conducting weak professional development were cited by this principal as problem areas in working with the LTP. This principal felt the LTP held them back and was not on the same page as the school.

Principal 4 had a similar experience as Principal 3. Principal 4 noted "we had mixed reviews on that [LTP] because of course, with anything, the coaching and the work with your lead external partner is only as beneficial as the person who is driving it." The LTPs being unprepared, not well received by the teachers, and not having expertise in the content area needing support were some additional issues identified by Principal 4. "The district decided to exit the contract because of the negative feedback" (Principal 4).

Summary

This chapter began with an overview which included a review of the purpose of the study, identification of the research questions and a detailed description of the participants. Detailed narrative findings were then presented to answer each of the research questions. For the first research question, the student-related factors that impact a school's ability to increase academics, from the perspective of principals, included reading issues, teacher issues, students' needs, attendance issues, and discipline issues. For question two, the student learning issues identified included reading issues, teacher issues, and student issues. For question three, strategies to address student learning issues were presented as reading strategies, teacher competency strategies, using data, building relationships, and community involvement. For question four, the exterior student-related factors needing improvement included students' needs, attendance, and discipline issues. For the final research question, number five, the student-support strategies noted were attendance policies, attendance strategies, attendance incentives,

discipline plans, discipline strategies, and discipline supports. Subsequent Themes identified through the analysis, funding and external lead partners, were discussed in the final section of the chapter.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of the study, was to investigate school turnaround reform by identifying factors from the perspective of successful turnaround leaders that hinder or aid the process. The driving problem for this study was an absence of research on the student factors that may contribute to the success or failure of the turnaround process.

One research and four sub-research questions guided the study. They are as follows:
Central research question:

1. What were the student-related factors that impacted a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process?

Research sub-questions:

2. What student learning issues were identified?
3. How were student learning issues addressed to attain student learning and achievement goals?
4. What exterior student factors were identified as needing improvement? (e.g. attendance, discipline, support, etc.)
5. What were the student-support strategies implemented to address exterior student factors?

This chapter is organized by the following headings: summary of the study, discussion and interpretation of the findings, implications for practice, delimitations and limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a summary of the chapter.

Summary

In this section, the main research question will be answered. The answer to the main research question was there were five student-related factors that were identified as having impacted a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process. The five factors identified as having had an impact on academic achievement were reading issues, teacher issues, students' needs, attendance issues, and discipline issues. Specifically, reading was identified as a factor as it was a target area for each of the schools due to not meeting the

state benchmark on end-of-the-year assessments. Teachers were identified as a factor due to competency and effort. Students were identified as a factor due to their physical and academic needs. Also, students not having a voice in their learning was considered a factor that impacted academic achievement. Attendance was identified as a factor due to excessive tardiness leading to missed instruction. Finally, discipline was identified as a factor due to disruption of classroom instruction, loss of instructional time, and neighborhood drama affecting students. Each of the factors will be discussed further in the next section of this study with details on the issues each presents, the strategies used to minimize the issues, and the supports utilized for student success.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

A synthesis of the results of the data analysis performed in Chapter 4 of this study was the focus of this section. In addition, the discussion section correlates the findings presented in the literature review of Chapter 2 with this study's findings and offers support for the conclusions reached in relation to the research questions.

Research sub-question 2. What student learning issues were identified as needing improvement?

From the interviews it was determined that principals saw reading issues, teacher issues, and students' needs as issues that impacted student learning. Principals reported reading issues at their schools included not making the reading benchmarks on state assessments due to poor reading comprehension, vocabulary issues, lack of books in students' hands, reading books that were not on the students' appropriate level, and poor test-taking skills as impacting student learning. Reading comprehension was low, according to the principals interviewed, because students were not able to access a variety of books and were reading books at an inappropriate level. Another issue that impacted reading comprehension, according Principal 4, was the students' lack of background knowledge and vocabulary skills. Finally, students not knowing test-taking strategies and a lack of stamina was reported to impact achievement. This finding contradicts the conclusions drawn by Peck and Reitzug (2013) that "the largest number of references to students in the reports refer to their 'achievement', 'performance', 'progress', 'data', and other terms that tie their value to how they do academically as measured by tests" (p. 25). The principals in this study did use the terms noted above, but in the context of students' learning, not the end-of-year tests. Only one principal discussed students in terms of testing and

that reference was to their test-taking skills. Testing is a reality in today's education, so understanding the test and test-taking strategies is a necessity but should not be the focus of learning. One principal stated that "if you can read you can do anything else" (Principal 3). Getting students to read books was the focus of three of the principals.

For teacher issues, the principals reported teacher retention and resistance to change impacted student learning. There was an issue with the schools being able to recruit and retain teachers, which led to a big turnover of staff. The turnover meant there were either a lot of new teachers or long-term substitutes in the classrooms. Principals felt that new teachers came to the classroom with limited content knowledge and classroom management skills. New teachers must learn the standards as they are trying to teach the students. The need to constantly repeat professional development on these topics took up a lot of the principals' time and time that could be spent training on other important strategies. Long-term substitutes came to the classroom with little to no college or educational training and were not endorsed to teach, so they have to not only learn the content, but learn to teach also. This finding corroborates with a number of studies included in the literature review which found that low salaries and high teacher turnover lead to the need to hire alternatively certified and inexperienced teachers. These teachers were weak in pedagogy and classroom management (Hamilton et al. 2014; Holme & Rangel, 2012).

Two other issues impacting students' learning was the teachers' lack of desire to teach and frustration with constant changes in programming. According to the principals, teachers with a lack of desire to teach don't relate to the students, can't connect with them, and don't try to get student buy-in. Inconsistency and constant change had hindered student learning due to the teachers' unwillingness to put time into something new without a guarantee the program would continue. These findings correspond with Holme and Rangel (2012), who noted that in negative responding schools "teachers were frustrated by constant changes to programs and schedules" (p. 266). The positive responding schools reported that "teachers knew what to expect, were able to plan ahead and counted on structures and supports when they needed them" (p. 267).

For student issues, the principals reported the students' low socioeconomic issues and frequent change impacted student learning. The interviews revealed that students coming from low socioeconomic areas had to deal with neighborhood drama and events. Not having access to things and experiences that affluent children did was reported to be an issue with the students'

background knowledge. Low socioeconomics also contributed to a lack of food, which prevented students from concentrating and learning. Parents had to work multiple jobs and were not available to support the students. Frequent change in programming was also identified as having an impact on student learning. Students never get a chance to become familiar with a program or strategy before another change came.

