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Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study

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TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO HIGH-STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY IN TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

DISSERTATION

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by

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ABSTRACT

TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO HIGH-STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY

IN TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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Barry University, 2009

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the responses of third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to high-stakes accountability policy in Florida's Title I elementary schools. Principles of Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory were used to guide the study. Teachers' context and capability beliefs regarding external and personal factors that may have contributed to their ability to comply with high-stakes accountability policy were examined, as well as the means by which they believed they were capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance**.** Using a triangulation mixed methods design, an on-line survey consisting of open- and closed-ended items was used with a sample of 68 respondents in Broward and Palm Beach County.

A significant difference existed in the percentages of third grade teachers exhibiting negative, neutral-variable, or positive context beliefs and weak, moderate-variable, or strong capability beliefs. However, teachers' context and capability beliefs

did not significantly differ according to highest level of educational degree held or years of full-time teaching experience. Also, the percentages of teachers exhibiting each level of context and capability beliefs did not significantly differ according to either of these two variables.

Open-ended survey responses elucidated teachers' needs for additional instructional resources and professional development topics that they believed could contribute to their improved instruction of the Florida Sunshine State Standards. Qualitative data also elucidated teachers' perceptions regarding their own instructional abilities, as well as their beliefs regarding the need for contingency-based accountability, accountability for student growth, and instructional accountability.

Overall findings imply that the respondents believed they were competent individuals who had the skills needed to function effectively in implementing instruction of the Standards. However, their lack of confidence in their Title I school contexts to facilitate their goal attainment hindered them from effectively carrying out instruction, and, subsequently, achievement of Florida's *A+* policy measures. Survey data inform the provision of professional development and instructional resources in Title I, third grade classrooms, and emphasize the need for policymakers to include teachers as stakeholders that have a voice in improving the *A+ Plan* so that they can assume greater responsibility for the policy.

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INTRODUCTION

The trend toward high-stakes accountability has increased nationwide, whereby high-stakes assessment continues to be used to hold schools accountable for learning standards through rewards and sanctions (Stone & Lane, 2003). Great pressure is placed upon teachers to generate high test scores on standardized tests, often leading them to spend weeks teaching to the test and placing the regular curriculum on hold (Tanner, 2000). Moreover, educators teaching in Title I-funded schools face additional pressures of preparing "economically and educationally disadvantaged children" (Jennings, 2000, p. 516) in becoming proficient with grade level standards and tested content.

Teaching in the dual context of a school district that emphasizes high-stakes assessment, as well as a school whose demographic population may lack fundamental literacy and mathematics skills, potentially poses a significant concern for educators (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Diamond & Spillane, 2004). Research has already established that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds have less access to a variety of cognitively stimulating resources and enter school with fewer language and literacy experiences in comparison to their middle class and affluent peers (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Bradley, Corwyn, Burchinal, McAdoo, & García Coll, 2001). Furthermore, a negative correlation has been shown to exist between socioeconomic status (SES) and student achievement on standardized tests (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002; Holman, 1995; Smith, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1997; Watkins, 2004). These factors can contribute to teachers' existing pressures to demonstrate gains in student achievement as determined by high-stakes tests (Valli, Croninger, & Walters, 2007); however, researchers have

continuously failed to examine Title I teachers' responses to accountability. Hence, the present study expanded prior research by investigating the responses of third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to high-stakes accountability policy in Florida's Title I schools.

Background of the Problem

Eliciting the beliefs of Title I teachers responsible for aligning instructional practice with Florida's accountability policy has yet to be addressed in previous research studies. Labeled as "the nation's most aggressive test-based accountability measure" (Greene, Winters, & Forster, 2004, p. 1124), the *A+ Plan for Education* (1008.34, F.S.) was based on the principle that all students should gain at least one year's worth of knowledge in one year's length of time. The fundamental premise at the core of the policy is that every child can learn and no child should be left behind. In turn, the original plan was passed in 1999 and called for increased accountability through school grades (ratings from an A to an F) based on the annual measurement of students' learning on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

Three years later, the school grading system was adjusted to incorporate an annual learning gains component so that school grades reflected student performance and student learning gains equally (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). Thereafter, Florida's public elementary, middle, and high schools have been assigned a letter grade based on the following six components: the percentage of students meeting high standards in reading, writing, and mathematics; the percentage of students making reading and mathematics learning gains; and the percentage of the lowest 25% of students who make reading learning gains (Florida Department of Education, 2007d). [For those schools

with fewer than 30 students in the lowest 25%, the 30 lowest performing students are substituted.]

In 2003, Florida's State Board of Education raised the bar for student and school performance by adding three more components to Florida's school grading system. Science was added as a seventh component, measuring the percentage of students meeting high standards, effective with the 2006-2007 school year. Also, the percentage of the lowest 25% of students who make mathematics learning gains was added as an eighth component. Finally, high schools with at least 50% of 11th- and 12th-grade students who retook the Grade 10 FCAT and met graduation requirements were now eligible to receive additional school grade bonus points (Florida Department of Education, 2007a; 2007d).

Accountability in Grade Three

In particular, third graders are distinct from students in other elementary grades in Florida since they must earn a Level 2 or above (on a scale of one to five) on the FCAT Reading in order to be promoted. Although various good cause exemptions are available for students scoring at a Level 1, previous research has documented that elementary teachers in Florida consider student retention to be a negative outcome of the state's accountability policy (Shaver, Cuevas, Lee, & Avalos, 2007). Data show that 15% of 211,000 third graders throughout Florida were retained for failing the FCAT Reading in 2003 alone (McEachin, 2005). Consequently, Florida's teachers have criticized the sole use of FCAT scores to measure students' ability to learn (Jones & Egley, 2004; Shaver et al.).

Third Grade FCAT

The third grade FCAT consists of two sections: FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics. The FCAT Reading assesses students' knowledge of the third grade benchmarks located in the Reading/Language Arts Sunshine State Standards (SSS) (Florida Department of Education, 1996a). The test consists of approximately 50-55 multiple choice test items that assess four content clusters: words and phrases in context; main idea, plot, and purpose; comparisons and cause and effect; and reference and research. Students are presented with approximately 6 to 8 informational and literary passages (containing an average of 350 words per passage), as well as 6 to 11 multiple-choice items per passage (Florida Department of Education, 2005a; 2008).