For attendance issues, the interviews revealed that absenteeism in the form of tardiness was seen as a big factor for student learning in several of the interviews. Students being late to school meant they were missing core instruction, usually reading instruction.

Finnigan et al. (2012) determined that careful diagnosis of root causes of low performance and clear strategies that address these causes was needed. However, they concluded from the findings of their research that underperforming schools had developed improvement plans that focused on the symptoms, not the causes of the problems (Finnigan et al., 2012). This contradicts the findings of this study. Each of the principals diagnosed and articulated the root causes impacting student learning and then put into place strategies and procedures to address those causes.

Research sub-question 3. How are student learning issues addressed to attain achievement goals?

Student learning issues in reading were addressed by providing books to the students, increasing reading time, implementing Family Literacy Nights, conducting targeted professional development, developing teacher autonomy, providing administrative support, and involving community partners.

The principals designated reading as the focus of their school improvement efforts. Getting books into the hands of the students was a major focus for several of the principals. Having access to more books was found to lead to improved reading. Some of the strategies used to accomplished this were through the Family Literacy Nights book giveaways. Community partners provided books for the students, and summer reading programs kept books in the hands of students while school was on break.

Family Literacy Nights were conducted at the schools to get parents involved and help them understand the importance of reading. Parents were taught to choose the appropriate level of books and how to read to and with their children. Parental involvement and support was determined to be an important component of getting students to read.

Administrative support was reported as a strategy to support student learning by helping teachers to develop their craft. Administrative support used observations, instructional walk-throughs, feedback, one-on-one support, meetings, goal setting, and classroom monitoring to improve instruction, thus impacting student learning. Each of the principals felt the administrator must set goals and expectations and then communicate those to the teachers. Another component the administrator felt needed to be in place was a monitoring system that tracked what was working and what needed to be changed. This finding corroborates those of several studies which noted the school administrator impacts the culture, structures, and stability of the school and is the catalyst that sets other supports for school improvement (Cucchiara et al. 2013; Whitaker, 2003).

Professional development was also used as a strategy to support the reading effort. Training consisted of how to teach vocabulary, background knowledge, guided reading, and comprehension skills were some of the professional development sessions offered by the principals and divisions.

Giving teachers the freedom to be creative in their teaching and choosing the appropriate books for their class was another strategy used to address issues in reading. It was reported that reading scores increased when teachers were given the autonomy to choose what was happening in their classroom. This finding supported the work of Cucchiara et al. (2013), who noted the response from the negative responder schools showed teachers felt a lack of control over their practices. Negative responses indicated teachers felt they were forced to use prescribed curricula and were under significant management of their classroom practices. The teachers also reported they were being micromanaged as evidenced by being forced to comply with demands about their classroom displays, instructional routines, management, test preparation, and use of data.

Frequent monitoring of instruction through principal observations and walkthroughs was another strategy reported to aid student learning. If instruction was aligned and rigorous then student learning was noted to increase. When students saw the administration in the classrooms, they felt their learning mattered. The feedback from observations and walkthroughs was reported to be important in helping teachers improve their practice. Having the state contract partner come to the school modeling how to conduct the classrooms observations and how to give feedback was determined to be valuable. This finding corroborates the Cucchiara et al. (2013) study which found that in the positive responder school teachers reported that the

observation process was helpful because it included multiple observations as well as immediate feedback with an emphasis on instructional improvement.

Another strategy used to improve reading was getting the community into the schools and part of the effort. The principals reported they needed people coming into the schools so students would see that those outside of the school cared about their learning as much as those inside the school. This was accomplished by working with community partners and having them focus on reading when they were in the schools. Community partners provided books and came to the schools to read with students.

Students' needs as a learning issue was addressed through using of data, building relationships, and involving the community. Using the data to address students' needs was the focus to understand the students and improve learning. Assessment tools, such as MAP, were used to identify students' weaknesses and assign interventions. The Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) was reportedly used to monitor students' progress. Professional development was given by both the state and division to help teachers learn to dig deeper into the data to help the students.

Building relationships with the students was another strategy that principals felt helped student learning. Showing students that teachers cared was cited as being crucial. The principals felt that when the students knew the teachers cared about them, they would work harder for them. One principal felt the teacher could be a mediocre in their craft, but if he/she really cared about the students and believed in them, the students would succeed. Another principal felt that part of caring for students also meant holding them to high expectations. When teachers hold students to high expectations, most of the time they will meet or exceed those expectations. This finding supports the findings of Peck and Reitzug, (2013), who concluded efforts to change the organizational structure by ignoring students' personal and socioemotional issues and needs, while basing the success of the turnaround efforts on their test scores, underscores the reality that all that really matters is the test score numbers and not actual student learning.

Having the right community partner supports in place to help students was determined to be important to eliminate student learning issues. Tutors and mentors from the community were used in one school to help students with their learning and social issues. When students come to school hungry and can't concentrate or misbehave, providing a support is crucial. Weekend food packs were provided by one principal to help with this issue. Parental engagement was another

community resource principals felt needed to be in place to support student learning. Getting parents into the schools and making them feel a part of what was going on helped build communication and support. When issues arose, the schools had a relationship with the parents that was open to listening and working together to solve issues. Principals planned nonacademic events that would bring parents into the schools in order to help them feel comfortable. Some of those events included father/daughter dances, mother/son dances, Thanksgiving dinners, Easter Bunny visits and egg hunt, and celebrations.

These findings for research sub-question two support the findings of Cucchiara et al. (2013), who found that the positive schools had clarity of focus in their instruction and climate and the leaders put systems into place, such as professional development and evaluation, peer support, and student discipline, to support the teachers' work.

Research sub-question 4. What exterior student-factors were identified as needing improvement in a turnaround school? (e.g. attendance, discipline, support, etc.)

The exterior student-factors needing improvement in turnaround schools were identified as attendance and discipline. Three of the schools felt attendance was not a big issue, but they reported tardiness was a huge issue. One principal struggled with both chronic absenteeism and tardiness. Several of the schools reported that though they did not have big attendance issues, they did have a handful of students who missed a lot of school. Tardiness was a big factor to the principals because students were missing core instruction, usually in reading. One principal noted that if the students were not there they could not be taught. All of the principals voiced concern over students missing instruction due to being out of the classroom.

Discipline was the second student-factor identified as needing improvement in turnaround schools. Three of the principals reported that discipline was an issue but not as much of one as it had been in the past. Two principals felt that discipline issues outside of the school had more impact on them than those inside the school. Due to the high crime in their neighborhoods, students were dealing with a lot of drama outside of the school setting and brought the issues with them. Supports were needed to show students how to cope with outside drama and learn. These findings correspond to the study conducted by Noguera and Wells (2011) who concluded schools are part of a complex community ecology in which the social conditions that arise from poverty, including poor health, high crime rates, substance abuse, etc.,

present formidable challenges that affect child development, learning, and performance in the classroom.

Research sub-question 5. What were the student-support strategies turnaround schools had implemented to address exterior student factors?

The student-support strategies turnaround schools implemented to address exterior student factors were use of attendance policies, attendance strategies, attendance incentives, discipline plans, discipline strategies, and discipline supports. All of the principals reported a decrease in attendance issues.

One principal reported that the VDOE was implementing a new way of tracking attendance. Their division had a meeting to discuss the new reporting indicator and decided to make attendance a division-wide focus. All of the principals reported following their attendance policies which are set by their division. Some felt the policies were the same as those of other school systems across the state. The discussion around the attendance policy was about the punitive aspect of the plan. The consequences for missing certain numbers of days was outlined by two of the principals. One principal felt the consequences were helpful, especially when it reached the Truancy Court level because the judge took truancy very serious. This principal felt that once the parents knew how seriously attendance was taken, the issues declined.

One principal found that using a PBIS team was very helpful in problem-solving the attendance issues. The data gathered through PBIS broke the issues down to the individual students, and the team could plan strategies and interventions to help the students' attendance issues.

Another strategy used to alleviate attendance issues was informing the parents of the policy and why attending school was important. This was done by several means: Family Literacy Nights, newsletters, and parent liaisons. Several of the principals used Family Literacy or Parent Nights to remind parents of the importance of getting their students to school and being on time. Another way the importance of attending school was conveyed was through parent newsletters. One principal reported having a section in the parent newsletter focusing on just attendance to highlight its importance.

Two of the principals reported having a student-support person in place to contact the parents through phone calls and email when an issue arises or to go to the family's home and meet with the parents if the issue continues.

All of the principals reported using a school-wide discipline program to decrease discipline issues. Two used the PBIS system, one used ClassDojo, and the fourth used the Aggressive Discipline Plan (created by the school). The common factor among the discipline plans was they all emphasized positive behaviors as opposed to punitive measures. Each of the principals felt their discipline issues decreased with the use of the school-wide plans. Two of the strategies credited with the success of PBIS were having school-wide expectations and having engaging instruction. The school-wide expectations were part of ClassDojo and the Aggressive Discipline Plan also. Purposefully teaching the expectations to the students and then holding them accountable for those expectations was considered an important part of the program. One principal thought the other important component to PBIS, was helping teachers understand that if they have engaging lessons and activities that helps with discipline issues.

Another strategy used by two of the principals that helped reduce discipline issues was, giving teachers the support needed to handle discipline issues in the classroom. This was accomplished by creating a list of standard behaviors and consequences to help teachers understand when to write a referral, when to contact the parent, when to contact the guidance counselor, and when to send a child to the office. In one of the schools the teachers were required to take several steps before sending the students to the office and miss instruction. The principals felt this helped teachers take ownership of the discipline in their classrooms.

Community supports were also felt to be an important factor in helping with discipline issues. Two of the principals reported using Therapeutic Day Treatment programs to support their students. Two principals had outside groups mentor and tutor their students. One principal felt that the Community Resource Officer was very helpful in making connections and building relationships with the students.

Subsequent themes

Two subsequent themes emerged through the examination of the interview data: Funding and External Lead Partners. As the examination of data developed, it was noted that several of the participants discussed funding and their turnaround efforts. All of the principals either stated or implied that funding was not an issue. Several stated that if they needed something they would contact central office and they would get what they needed. One reported they were able to use federal funds to hire an instructional coach to work with teachers. Another principal

stated they were able to get extra staffing and materials if they identified those as being needed for the school. This was an unexpected finding as a common complaint in education today is there is never enough money to fund what schools need. The principals in this study did not seem to require more programs or staff to accomplish their goals. Rather they used strategies that were within their current practices. When staffing or materials were needed, the principals reported that when they justified their needs, they were provided.

The second subsequent theme that emerged from the data was External Lead Partners (LTP). The External Lead Turnaround Partners (LTP) are services contracted through the use of federal School Improvement Grants. The LTPs are chosen from a VDOE list of approved entities and contracted to work with the Priority School after an interview process is completed. Millions of dollars have been poured into the turnaround effort through School Improvement Grants from the federal government and is one of the mandated strategies (VDOEOSI, 2017). Three of the principals reported not renewing the contracts prior to exiting priority status. They found the services did not meet the school's needs, were not well received by the teachers, and the partners were not willing to cooperate with the principal. One principal stated that that the reason they did not renew the contract was because they had not seen an increase in the scores even though the LTP had been in place for three years. This finding supports two studies that noted there was little evidence that the federal government's models have consistent and dependable results (Favero & Rutherford, 2013; Peck & Reitzug, 2013). Not one of the principals credited the LTP with helping to turn around the school. This finding also relates to Player and Katz (2016) when they voiced their concern that "since the School Improvement Grant (SIG) program received significant financial backing, we still know little about how to effectively turn around low-performing schools and whether planned and structured turnaround is even possible" (p. 676). This was apparent in the second theme uncovered in the interviews.

Conclusion

One of the most significant findings of this study was the depth to which the participants talked about the students and their needs. It was apparent the total focus of each of these principals was the students' needs and their learning. While the first inclination of school leaders in a failing school may be to find the "quick fix" to turn scores around, the principals in this study focused on three fundamental goals: get students to read more books, keep students in the

classroom, and meet students' needs. Teachers, administrators, parents, and community were all mentioned throughout the interviews, but they were mainly seen as tools to accomplish the three main goals.

Contrary to current Virginia practices which mandates use of the turnaround model for all schools who do not meet the state's benchmark. Peck and Reitzug (2013) determined that it was important to recognize that not all low-performing schools are created equally; they have common factors as well as individual histories and sets of circumstances that give each of them a unique set of strengths, liabilities, opportunities, and weaknesses. Accountability measures and strategies set by the federal government under No Child Left Behind (2001) may not be an effective "one size fits all" remedy. This was corroborated by two of the principals who felt the professional development conducted by the state did not meet their needs. Principal 4 stated, "sometimes it [AARPE sessions] went counter to what we really needed because it seemed as though it was more generic and it's not what my staff needed and it's not what I personally needed". Each of these principals found it more effective to have the state contractor come to the schools and be involved in the work going on there. Getting into the classrooms, supporting teachers and instruction was seen as more important than sitting in a professional development session for 8 hours. That is where they saw growth, not from the turnaround model forced on them.