In addition, the FCAT Mathematics assesses third grade benchmarks located in the Mathematics SSS (Florida Department of Education, 1996b). The test consists of approximately 45-50 multiple choice test items that assess students' knowledge of five strands: number sense, concepts, and operations; measurement; geometry and spatial sense; algebraic thinking; and data analysis and probability. Total time allowed for the FCAT Mathematics and Reading is 120 minutes per test (divided into two testing sessions) (Florida Department of Education, 2008).

Third grade students are assigned one of five Achievement Level Classifications based on their reading and mathematics scale scores (ranging from 100 to 500). Achievement Levels range from Level 1 (lowest) to Level 5 (highest). Students must earn a Level 3 or higher on the FCAT Reading and Mathematics to be considered on grade level (Florida Department of Education, 2008). In particular, third graders must earn an FCAT Reading score of Level 2 or higher in order to be promoted to the fourth

grade. However, six good cause exemptions are available for students scoring a Level 1, including:

- limited English proficient (LEP) students with fewer than two years in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program;
- students with disabilities whose individual educational plan (IEP) indicates that participation in the FCAT is inappropriate;
- students with disabilities who participate in the FCAT, but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading after more than two years of intensive remediation and were previously retained in kindergarten, first, second, or third grade;
- students who demonstrate a deficiency in reading after two or more years of intensive remediation and were previously retained in kindergarten, first, second, or third grade for a total of two years;
- students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on the state's alternate assessment (*SAT 10*) or score at the 51st percentile or higher on the norm-referenced test (NRT);
- students who demonstrate proficiency of the SSS Language Arts Benchmarks through a student portfolio (Florida Department of Education, 2007a).

Comparable clauses related to third grade students who score a Level 1 on the FCAT Mathematics do not currently exist.

In addition to assigned Achievement Levels, third grade students who have two years of FCAT data (i.e., retained third graders) also receive two developmental scale scores (DSS), or FCAT scores, for the FCAT Reading and FCAT Mathematics. Students' reading and mathematics scale scores are converted into DSS, represented on a

developmental scale ranging from 0 to 3000 (across grades 3 through 10). The scale is continuous and allows student progress to be tracked annually in each tested grade level (Florida Department of Education, 2005a).

Statement of the Problem

Few studies have focused on the perspectives of classroom teachers regarding Florida's accountability system. Previous surveys have revealed that teachers experience intense pressure to cover the curriculum quickly prior to the test (Jones & Egley, 2004), and feel that they have little time to teach anything that will not be assessed (Abrams, 2004). Although Florida's teachers have indicated that they are not against accountability, they do not seem to favor the means by which they are being held accountable (Jones & Egley, 2004). Nevertheless, researchers have yet to elicit Title I teachers' responses regarding the specific ways by which they believe they are capable of being held accountable for their students' high-stakes test performance. Studies of high-stakes accountability in Florida need to be extended to include Title I teachers' beliefs regarding external factors that may potentially contribute to their ability to be held professionally accountable to policy, as well as their beliefs regarding their personal ability to be held accountable. As a result, examining Title I teachers' beliefs may elucidate contextual and personal factors that may stimulate or hinder teachers from meeting accountability policy measures.

Statement of Purpose

This mixed methods study investigated the responses of third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to high-stakes accountability policy in Florida's Title I schools. A triangulation mixed methods design allowed the researcher to collect

complementary data on the same topic (Green, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989; Johnson & Turner, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory (MST) was used to guide this study. MST predicts that effective person-in-context functioning depends upon an individual's context beliefs (anticipatory evaluations about whether one's environment - including external factors or people - supports effective functioning) and capability beliefs (anticipatory evaluations about whether one possesses the personal skills necessary for effective functioning). An on-line survey was used to elicit third grade teachers' context and capability beliefs regarding external factors (professional development and instructional resources) and personal factors (instructional ability) that may have potentially contributed to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy within contexts of Title I schools.

Concurrent with this data collection, a few open-ended (qualitative) survey questions were included in the same study to explore the teachers' perspectives regarding the means by which they believed they were capable of being held accountable for their students' high-stakes test performance. The reason for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data was to bring together the strengths of both forms of research: quantitative methods sought out generalizable data on teachers' beliefs, whereas qualitative methods elicited teachers' perceptions of accountability that otherwise could not have been meaningfully expressed quantitatively (Berg, 2007). In turn, qualitative data were used to expand on quantitative results.

Research Hypotheses and Questions

Quantitative

1. Third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have an

undergraduate degree will possess more positive context beliefs regarding access to professional development that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have a graduate degree.

2. Experienced third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with five or more years of teaching experience will possess stronger capability beliefs regarding planning, instruction, and assessment practices that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than novice third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience.

Qualitative

3. What are third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' perceptions regarding the means by which they believe they are capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance in Title I elementary schools?

Mixed

4. To what extent do the open-ended themes from third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' qualitative survey data corroborate and expand upon their quantitative Likert scale survey results?

Assumptions of the Study

The present study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Computers are available to participants at their school sites.
2. Participants possess the ability to access the on-line survey.
3. Participants possess the information that the researcher requires.

4. Participants understand each survey question as the researcher intends it to be understood.
5. Participants supply honest survey responses.
6. Participants' answers to each question can be meaningfully compared with one another (Foddy, 1993).

Rationale

Overall, the majority of previous research has either quantitatively or qualitatively explored the influence of high-stakes assessment on teachers throughout the nation (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001; Jones et al., 1999; Rex & Nelson, 2004; Williamson, Bondy, Langley, & Mayne, 2005). Although each of these research methods is useful in attaining a specific purpose (Creswell, 2005), a combination of both approaches can offset the weaknesses of either used by itself to address this study's problem (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003). Conducting mixed methods research studies of Title I teachers' responses to accountability may expand previous research and provide a more holistic picture, including significant implications for curriculum and instruction in an era of high-stakes testing with regard to Title I third grade settings.

Theoretical Framework

Ford's (1992) MST served as the theoretical foundation for this study. MST is grounded in the premise that motivation provides the psychological foundation for the development of human competence. According to the theory, an individual's competence in any given area can be attributed to personal motivation, skill, and environment. In order for an individual to accomplish what is personally perceived to be an attainable goal, several components of motivation must be accounted for: personal

goals, beliefs about one's own capabilities, beliefs about one's own context, and emotions. Since the focus of this study was on teachers' beliefs regarding accountability in Title I schools, the conceptual framework only incorporated teachers' capability and context beliefs.

MST can readily be applied to a study of teachers' responses to high-stakes accountability policy in Title I settings. State accountability policy goals are outlined in Florida's *A+ Plan*, ensuring that all schools and educators will be held accountable for the performance of the students they are entrusted to educate. Students are expected to gain at least a year's worth of learning in a year's time (as indicated by a score of a Level 2 or higher on the third grade FCAT Reading). Likewise, students must achieve a score of a Level 2 or higher on the third grade FCAT Reading to be promoted. In order for teachers to effectively attain these goals, they must believe in their schools' capacity (i.e., perceived availability of professional development learning opportunities and adequacy of resources) to support their efforts [context beliefs]. Simultaneously, they also need to believe in their own instructional ability as educators to be held accountable for achieving Florida's accountability goals [capability beliefs]. As a result, examining Title I teachers' context and capability beliefs may elucidate contextual and personal factors that may stimulate or hinder them from meeting those goals.

Significance of the Study

Understanding how teachers respond to accountability may place educators, policymakers, and researchers in a better position to affect change in policy and practice with Florida's Title I schools. Conducting mixed methods research may produce significant findings regarding the perceived needs of Title I teachers in contexts of high-

stakes accountability. In turn, this may lead to the provision of professional development that focuses on the importance of their beliefs as well as access to adequate instructional resources that may enable them to prepare students for high-stakes assessment without narrowing the curriculum.

Furthermore, mixed methods research may allow policymakers to recognize the effects of high-stakes accountability policy on Title I third grade teachers in urban school districts. This study's findings may serve as a means of including Florida's teachers in efforts to influence accountability policy by providing policymakers with viable recommendations for policy revision. In order for teachers to support a statewide testing policy, they need to have their voices heard and have a part in developing the policy itself (Grant, 2000). In turn, policy may be transformed so that it serves as a means of improving teachers' instruction (Cohen & Hill, 2000), thereby enhancing their capability and context beliefs.

Finally, this study may serve as a springboard for further mixed methods inquiry by future researchers on high-stakes accountability in Title I schools. Such studies will allow for the collection of multiple sets of quantitative and qualitative data, thereby generating greater confidence in the research findings regarding this topic (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purposes of this study.

Achievement Level - An Achievement Level is the pre-determined Florida Department of Education (DOE) established range in which a student's FCAT score falls. Established by the Standards Setting Committee, DOE staff, Florida's Education

Commissioner, and the State Board of Education, Achievement Levels consist of ranges of scores within the 100 to 500 point FCAT scale, and range from Level 1 (lowest) to Level 5 (highest) (Florida Department of Education, 2005a). Each level is defined according to a student's level of success with SSS content: "success with the most challenging content" (Level 5); "success with challenging content" (Level 4); "partial success" (Level 3); "limited success" (Level 2); and "little success" (Level 1) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2007, p. 74). Students must earn a Level 3 or higher on the FCAT Reading, Mathematics, and Science, and a Level 3.5 or higher on the FCAT Writing+ to be considered on grade level (Florida Department of Education, 2008). In particular, third grade students must earn a Level 2 or above on the FCAT Reading in order to be promoted to the fourth grade.

Assessment – Assessment is an instrument, a process, or a method used to gather information relevant to the purpose of documenting students' strengths and weaknesses, evaluating students' progress, or planning instruction (Cizek, 1997). Assessment can either be formal or informal. Formal assessments are standardized in content and assessment procedure, and are developed commercially, by a state board of education, or by a school district. Examples of formal assessment include norm-referenced tests and criterion referenced tests, as well as unit tests and performance assessment activities accompanying commercially-published textbooks. In contrast, informal assessments are developed by the classroom teacher to address instructional objectives relative to individual students or an entire class. Examples include classwork, homework, rubrics, oral questions, and portfolios.

Benchmarks - Benchmarks are specific statements located in the SSS, describing what students at each grade level should know and be able to do (Florida Department of Education, 2005a). They represent the essential skills and knowledge necessary for Florida's students and are assessed on the FCAT.

Experienced teachers – Experienced teachers in this study were identified as classroom teachers who taught on a full-time basis (i.e., an entire school day, five days a week) for five or more years.

Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) - Title XLVIII of the Florida Senate's statutes (Section 1008.22) mandates the implementation of the FCAT as the state's designated student achievement testing program (Florida Senate, 2007). The primary purpose of the FCAT is to assess students' achievement of higher-order thinking skills represented in the Reading, Writing, Mathematics, and Science SSS annually (Florida Department of Education, 2008). Students in Florida's public schools are currently required to take the FCAT Writing+ in grades 4, 8, and 10 in February; the FCAT Reading and Mathematics in grades 3 through 10 in March; and the FCAT Science in grades 5, 8, and 11 in March (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). According to the Florida DOE (2005a), "…students who have mastered the Standards… should perform well on the FCAT" (p. 13).

The FCAT has traditionally consisted of two components: the FCAT SSS and the FCAT NRT. The FCAT SSS is a criterion-referenced test that measures student progress towards meeting selected benchmarks from the SSS in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. The FCAT NRT measures reading comprehension and mathematics problem solving, and compares individual student performance against national norms (Florida

Department of Education, 2007f). Recently, enactment of Senate Bill 1908 in July, 2008, called for the removal of the requirement that NRTs be included in the FCAT effective the 2008-2009 school year (Florida School Boards Association, 2009).

The FCAT was first developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill under the leadership of Governor Jeb Bush to measure students' achievement of selected benchmarks derived from the1996 SSS (Florida Department of Education, 2007e). Effective with the 2007-2008 school year, the FCAT Content Advisory Committees began developing a new FCAT Reading and Mathematics design, item specifications, and new items to measure students' achievement of the Next Generation Standards (see below). The new assessments are intended to support teaching and learning for the 21st century, and will incorporate the use of computer-based testing (Florida Department of Education, 2007g).