It was not a surprise that the themes of students' needs, attendance, discipline and community do not have references from the literature review on turnaround schools from chapter two. This supports the problem-statement of this study that current research has centered on the elements of school-, parent-, and teacher-level effects on school turnaround, but little had been documented on the student factors that may contribute to the success or failure of the turnaround process. The findings of this study diverge from the findings of Peck and Reitzug (2013) who stated, "The core constituents and members of schools are students, yet there is scant mention of students and their personal needs and rights in the turnaround literature" (p. 25). Another conclusion drawn from their research conveyed that the silence in the literature regarding students' personal socioemotional issues and needs may reflect the reality that in a turnaround school all that really matters is the test score numbers the students must produce. The findings in this study revealed principals who were passionate about students' reading, their physical needs, their support systems, and their learning. Their passion was evident in the tone of the

conversations and the enthusiasm present when discussing students' achievement. The findings of this study added insight into the students and their personal needs in the turnaround literature beyond just the test scores they must produce.

Implications for Practice

In this section, implications for practice were proposed for school leaders, superintendents, school administrators, teachers and community stakeholders, addressing issues that have been presented throughout the development of this research. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends six practices for consideration to address student-related factors that impact academic achievement: a) fostering a love of reading in students, b) monitoring and providing feedback of instruction, c) using data to monitor students' academic and social progress, d) implementing a school-wide discipline plan focused on positive behaviors, e) implementing attendance plans that include incentives for being to school on time, and f) engaging community and parents in the work of the school.

a) Recommendation number one is to have students engaged in books and foster a love of reading. A possible solution to this issue for school leaders is to focus on providing opportunities for students to obtain books at their appropriate reading level to take home. Another possible solution to this issue would be to create time during the school day where students read for enjoyment.
b) Recommendation number two is to create a system of monitoring and providing feedback to teachers in order to provide the best possible instruction for students. One possible solution for this recommendation is for school administrators to schedule observations and instructional walk throughs and the feedback conferences on a regular basis.
c) Recommendation number three is to implement a tiered instructional intervention methodology to monitor student progress, both academic and behavioral. One possible solution for this recommendation is to use Virginia Tiered System of Support (VTSS).
d) Recommendation number four is to have a school-wide discipline plan in place that emphasizes behavioral expectations and focuses on positive behaviors to address discipline issues. A possible solution for this recommendation for school leaders and

administrators is to implement the Positive Behaviors Intervention and Support (PBIS) discipline program.

e) Recommendation number five is implementing attendance plans that include tardiness. One possible solution to this issue is to create incentive programs that encourage perfect attendance in small increments, so students have more opportunities for success.

f) Recommendation number six that could be implemented to help students that are economically disadvantaged is engaging the community and parents in the work of the school. One possible solution for this recommendation would be to hold events that open the doors of the school on a regular basis. Another possible solution for this recommendation is to develop partnerships with community agencies.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. The current study only included elementary schools in Virginia. The sample did not include middle and high schools. A recommendation for future research would be to include all of the schools in Virginia that have exited priority status. This could possibly identify student-related factors that impact student achievement relative to these levels of the education system that may not be evident at the elementary level.
2. The current study only examined the student-related factors that impact academic achievement from the perspective of the principal. A recommendation for future research would be to include representation from all stakeholders involved in the turnaround effort.
3. A recurring theme emerged during the research. Reading issues were addressed by having students read more books. A recommendation for future research would be to examine the correlation between increased book exposure and end-of-year state assessment.
4. External Lead Partners was an unexpected theme that arose from the research. Specifically, this federally supported and encouraged intervention was seen as a hindrance to turnaround reform by the principals interviewed for this study. A recommendation for future research would be to examine the use and effectiveness of

the External Lead Partners from the perspectives of the division and school administrators.

5. The research for this study focused on elementary schools that exited priority status between 2012-2016. Schools that have not exited priority status were not included in the qualitative research. A recommendation for future research would be to duplicate the study with schools that have been labeled as Priority Schools but have not exited priority status and then compare the factors presented to the findings in this study for similarities or differences.

Summary

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to investigate school turnaround reform by identifying student-related factors, from the perspective of successful turnaround leaders that hinder or aid the process. The driving problem for this study was a lack of research on the student factors that may contribute to the success or failure of the turnaround process. One central research question and four sub-questions were developed to guide the study. Data were collected from phone interviews conducted with the selected sample. The findings were presented in Chapter 4 and findings were revealed for each of the research questions. In the discussion and interpretation of findings section, the findings were analyzed using research found in the literature review from Chapter 2. Implications for future practices that would aid school division superintendents, school administrations, teachers, and community leaders were derived from the results and presented in the discussion section. It was determined in this study that student-factors do impact school turnaround reform and there need to be plans and strategies in place to address these student-factors. The information within the implications for future practice and recommendations for future research were meant to be an aid to all stakeholders to make better informed decisions and help guide future research studies that will benefit all schools in turnaround reform.

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APPENDIX A

PROFICIENCY GAP GROUPS–VDOE NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: July 24, 2012
Contact: Charles Pyle, Director of Communications, (804) 371-2420
Julie C. Grimes, Communications Manager, (804) 225-2775

VDOE Announces New Annual Reading & Math Objectives

Goal to Cut Gap between Highest- & Lowest-Performing Schools by Half

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), following a formula approved by the Board of Education and the US Department of Education (USED), has established new annual benchmarks for raising achievement in the commonwealth's lowest-performing schools. The new annual objectives in reading and mathematics replace the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets schools were previously required to meet under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Under the provisions of the two-year flexibility waiver granted by USED on June 29, ambitious but achievable annual measurable objectives (AMOs) have been set for student subgroups, including new "proficiency gap groups" comprising students who historically have had difficulty meeting the commonwealth's achievement standards:

- **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**
- **Proficiency Gap Group 3 – Hispanic students, of one or more races, including those also counted in Proficiency Gap Group 1**

The benchmarks are set with the goal of reducing by half proficiency gaps in reading and mathematics between schools performing at the 20th and 90th percentiles — overall and for each subgroup and proficiency gap group – over six years.

"Accomplishing this goal will make a difference in the lives of thousands of Virginia students in chronically underperforming schools," Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright said.

"The commonwealth and school divisions are now able to focus federal resources on the schools most in need of reform while maintaining accountability for raising achievement in all schools through Virginia's accreditation standards," Board of Education President David M. Foster said.

The AMOs were determined using a formula based on the federal law and student-achievement data from the state's assessment program. Annual reading benchmarks for the first year of flexibility are based on achievement on 2010-2011 state assessments and mathematics benchmarks are based on achievement during 2011-2012.

Reading Annual Measurable Objectives

Accountability Year	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**	**2017-2018**
Assessment Year	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**	**2017-2018**
All students	85	Reading AMOs for accountability years 2013-2014 through 2017-2018 will be calculated based on achievement on revised Reading SOL test administered during 2012-2013.				
Proficiency Gap Group 1	76					
Proficiency Gap Group 2 (Black Students)	76					
Proficiency Gap Group 3 (Hispanic Students)	80					
Students with Disabilities	59					
ELL Students	76					
Economically Disadvantaged Students	76					
Asian Students	92					
White Students	90					

Mathematics Annual Measurable Objectives

Accountability Year	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**	**2017-2018**
Assessment Year	**2012-2013**	**2013-2014**	**2014-2015**	**2015-2016**	**2016-2017**	**2017-2018**
All students	61	64	66	68	70	73
Proficiency Gap Group 1	47	49	52	54	56	58
Proficiency Gap Group 2 (Black Students)	45	48	50	52	54	57
Proficiency Gap Group 3 (Hispanic Students)	52	55	57	60	62	65
Students with Disabilities	33	36	39	42	45	49
ELL Students	39	42	45	48	51	54
Economically Disadvantaged Students	47	50	52	54	56	59
Asian Students	62	83	85	86	88	89
White Students	68	70	72	74	76	78

"The mathematics AMOs are based on student achievement on the rigorous new Standards of Learning (SOL) tests introduced last year and are designed for the specific purpose of cutting in half the gap between Virginia's lowest- and highest-performing schools," Wright said. "These new annual objectives should not be compared with last year's AYP benchmarks."

Reading benchmarks will be reset next year based on the performance of students during 2012-2013 on new reading SOL tests reflecting the increased rigor of the 2010 English standards.

Under the flexibility granted last month, Virginia schools and school divisions will no longer receive annual AYP ratings. However, information on schools and school divisions meeting and not meeting the new, annual federal benchmarks will be reported in early September on the VDOE website.

VDOE also will report on low-performing schools identified as "priority" and "focus" schools. Priority and focus schools are subject to state-approved and monitored school-improvement interventions. Priority and focus schools, however, are not subject to previous federal "improvement" sanctions, such as having to provide public school choice or private tutoring.

Five percent of Virginia's Title I schools (36) will be identified as priority schools based on overall reading and mathematics achievement as well as graduation rates for high schools.

Priority schools must engage a state-approved turnaround partner to help implement a school-improvement model meeting state and federal requirements.

Ten percent of Virginia's Title I schools (72) will be designated as focus schools based on reading and mathematics achievement of students in the three proficiency gap groups. Focus schools must employ a state-approved coach to help the division develop, implement and monitor intervention strategies to improve the performance of students at risk of not meeting achievement standards or dropping out of school.

Many of the commonwealth's underperforming schools are already subject to these and similar interventions as a consequence of state accountability provisions and requirements for schools receiving federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds.

All public schools — including schools that do not receive Title I funds under the federal education law — must develop and implement improvement plans to raise the achievement of student subgroups not meeting the annual benchmarks.

School divisions also are expected to meet the new annual measurable objectives in reading and mathematics for all student subgroups and proficiency gap groups.

Virginia Department of Education. (2012). *VDOE announces new annual reading & math objectives* [News release]. Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/news/news_releases/2012/jul24.shtml

APPENDIX B

PRIORITY SCHOOL CHART

School Division	School	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Elementary Schools					
Accomack County	Metompkin Elementary			x	x
Albemarle County	Benjamin F. Yancey Elementary			x	x
Alexandria City	Jefferson-Houston Elementary	x	x	x	x
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Elementary		x	x	x
Buckingham County	Buckingham County Primary		x	x	x
Danville City	Woodberry Hills Elementary				x
Franklin City	S.P. Morgan Elementary		x	x	x
Grayson County	Fries School	x	/	/	/
Halifax County	Sinai Elementary				X
Hampton City	Jane H Bryan Elementary	x	x	x	/
Hampton City	AWE Bassett Elementary				X
Lynchburg City	Dearington Elementary			x	X
Lynchburg City	Perrymont Elementary			x	X
Martinsville City	Albert Harris Elementary		x	x	X
Newport News	Horace H Epes Elementary			x	X
Newport News	Newsome Park Elementary	x	x	x	X
Newport News	Sedgefield Elementary	x	x	x	X
Newport News	Willis A. Jenkins Elementary		x	x	X
Norfolk City	Lindenwood Elementary	x	x	x	/
Norfolk City	Tidewater Park Elementary	x	x	/	/
Norfolk City	Campostella Elementary		x	x	X
Norfolk City	Jacox Elementary		x	x	X
Norfolk City	P.B. Young Sr, Elementary		x	/	/
Norfolk City	Chesterfield Academy Elementary			x	X
Norfolk City	James Monroe Elementary			x	X
Northampton	Kiptopeke Elementary	x	x	/	/
Petersburg City	A.P. Hill Elementary	x	x	/	/
Petersburg City	J.E.B. Stuart Elementary	x	x	/	/
Prince William County	Belmont Elementary				X
Richmond City	Blackwell Elementary		x	x	x
Richmond City	Ginter Park Elementary		x	x	x
Richmond City	Oak Grove.Bellemeade Elem.		x	x	x
Richmond City	G.H. Reid Elementary			x	x
Richmond City	Woodville Elementary			x	x
Richmond City	Swansboro Elementary			/	x
Roanoke City	Lincoln Terrace Elementary	x	x	/	/

(continued)

School Chart (*cont.*)

School Division	School	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Elementary Schools					
Roanoke City	Westside Elementary	x	/	/	/
Sussex County	Ellen W. Chambliss Elementary	x	/	/	/
Brunswick County	James S. Russell Middle	x	/	/	/
Danville City	JM Langston Focus	x	/	x	/
Franklin City	Joseph P King Middle	x	x	x	/
Henrico County	L. Douglas Wilder Middle		x	x	x
Norfolk City	Lake Taylor Middle	x	x	x	/
Norfolk City	William H Ruffner Middle	x	/	/	/
Petersburg City	Peabody Middle	x	/	x	X
Petersburg City	Vernon Johns Junior High	x	/	/	X
Norfolk City	Lafayette-Winona Middle		x	/	/
Richmond City	Elkhardt Middle	x	x	x	/
Richmond City	Fred D. Thompson Middle	x	x	x	/
Richmond City	Henderson Middle	x	x	x	X
Richmond City	Martins Luther King Jr. Middle	x	x	x	x
Richmond City	Thomas C Boushall Middle	x	x	/	/
Richmond City	Binford Middle		x	x	x
Sussex County	Sussex Central Middle	x	/	/	/
High Schools					
Alexadria City	T.C. Williams High	x	/	/	/
Colonial Bech	Colonial Beach High	x		/	/
Northampton	Northampton High	x	x	/	/
Hopewell City	Hopewell High	x	x	/	/
King/Queen County	Central High	x	/	/	/
Prince Edward County	Prince Edward County High	x	/	/	/
Richmond City	Armstrong High	x	x	/	/
Richmond City	John Marshall High	x	x	x	X
Richmond City	Richmond Alternative	x	x	x	x
Roanoke City	William Fleming High	x	x	/	/