Statewide educator reviews of the new FCAT Reading & Mathematics items were conducted in the fall of 2008. Thereafter, test items will be assembled into field test forms during the spring and summer of 2009; field testing of new items will be conducted in the spring of 2010; and baseline assessments will be administered in spring of 2011. Timelines for the revision of the remainder of the content area assessments will be provided as revisions of the Standards are completed (Florida Department of Education, 2007g).

High-stakes test - A high-stakes test is any test whose results are tied to educational decisions with important consequences for students (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2000). According to the American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education (1999), such decisions may include student promotion or

retention; student placement into gifted and talented programs, special education programs, or programs serving LEP students; high school graduation; diploma awards; entrance into an educational institution; and/or scholarship awards (cited in U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights).

In Florida, high-stakes decisions regarding promotion and retention for students in grades 3 and 12 are based on their FCAT scores. Third grade students must earn a Level 2 or higher on the FCAT Reading in order to be promoted to the fourth grade. Students in 12th-grade must earn a DSS of 1926 or above on the Grade 10 FCAT Reading and a DSS of 1889 or above on the Grade 10 FCAT Mathematics to graduate from high school (Florida Department of Education, 2007a).

Novice teachers – Novice teachers in this study were identified as classroom teachers who taught on a full-time basis (i.e., an entire school day, five days a week) for fewer than five years.

Sunshine State Standards (SSS) - Originally approved by the State Board of Education in 1996, the SSS represent Florida's curriculum framework (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). They consist of curriculum content, strands (broad categories of knowledge), standards (general levels of expectation), and benchmarks (specific levels of expectation). Learning expectations for student achievement are provided in seven content areas (language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health and physical education, foreign languages, the arts) across four grade clusters (PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) (Florida Department of Education, 2005a).

Following the adoption of the 1996 Standards, Florida's State Board of Education deemed the Standards' level of rigor as inadequate to address students'

increased levels of achievement. Moreover, national and international measures of student achievement indicated the need for higher expectations for Florida's students. Subsequently, the Board adopted a six-year cycle in January 2006 that called for the periodic review and revision of all K-12 Standards. Revised Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards were adopted in 2007, while Science, Social Studies, and Physical and Health Education Standards were adopted in 2008. Adoption of the remainder of the content area Standards is currently pending. Implementation of all content area Standards will be carried out in three phases: adoption (teachers gain awareness and increased knowledge of the new SSS), adaptation (teachers become more familiar with the new SSS and how to incorporate them into lesson plans), and implementation (teachers incorporate the new SSS into daily instruction) (Florida Department of Education, 2007g).

The revised Reading/Language Arts SSS (Florida Department of Education, 2007b) are identified through a specific coding system consisting of five components in the following order: subject, grade, strand, standard, and benchmark. For example, the coding scheme for a third grade Reading/Language Arts Standard would be indicated as LA.3.1.6.8, with 'LA' representing the subject (language arts), '3' representing the grade level, '1' representing the strand (vocabulary development), '6' representing the standard ("The student uses multiple strategies to develop grade appropriate vocabulary"), and '8' representing the benchmark ("The student will identify "shades of meaning" in related words") (Florida Department of Education, 2007b, p. 57).

In addition, the revised Mathematics SSS (Florida Department of Education, 2007c) are identified through a similar coding system consisting of five components:

subject, grade level, body of knowledge, big idea/supporting idea, and benchmark. Such a scheme would be indicated as MA.3.A.1.1. The specific order of the coding schemes, moving from strand to benchmark, represents a natural progression from broad to specific content (Florida Department of Education, 2007g).

In July 2008, Senate Bill 1908 was enacted by Florida's Legislature, instructing the State Board of Education to review the SSS and replace them with Next Generation SSS by December 31, 2011 (Florida School Boards Association, 2009). Next Generation SSS are intended to prepare Florida's students to effectively communicate and compete with students globally, incorporating critical thinking, innovation, and collaboration skills (Florida Department of Education, 2009b). Reading and Language Arts Standards were developed to reflect the reading and writing process, while Mathematics Standards were condensed to reflect in-depth teaching for long-term learning (Florida Department of Education, 2007g). Access points, or expectations for students with significant cognitive disabilities to access the general education curriculum, were also developed for the Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics Standards (Florida Department of Education, 2009a).

Title I, Part A (also known as *Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Education Agencies; Education for the Disadvantaged - Grants to Local Education Agencies; Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged; Title I ESEA; Title I LEA Grants*) - Title I is a federal program that provides financial assistance to local education agencies and schools with high numbers or percentages of economically disadvantaged children to help ensure that all students meet challenging state academic standards (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Communications and Outreach,

2007). The distribution of Title I funds to public schools is determined by the number of students eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch (based on family SES).

Currently, there are 76 Title I-funded elementary schools in Broward County and 57 Title I-funded elementary schools in Palm Beach County (Broward County Public Schools, 2008a; Palm Beach County Public Schools, 2008b). Recent data from the *Florida School Indicators Report* (Florida Department of Education, n.d., a) indicate that 45.3% of 121,249 elementary students in Broward County, Florida, and 49.1% of 79,226 elementary students in Palm Beach County, Florida, qualified for free- or reduced-price lunch during the 2006-2007 school year.

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The present study reports results of third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' elicited context and capability beliefs regarding factors (including access to professional development, access to adequate instructional resources, and instructional ability) that may contribute to their own ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy, as well as their perceptions regarding the means by which they believed they were capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance. Although this study may contribute new findings to the fields of early childhood and elementary education, two limitations need to be taken into consideration. Data from this study reflect teachers' self-reported beliefs regarding their instructional ability and contextual factors within their school sites that may support effective functioning; their instructional practices and school sites were not observed. In addition, caution should be taken in generalizing this study's findings to other elementary

grade levels and non-Title I elementary schools held accountable to Florida's high-stakes testing policy.

Despite these limitations, this study's findings may begin to close the gap in the literature on high-stakes accountability in Florida's Title I, third grade classrooms. As Rex and Nelson (2004) indicate, "…standardized state and national achievement testing is a political and practical occupational reality for teachers… studies of how teachers are managing these realities are urgently needed" (p. 1319).

Organization of the Remaining Chapters

This introductory chapter defined the research hypotheses and questions, theoretical framework, and expected contributions of this study. Subsequent chapters are organized as follows. Chapter II provides a detailed explanation of the theory guiding this study. A comprehensive review of the literature focusing on accountability and high-stakes assessment in Florida, teacher efficacy, professional development, and instructional resources is presented with an emphasis on critical gaps that prompted this study. Chapter III outlines the research methodology utilized, whereby a description of the design, sampling procedures, instrumentation, data collection, and data analyses procedures is provided. Chapter IV discusses the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses procedures used to address the study's research hypotheses and questions. Chapter V presents a summary and discussion of the study's overall findings. Conclusions and limitations are outlined, followed by recommendations for future research and implications.

Summary

The primary focus of this study was to (a) determine whether Title I, third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' context beliefs regarding access to professional development related to accountability differ according to educational degree held; (b) determine whether Title I, third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' capability beliefs regarding planning, instruction, and high-stakes assessment differ according to years of teaching experience; (c) explore Title I, third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' perceptions regarding the means by which they believe they should be held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance; and (d) use the data derived from the qualitative survey items to explain, support, or enhance the quantitative survey findings. An on-line survey consisting of open- and closed-ended items was used as part of a triangulation mixed methods research design, whereby principles of Ford's (1992) MST were used to guide this study. Conducting a mixed methods research study of Title I third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' responses to accountability in Florida may fill the gap in previous research and provide significant implications for change in educational policy and practice.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Standards-based accountability is not a new phenomenon. As Herman and Dietel (2005) have pointed out, the idea of evaluating whether the curriculum is achieving its desired results was originally introduced by Ralph Tyler (1949) in *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. However, with sanctions and rewards now tied to students' test scores, the potential of high-stakes tests to influence teachers' instructional practices and decisions is immense (Cimbricz, 2002; Elmore, 2002; Lloyd, 2007). Research on school positioning and student demographics suggests that the extent to which high-stakes accountability policies influence teachers' implementation of curriculum and instruction depends greatly on the school population being served (McNeil, 2000; Wallace, 2002). Test-preparation is more likely to become the focus of classroom instruction at schools with high percentages of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In particular, teachers working in Title I-funded schools experience intense pressure to demonstrate gains in student achievement (Valli et al., 2007).

In order to portray the potential influence of accountability policy on Title I teachers' beliefs and perspectives, this literature review will examine the current context of standards-based accountability within the state of Florida. A brief historical overview of Florida's educational accountability system will be provided, as well as teachers' responses to the system. Next, a description of the Motivational Systems theoretical framework upon which the current study is based follows. Thereafter, a synthesis of current literature is presented, elucidating how teachers' beliefs regarding internal and external factors such as perceived efficacy, access to professional development, and

adequate instructional resources may potentially influence their responses to accountability policy.

Educational Accountability in Florida

Statewide testing has served as a major policy tool to influence educational practice since the early 1970s. In 1971, the Florida Legislature enacted the Educational Accountability Act (Section 229.57, F.S.), which called for the objective evaluation of educational programs offered by the state's public schools. Education goals were also developed that same year and adopted by the State Board of Education to ensure every student's acquisition of essential skills. In turn, the Florida Statewide Assessment Program was established by the 1971 Legislature to implement the goals and ensure educational accountability. Thereafter, the first statewide assessment in reading was administered during the 1971-1972 school year to a sample of second and fourth graders. Test administration later varied according to grade level and subject area (Florida Department of Education, n.d., b).

In 1974, a Review Committee from the Florida Department of Education's (DOE's) Student Evaluation Section was established to make recommendations regarding the goals and priorities of Florida's Statewide Assessment Program. Subsequently, the Educational Accountability Act was amended. Provisions included the comparison of statewide results to national indicators of student performance, as well as the interpretation of assessment results in annual reports of school progress. Two years later, the Act was amended once more to expand statewide testing; however, the only group truly held accountable for test scores was high school seniors effective the 1978-1979 school year (Florida Department of Education, n.d., b).

Several years later, the Florida Legislature enacted the School Improvement and Accountability Act in 1991 (also known as *Blueprint 2000*), which established the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability. Subsequently, seven statewide education goals were outlined, including Goal 3 - which called for improved student achievement and increased school accountability. One year later, the Florida Writing Assessment Program was introduced and administered to Florida's fourth graders. Administration was later expanded to include eighth graders in 1993 and tenth graders in 1994 (Florida Department of Education, 2005a).

In 1995, the Florida DOE identified 158 schools in Florida as "critically low schools" (Florida Department of Education, 2007a, p. 49). These schools demonstrated low student performance for two consecutive years in reading, writing, and mathematics, and were provided with technical assistance and resources from their district and the state (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). Subsequently, the Florida Commission on Education Reform and Accountability made recommendations for a comprehensive assessment design focusing on reading, writing, mathematics, and critical thinking, resulting in the development and adoption of the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in 1996 (Florida Department of Education, n.d, b).

Soon after, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) was developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill under the leadership of Governor Jeb Bush to assess the content outlined in the Standards. The FCAT Reading and Mathematics tests were field tested in 1997, and then administered for the first time to students in specific grade levels a year later (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). The Florida Writing Assessment Program was later incorporated into the FCAT, and reading and mathematics testing were

expanded to include all students in grades 3 through 10 (Florida Department of Education, 2007e).

In 1999, Governor Bush cited challenges for the improvement of education in Florida, including: half of the state's fourth-graders' inability to read on grade level; more than one third of the state's ninth-graders earning a 'D' or 'F' average; and a state graduation rate of 52% (Inman, 2001). Subsequently, the Florida Legislature enacted the *A+ Plan for Education* (Section 1008.34, F.S.). Labeled as "the nation's most aggressive test-based accountability measure" (Greene et al., 2004, p. 1124), the Plan called for increased accountability through the grading of schools (ratings from an A to an F) based on students' standardized assessment performance. In 2002, the school grading system was adjusted to incorporate an annual learning gains component so that school grades reflected student performance and learning gains equally (Florida Department of Education, 2007a). Thereafter, Florida's public schools have been assigned a letter grade based on the following six components: the percentage of students meeting high standards in reading, writing, and mathematics; the percentage of students making reading and mathematics learning gains; and the percentage of the lowest 25% of students who make reading learning gains (Florida Department of Education, 2007d) (see Table 1). [For those schools with fewer than 30 students in the lowest 25%, the 30 lowest performing students are substituted.]