KEY:
X = Year school labeled Priority Status
/ = Year exited Priority Status

Virginia Department of Education Office of School Improvement. (2014). *2014-2015 accreditation ratings reflect higher standards for students and schools.* Retrieved from http://doe.virginia.gov/news_releases/2014/09_sep16.shtml

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APPENDIX C

VDOE CONTRACTED LEAD TURNAROUND PARTNERS

Schools designated as "Priority" schools, in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must engage state-approved turnaround partners to help design and implement school-reform models meeting state and federal requirements.

VDOE issued RFP# DOE-LASTP-2013-04 for Lead Turnaround Partners to develop and implement an academic program for one or more of the core discipline areas of math, science, history/social science and language arts using VDOE approved approaches to increase student achievement in persistently low-achieving schools. The contracts listed have been renewed through October 2017.

Company	Management Services
Innovative Educational Programs, LLC.	Elementary Schools Only
Newton Alliance, LLC.	Elementary, Middle, High School
Public Counseling Group, Inc.	Elementary, Middle, High School
American Institute for Research	Elementary, Middle, High School
Cambridge Education, LLC	Elementary, Middle, High School
NCS Pearson, Inc.	Elementary, Middle, High School
Community Training and Assistance Center	Elementary, Middle, High School

Virginia Department of Education Office of School Finance. (2013). *Low achieving schools' turnaround partners.* Retrieved from http://www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/procurement/low_achieving_school/index.shtml

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLE OF LEAD TURNAROUND PARTNER CONTRACTED PRICING

Example of contracted pricing for 40 hours per week on-site services

Base Unit price per student per school year	Elementary School high grade 5	Middle School high grade 8	High School hide grade 12
Up to 250 students	$2,548 per student per school year	$2,548 per student per school year	$2,548 per student per school year
251 – 500 students	$2,002 per student per school year	$2,002 per student per school year	$2,002 per student per school year
501 – 750 students	$1,011 per student per school year	$1,011 per student per school year	$1,011 per student per school year
751 – 1000 students	$669 per student per school year	$669 per student per school year	$669 per student per school year
1000 + students	$669 per student per school year	$669 per student per school year	$669 per student per school year

Example: One elementary school contracting with Cambridge Education, LLC with **436 students** would pay **$872,872.00** from their Federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) for **1 year of service.**

Virginia Department of Education. (2013). *Commonwealth of Virginia standard contract.* Retrieved from www.doe.virginia.gov/school_finance/ procurement/low_achieving_school/index.shtml

APPENDIX E

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OFFICE OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ABOUT PRIORITY SCHOOLS [EXCERPT]

What is the process for compensating the VDOE Contractor for priority schools?

A: Each LEA with priority schools will be assigned a VDOE contractor to facilitate strategies for supporting improvement efforts and building local capacity for improvement. LEA costs for the VDOE contractor assigned to the priority school may be supported with school improvement grant funding the school receives (1003(a) or 1003(g)), other appropriate federal funds and/or local funds. The division contact person will use the LEA's procedure to secure an approved purchase order for *University Instructors, Inc*. based on the following requirements:

- One priority school - $20,000
- Two priority schools - $30,000
- Three priority schools - $40,000
- Four or more priority schools - $50,000

Q: ***What is the role of a VDOE contractor assigned to priority schools?***

A: VDOE contractors assigned to priority schools are expected to engage in activities including, but not limited to:

- Attending school improvement team monthly meetings to:
  - ensure agendas and minutes in Indistar® evidence the school's turnaround initiatives through <u>specific actions</u> and <u>next steps;</u>
  - support the development of indicator tasks using the research base in Wise Ways® as aligned to the school's needs and initiatives;
- Attending division improvement team quarterly meetings with the school principal;
- Reviewing division, LTP and school support for transformation efforts. This may include observing classroom instruction, interventions or professional development with members of the division leadership team and/or the building principal;
- Reviewing required OSI reports including: Priority School Leading Indicator Annual Report, Priority School Lagging Indicator Annual Report, Priority School Interventions Annual Report, and Priority School Quarterly Data Analysis Report prior to submission to OSI;
- Assisting the school with analyzing student performance data and using the information to make instructional decisions; and
- Sharing information gleaned from the division leadership support team (DLST) meetings conducted at The College of William and Mary.

Virginia Department of Education Office of School Improvement. (2017). *Frequently asked questions (FAQ) about priority schools.* Retrieved from http://doe.virginia.gov/priority_schools_faq/index.shtml

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FORM

Interview Protocol		
Date:		
Time:		
Interviewer:		
Interviewee:		
Informed consent form on signed and on file: _____yes _____no		
Interview Questions		
Research Question	**Central Interview Question**	**Possible Sub-question Probes- used to narrow the focus**
How do student-related factors impact a school's ability to increase academic achievement within the turnaround process?	Discuss the factors you feel most impacted your school's ability to exit priority status within the three-year time period?	1. What student learning issues were identified as needing improvement? What evidence/data was used to identify these issues?
		2. What were some of the challenges to achieving student learning and achievement goals your school encountered?
		3. What exterior student-factors were identified as needing improvement at your school? (e.g. attendance, discipline, support, etc.)
		4. What student-support systems were in place or did your school implement to address exterior student-factors?
		5. What types of support did you receive from the division to aid in your turnaround effort? (e.g. personnel, fiscal, materials, etc.)
		6. How did the support allocated by the division address the student-factors and challenges in your school? What evidence/data was used by the division to determine the school's needs?
Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in this study. I will be contacting you shortly to provide you a copy of the transcription of the interview. Thank you again.		
Interviewee questions or concerns:		

*****Adapted from Creswell's Interview Protocol

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method s approaches.* Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

APPENDIX G

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

VirginiaTech

Office of Research Compliance
Institutional 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: May 15, 2017

TO: M. David Alexander, Tamra Joan Vaughan

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)

PROTOCOL TITLE: School Improvement and Reform: A Study of Student-Related Factors in Priority School Turnaround Efforts

IRB NUMBER: **17-438**

Effective May 15, 2017, the Virginia Tech Institution Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, 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:	**Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7**
Protocol Approval Date:	**May 15, 2017**
Protocol Expiration Date:	**May 14, 2018**
Continuing Review Due Date*:	**April 30, 2018**

*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.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

APPENDIX H

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENT REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

Dear Superintendent _____,

My name is Tamra Vaughan and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership and Policies Studies program at Virginia Tech. I am working under the direction of Dr. David Alexander. I have proposed a research study that will be my doctoral dissertation. This letter is to provide an overview of the study and request permission to conduct the research through an interview with the principal and/or school leaders at _____.