In 2003, Florida's State Board of Education raised the bar for student and school performance by adding three more components to Florida's school grading system. Science was added as a seventh component, measuring the percentage of students meeting high standards, effective with the 2006-2007 school year. Also, the percentage

of the lowest 25% of students who make mathematics learning gains was added as an eighth component. Finally, high schools with at least 50% of 11th- and 12th-grade students who retook the Grade 10 FCAT and met graduation requirements were now eligible to receive additional school grade bonus points (Florida Department of Education, 2007a; 2007d) (see Table 1).

Teachers' Responses to Accountability

Few researchers have examined classroom teachers' perspectives regarding Florida's *A+ Plan*. However, studies that do exist suggest mixed findings. One year after the Plan's implementation, Inman (2001) collected survey data and follow-up interview data from 2,538 elementary through high school teachers and administrators throughout Florida with a focus on uncovering significant issues related to the Plan. Data revealed that the majority of the teachers disagreed with schools being rated based on students' FCAT scores, and indicated that the ratings could possibly contribute to erroneous information about school quality. In addition, more than half of the teachers expressed the concern that the bulk of their instructional time was dedicated to test preparation separate from the remainder of the curriculum. More than one half of the respondents indicated that they had not received the professional development necessary to teach the standards-based curriculum, nor had they been provided opportunities to learn about the Plan's expectations.

In another study, longitudinal data derived from questionnaires and focus group interviews from 43 third and fourth grade teachers in one urban school district in Florida between 2001 and 2003 elucidated their frustrations with the state's accountability

Table 1

Components of Florida's School Grading System

Component	Accountability Policy
Students meeting high reading standards	Level 3 or above
Students meeting high writing standards	Level 3.5 or above
Students meeting high mathematics standards	Level 3 or above
Students making reading and mathematics learning gains	Improve one level, maintain Level 3 or above, or demonstrate more than one year's growth within Levels 1 or 2
Lowest 25% of students in Levels 1, 2, or 3 who make reading and mathematics learning gains	Based on Level from previous school year
Students meeting high science standards	Score of Level 3 or above
11th- and 12th-grade students retaking the Grade 10 FCAT	DSS of 1926 or above on the FCAT Reading; DSS of 1889 or above on the FCAT Mathematics

Note. From *Assessment and Accountability Briefing Book,* by Florida Department of Education, 2007a, Tallahassee, FL: Author.

program (Shaver et al., 2007). The teachers expressed increasingly negative perceptions of school grades being awarded for test results, as well as their frustration regarding their loss of authority related to student retentions. Whereas many teachers expressed the unfairness of retaining students based on one test score, others believed that they should have the right to retain students who do not earn satisfactory grades throughout the school

year - even if they pass the FCAT. Overall, the teachers recognized that state accountability policies "increasingly controlled curriculum, instruction, and [classroom] assessment" (Shaver et al., p. 740).

In contrast, López's (2006) case study of the effects of the *A+ Plan* on curriculum and instruction in four Title I public elementary schools in Miami-Dade County that earned a school grade of F a minimum of one time (between 1998 and 2004) produced distinctly different findings. Interview data derived from the principals and four third through fifth grade classroom teachers from each of the schools highlighted their positive perceptions regarding the Plan's impact, including increased use of the SSS, integrated curriculum, curriculum mapping, data-driven decision-making, a variety of instructional materials, as well as increased availability of tutoring for students and teacher collaboration. Since Lopez's (2006) research focused on a small sample of schools within one county, the results may not be generalizable to other schools within the county or other counties within Florida. Moreover, the schools' demographics reflected a predominantly Hispanic population consisting of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, thereby limiting generalizations that can be made to other Title I schools in the state whose student demographics vary. Hence, these limitations emphasize the need for studies that provide a more holistic understanding of high-stakes accountability in Florida's Title I schools at benchmark grade levels.

In addition to the aforementioned studies, other researchers have also reported on teachers' opinions regarding the *A+ Plan's* assessment system. In 2001, the National Board on Educational Testing and Public Policy conducted a national survey of 4,195 elementary and secondary teachers in 28 states (Pedulla et al., 2003). Responses from

167 elementary and secondary teachers in urban and suburban school districts across Florida indicated that they increased their instructional time on tested content and reported a significant decrease in time spent on enrichment activities due to the FCAT. The researchers reported that the teachers were more likely to believe that the test had led them to teach in ways that contradicted their own notions of sound educational practice due to external pressure from district superintendents to raise test scores.

In a similar study, Jones and Egley (2004) investigated whether teachers believed the FCAT was taking public schools in the right direction after four years of administration. Responses derived from an on-line questionnaire of 708 third through fifth grade teachers across 30 Florida school districts in 2002 indicated that the majority (79.9%) held negative perceptions of the FCAT's effects on education. The researchers identified several common themes based on the teachers' comments, including

> the unfairness of comparing students, teachers, and schools based on test scores; the negative effects of increased teaching to the test; the large amount of pressure felt by students and teachers; and the lack of reliability of a one-time test. (Jones & Egley, 2004, p. 23)

Perhaps the most revealing findings of Jones and Egley's (2004) research that informed this study were teachers' responses to accountability in relation to students' socioeconomic status (SES). Comments derived from the questionnaire's open-ended items reflected the teachers' disagreement regarding the use of FCAT scores to measure their instructional ability and compare students since SES was a factor that they believed was beyond their control. Additionally, a major concern expressed by the teachers was

their perception of unfair inferences being made regarding their instructional ability and their schools' quality despite the variability in students' backgrounds.

Such a concern seems to warrant validation since research has already established that children from low socioeconomic backgrounds have less access to a variety of cognitively stimulating resources and enter school with fewer language and literacy experiences in comparison to their middle class and affluent peers (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002; Bradley et al., 2001; Coley, 2002; Duncan, Brooks-Gunn, & Klebanov, 1994; Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2005; Hart & Risley, 1995; Hoff, 2003; Lee & Burkham, 2002; Smith et al., 1997). Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds also experience less frequent parental involvement with their schooling and educational experiences (Brown et al., 1999). Furthermore, a positive correlation has been shown to exist between SES and student achievement on standardized tests (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002; Holman, 1995; Smith et al., 1997; Watkins, 2004). According to Popham (1999), children's SES is highly correlated with standardized test scores mainly because the test items themselves assess knowledge and skills that are derived outside of a student's school setting.