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine factors that impact schools in turnaround reform. There have been several studies conducted on turnaround reform that have examined the impact of school culture, leadership, and teachers. Research on students in turnaround reform has been limited to the scores they produce on end-of-year assessments. This proposed study will document, from school leaders' perspectives, the student-factors he/she feels most impacted the school's ability to turnaround academic achievement.

I will be interviewing school leaders from across the Commonwealth of Virginia who have successfully exited priority status. With your permission, I would like to interview _____the school leader and/or designees of _____. Data gathered from the interviews will be analyzed for commonalities, differences, and patterns. Information collected in this study may be beneficial to other educators who are involved in school improvement.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed study. I am available to answer any questions or address any concerns you have regarding the study. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Tamra Vaughan
Doctoral Candidate
tamra14@vt.edu
276-732-1429

APPENDIX I

LETTER OF SUPPORT FROM DR. STEVEN STAPLES, VDOE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Steven R. Staples, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Public Instruction

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2120
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Office: (804) 225-2023
Fax: (804) 371-2099

May 15, 2017

Dear Superintendent:

I am pleased to write in support of the research study proposed by Tamra Vaughan (see letter attached). Her review of turnaround reform schools is of great interest to our mission at the Virginia Department of Education, and she has agreed to share her results with us to better inform that work.

While voluntary, I encourage you to consider participating in this important study. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Steven R. Staples

SRS/jm Attachment

APPENDIX J

STUDY PARTICIPANT THANK-YOU NOTE AND INTERVIEW CONFIRMATION

Dear _____,

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. The interview will be held on _____ at _____. The interview will be conducted by telephone, using phone number _____. If you would like to be contacted at a different number, please let me know by email.

I look forward to talking to you about your school's successes in the turnaround process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the email of phone number attached.

Sincerely,

Tamra Vaughan, Doctoral Candidate
tamra14@vt.edu
276-732-1429

APPENDIX K

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH PROJECTS INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
Informed Consent for Participants
in Research Projects Involving Human Subjects

Title of Project: School Improvement and Reform: A Study of Student-Related Factors in Priority School Turnaround Efforts

Investigator(s):
Dr. D. Alexander **mdavid@vt.edu**

Tamra Vaughan **tamra14@vt.edu** **276-732-1429**

I. Purpose of this Research Project

School turnaround, as presented under No Child Left Behind, focuses on mandating school reform through the turnaround process to raise student achievement in the United States. The goal to ensure that all students receive the level of education necessary to succeed is a worthy endeavor. Focusing on the root causes for low performance has been identified as an area in need of further investigation for learning more about successful/unsuccessful school turnaround. Schools are not all equal in their organizational performance, learning capacity, function, stability, and external factors. The pressure to have low-performing schools use the same turnaround strategies and practices has been alleged to hinder turnaround success.

Missing from the turnaround literature was research on students and the factors they face in their everyday lives. Whether self-generated or a product of their circumstances, these factors may affect the student's achievement capabilities. Turnaround reform would benefit from an examination of student-related factors that may facilitate or impede learning.

A study of successful turnaround organizations focusing on student-related factors would be beneficial in determining strategies to aid other schools in their reform process and decision-making. Examination of how students' personal needs and issues contribute to the organization's ability to turn around low performance may inform administrators of strategies to overcome barriers.

The selected subgroup for this study will be derived from within the population of Virginia Title I Priority Schools identified between 2012 and 2016 which have participated in the turnaround process for two or more years. The selected subgroup of the population identified for this descriptive qualitative study will consist of Virginia Title I elementary schools that have successfully exited priority status. Participants in the

study will include school leaders and/or designees as identified by the superintendents of the respective school divisions represented in the selected subgroup. The anticipated number of participants is up to 50.

Results from this research will be used in a dissertation to fulfill the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies.

II. Procedures

Should you agree to participate in this project, you will be asked to participate in a 60-90-minute audio-recorded interview. Upon receiving permission to recruit from your superintendent, you will be contacted by phone to schedule the interview which will take place either through a phone call or face-to-face. You will receive a copy of the Consent-to-Participate form and the interview questions electronically prior to the interview for review. The Consent-to-Participate form will be reviewed with you verbally and you may choose to verbally consent or provide a signature of consent before the interview takes place. The interview will be conducted by Tamra Vaughan, a researcher from Virginia Polytechnic and State University.

With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded with the intent to capture your answers as accurately as possible. Notes will also be taken by the researcher during the interview. The audio of the interview will be transcribed by a contracted transcriptionist.

Once the audio recording has been transcribed, you will receive a copy of the transcription to review and make corrections or additions. After all corrections or additions are completed you are requested to send the signed approval form back in a self-addressed, stamped envelope provided by the researcher. A copy of the approval form will be returned to you for your records.
If the transcription approval form is not returned within two weeks it will be assumed there are no corrections and/or additions and the data obtained from the interview will be included in the analysis.

III. Risks

The decision to participate or not in this study will not affect your employment status with your school or school division.

Should you agree to participate in this project the risk you can anticipate will be the time needed to participate in the interview process. The time allotment anticipated for the scheduled interview will be from 60 to 90 minutes. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience and preference of face-to-face or by phone.

IV. Benefits

Should you agree to participate in this project the benefits will be your input adding to the body of information on turnaround reform efforts. Effective strategies and barriers identified in this research may be used by educational leaders to aid in their reform efforts.

No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

Should you agree to participate in this project, you will not be identified by name in any reports using information obtained from the interview. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutes.

Confidentiality of the data collected will be maintained by being handled only by the researcher and stored securely on a password protected personal computer. A confidentiality form will be obtained from the contracted transcriptionist for further protection.

All data collected will be purged according to standard data use policy upon completion of the study.

At no time will the researchers release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

VI. Compensation

Should you agree to participate in this study, your participation in this project will be of a voluntary nature.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject.

Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will be compensated for the portion of the project completed in accordance with the Compensation section of this document.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date_____
Subject signature

_____
Subject printed name

APPENDIX L

INTERVIEWEE PERMISSION FORM

Enclosed you will find a copy of the transcription of our interview conducted on _____. Please read the transcript and choose one of the options below. After you have completed this form, please sign and return in the self-addressed envelope provided. Thank you Tamra Vaughan	
Option 1:	I have read the transcription of our interview and agree that it can be used in its current state.
Option 2:	I have read the transcription of our interview and would like the following additions or corrections be made before moving forward. Corrections or additions:
Signature:	
Date:	

APPENDIX M

DATA ACCOUNTING LOG

	Principal A	**Principal B**	**Principal C**	**Principal D**	**Principal E**	**Principal F**	**Principal G**
Contact Superintendent	7-10-17-mail	7-10-17-mail	7-10-17-mail	7-10-17-mail	7-10-17-mail 8-24-17-new contact-K 9-14-17-3rd new-B 9-21-17-3rd contact	7-10-17-mail 9-18-17-contact-B-permission ok	7-10-17-mail 8-24-17-mail
Contacts Principal	8-1-17-mail 8-8-17-phone	8-1-17-mail 8-8-17-phone 8-19-17-email	8-1-17-mail 8-8-17-phone 8-16-17-email 8-23-17-request to reschedule	8-8-17-mail 8-16-17-email 8-29-17-email No Response	9-25-17-email 9-26-17-email	9-18-17-phone	
Informed Consent	8-10-17-verbal	8-22-17-verbal			9-29-17-verbal	9-25-17-verbal Signed recvd 10-10-17	
Interview Date	8-10-17	8-22-17	8-23-17 Cancelled by principal		9-28-17	9-25-17	
Interview Time	8:00 am	9:00 am			12:00 pm	8:45 am	
Interview mode	Phone	Phone			Phone	Phone	
Permission to audiotape	Verbal given 8-10-17	Verbal given 8-22-17			Verbal given 9-28-17	Verbal given 9-25-17	
Transcript sent to Interviewee	9-19-17	9-19-17			10-2-17	10-2-17	

*****Adapted from Data Accounting Log Sample.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M. & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

APPENDIX N

CODING MATRIX- EXAMPLE

Coding- Interviews Principals of Priority Schools Tamra Vaughan			
The colors represent meta-code and sub-code groupings: Orange- COM- Community Green-STU- Students Red- DIS-discipline Blue Green- ATT-Attendance Brown- READ-Reading Pink- ADM-Administration Yellow Green- PD-Professional Development Purple- TCH-Teacher Navy Blue- VTSS- Virginia Tiered System of Support Black- FUND-Funding Lavender-AFT-After-School Program			
Principal	**Meta-codes**	**Sub-codes**	**Reflective Notes**
Principal 1	VTSS- Virginia Tiered System of Support	VS- VTSS system	-understand -tiers - interventions -Tier 2 and 3
		VT- VTSS Training	-eye opener -hard work -analyze data -universal screener -mult. Data points -interventions
		VBP- VTSS Best Practices	-research based interventions -Reading
	Read- Reading	RT- Reading Target Area	-not met state benchmark
		RL- Book Level	-par choose correct -not frustrate -home usually too low -hinders compreh.
		RS- Reading Strategies	-5 fingers ->3 words missed-too hard
		RI- Reading Improvement	-library involved -exposed to more books
	PD- professional development	PDSD- Professional Development -State Dept.	-several -school improvement -align Curriculum and assmnt -assmnt align w/instruction

APPENDIX O

CODING CONSISTENCY CHECK EXAMPLE

12/19 **Transcribe Me!** Dr Lisa Newell 9-26-17

COM community partners, and we had a lc of parents to [inaudible] com- parents involved
more involved in school. And I will te you, it was a struggle at
first. It wasn't [inaudible] [laughter]. | naudible] with
ADM administration, and then breaking do vn some things that were ADM- commitment / took time
in place that were not conducive to t e school and building up
TCH what was. But that took a little time. he teachers were TCH- supportive - took time
supportive as well, but it did take tim . And then the academic
piece, that took lots of time meaning hat we had to start off
PD with training. But my second year tha I was there is when we PD- lots of training voice UBD lesson plans
really did a lot of training. And they h d somebody come in for a
year just to work on understanding b design, which is
TCH backwards planning, and work with u , our teachers, trying to get TCH- attention to lesson plans
a different voice. But I'll tell you that he last thing is expectation.
STU Knowing what's right, doing right by s udents, and knowing that STU- Do what is right, regardless
what you're doing is the right thing a d not backing down no
matter how much grief you get. Doin that is important. And not
TCH backing down because teachers or pe ople complain. Because it's TCH- of complaints ignore complaints
not always teachers that complain. If ou don't hold the
expectations, and if you don't do righ by students, this class is
going to be very difficult because it w l always be what someone
STU else wants. And it's not about anyone else but students. So my stu- It is all about students. give them every opportunity
take on it is that they're definitely ou future. Doctors, lawyers,
engineers, teachers - they're the futu e, and we have to provide
them with the best, and we have to g ve them every opportunity
to be successful. [inaudible] learn, an we have to provide every
ADM opportunity for them to do that. So t at was my first year. What ADM- challenged and proud
was it was a challenge, but I'm very p oud of what we put in
place. And I understand that some of hose things are still in
COM place, which is a good thing. And I thi k the community would COM - liked participation
have liked to get where this is staying that they could participate
in with their child.

RD Excellent. I like that attitude. Good jo . Whoops, sorry. What RD- students choose books!
issues did you think- I know you said hat the reading and the
choosing of the books and the family participation- but did you
and your team feel that anything else impeded student learning?

I would say that- I'm going to be very honest, okay? What
impedes student learning is, I would say, peoples' lack of ability
STU to [grasp?]. So everyone has a vision. Everyone thinks they know STU- Ask them their opinion. engage thier interest and opinion
what to do and what's right for stude ts, and no one ever asks
the students anything. And that's imp ortant. You have to ask the
students, "What do you like? What d n't you like?" Learning
should be in the hands of the student And you will find that
people feel like it should be done this way. From- and I am
talking lots of people- I'm speaking fr m the central office
perspective all the way down. Everyo e feels that it should be
taught a certain way, but no one eve asks the students. So when
you start to do things like that and yo start to change, it's very

TranscribeMe 4