Overall, questionnaire responses derived from the teachers in Jones and Egley's (2004) study indicated that they were not against accountability - a finding that echoes the sentiments of elementary, middle, and high school teachers in Texas (Flores & Clark, 2003; Reese, Gordon, & Price, 2004), as well as elementary teachers in Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (Berry, Turchi, Johnson, Hare, & Owens, 2003). Teachers in Florida, however, also indicated that they did not favor the means by which they were being held accountable. Since Jones &

Egley's (2004) questionnaire did not provide participants the opportunity to express their perceptions regarding the means by which they believe they should be held accountable, the intent of the current study was to build upon their findings and fill this gap in the literature through qualitative data.

Theoretical Framework

Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory (MST) serves as the theoretical foundation for this study. MST is an outgrowth of the Living Systems Framework (LSF) (Ford, 1987), a theory of human functioning and development that conceptualizes how an individual's distinct components (i.e., goals, emotions, perceptions, actions) work in combination to produce unique behavior patterns, and how the functioning of those patterns can be strengthened or altered. According to Ford (1992), MST provides a comprehensive conceptualization of motivation that focuses on the substance and organization of motivational patterns.

MST indicates that an individual's competence in any given area can be attributed to personal motivation, skill, and environment (Ford, 1992). The rationale for the theory is that motivation provides the psychological foundation for the development of human competence. In order for an individual to accomplish what is personally perceived to be an attainable goal, four components of motivation must be accounted for: personal goals, capability beliefs, context beliefs, and emotions. The absence of any one of the preceding components results in an individual's limited achievement and competent development.

Personal Goals

Personal goals are defined as "thoughts about desired states or outcomes that one would like to achieve" (Ford, 1992, p. 248). They are anticipatory and evaluative in nature, preparing an individual to respond in ways that may produce desired future events. Personal goals play a leadership role in MST because they define the content and direction of an individual's motivational patterns. Ford (1992) specifies that externally-assigned goals have a motivational impact only when they are adopted as personal goals. Accordingly, goals cannot be imposed on individuals; instead, they must be adopted as personal goals in order to serve a directive function.

Capability Beliefs

Capability beliefs are anticipatory evaluations about whether one possesses the personal skills necessary for effective functioning (Ford, 1992). The meaning of these beliefs depends upon the specific skills necessary for a particular type of achievement. In turn, an individual may consider a goal to be unattainable if the individual does not have the ability to achieve it.

Capability beliefs are similar to Bandura's (1997) construct of self-efficacy, defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Ford (1992) asserts, however, that MST affords "greater theoretical scope and precision" (p. 128) in that it provides a more comprehensive conceptual framework. According to Ford (1992), the self-efficacy construct fails to specify the kinds of skills that may be involved in self-efficacy judgments, and is restricted to beliefs about task goals in context-specific behavior episodes. In contrast, Ford (1992) explains that capability beliefs reflect personal

confidence or doubt about an array of personal strengths or weaknesses, and pertain to any kind of goal at any level of abstraction.

Context Beliefs

Context beliefs are anticipatory evaluations about whether one's environment (including external factors or people) supports effective functioning (Ford, 1992). The meaning of these beliefs depends upon specific environmental components that are relevant to an individual's achievement. In turn, several functional elements are necessary in order to have an "optimally responsive environment" (Ford, 1992, p. 130). Such an environment must: be congruent with the individual's goals; be congruent with the individual's biological, transactional, and cognitive capabilities; contain the material and informational resources necessary to facilitate goal attainment; and provide a supportive emotional climate conducive to facilitating effective functioning.

Personal Agency Beliefs

Together, the combination of context and capability beliefs is referred to as *personal agency beliefs* (PABs). PABs regulate motivation levels by providing information to decide whether to "initiate, maintain, amplify or inhibit" (Ford, 1992, p. 74) goal-directed activity. The patterning of these beliefs is determined by the strength of an individual's capability beliefs (i.e., strong, moderate-variable, or weak) and context beliefs (i.e., positive, neutral-variable, or negative) combined (see Table 2). Ford's taxonomy of 10 PABs reflects distinct motivational characteristics that include the following descriptions: robust, tenacious, modest, vulnerable, antagonistic or accepting, fragile, self-doubting, discouraged, and hopeless.

Table 2

Capability and Context Beliefs Defined

- Strong Capability Beliefs - Positive Context Beliefs:
  Contribute to personal expectations of goal achievement, despite obstacles or failures

- Strong Capability Beliefs - Neutral-Variable Context Beliefs:
  High personal motivation combined with the expectation that one's environment may be unresponsive to goal achievement.

- Strong Capability Beliefs - Negative Context Beliefs:
  Evaluations of self-adequacy along with distrust or hostility towards one's environment

- Moderate-Variable Capability Beliefs - Positive Context Beliefs:
  Views one's self as fallible, but sees one's context as a source of strength

- Moderate-Variable Capability Beliefs - Neutral-Variable Context Beliefs:
  Contribute to one's uncertainty regarding favorable expectations for goal attainment

- Moderate-Variable Capability Beliefs - Negative Context Beliefs:
  The self rather than the self's context serves as a main source of motivation

- Weak Capability Beliefs - Positive Context Beliefs:
  Lack of confidence in one's own capabilities combined with evaluations of an adequate context

- Weak Capability Beliefs - Neutral-Variable Context Beliefs:
  Lack of confidence in personal ability; context is not considered a reliable source of support

- Weak Capability Beliefs - Negative Context Beliefs:
  One's self nor one's context are considered sources of improving current or anticipated negative events

Note. From *Motivating Humans: Goals, Emotions, and Personal Agency Beliefs*, by M. E. Ford, 1992, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Emotions

Emotions are related to an individual's feelings when evaluating personally relevant problems and opportunities (Ford, 1992). They are responsible for predictably "influencing selective attention, recall, event interpretation, learning, decision making, and problem solving" (Ford, 1992, p. 252). Emotions serve as an important source of energy in motivational patterns; they provide important clues about the content of an individual's goals, contributing to their development and elaboration. Any emotion that is not grounded in a goal that is influencing an individual's behavior will generate minimal personal significance.

MST is grounded in the premise that motivation provides the psychological foundation for the development of human competence. The theory has previously been used as a framework for examining motivational factors that influence university faculty's sustained use of lecturing versus collaborative learning approaches with undergraduate students (Colbeck, Cabrera, & Marine, 2002), as well as profiling K-12 teachers' PABs regarding effective science instruction (Haney & Lumpe, 1998). In addition, MST has been used as the theoretical basis for developing the *Children's Self-Concept and Motivation Assessment* (Rouse & Cashin, 2001) and the *Beliefs About Teaching with Technology* (BATT) instrument (Lumpe & Chambers, 2001). However, there has been not been a concentrated effort to use MST as a framework for examining teachers' capability and context beliefs in relation to high-stakes assessment.

Since MST focuses on effective person-in-context functioning, the theory can readily be applied to a study of teachers' responses to high-stakes accountability policy in Title I settings (see Figure 1). State accountability policy goals are outlined in Florida's

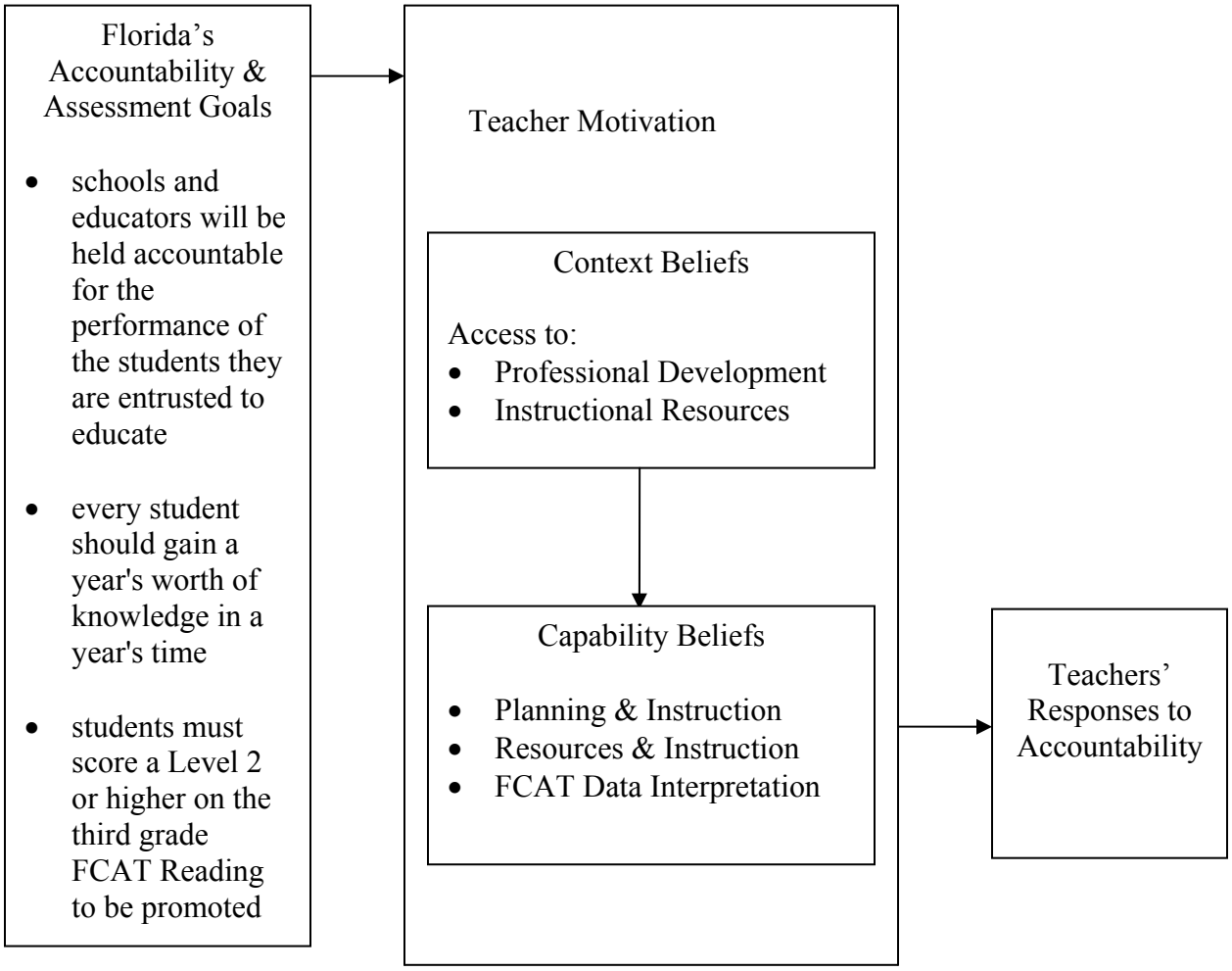

Figure 1. Motivational factors influencing teachers' responses to accountability (adapted from Colbeck et al., 2002).

A+ Plan, ensuring that all schools and educators are held accountable for the performance of the students they are entrusted to educate. Students are expected to gain at least a year's worth of learning and achieve a score of a Level 2 or higher on the third grade FCAT Reading to be promoted. In order for teachers to effectively attain these goals, they must believe in their schools' capacity (i.e., perceived availability of professional development opportunities and adequacy of instructional resources) to support their efforts [context beliefs]. Simultaneously, they also need to believe in their own instructional ability as educators to be held accountable for achieving the accountability policy's goals [capability beliefs].

Since the focus of this study was on teachers' beliefs regarding accountability in Title I schools (rather than their goals and emotions), the study's conceptual framework only incorporated teachers' capability and context beliefs. The study utilized a survey instrument containing a Likert scale and open-ended items to elicit teachers' context beliefs regarding organizational factors that may have influenced their ability to comply with accountability mandates. The instrument also elicited their capability beliefs regarding the specific means by which they believed they were capable of being held accountable. Subsequent data may provide insights regarding the provision of professional development activities and instructional resources that teachers believe enable them to meet state accountability goals. In turn, teachers may facilitate a key role in bridging accountability policy and instructional practice.

Teachers' Beliefs

An examination of teachers' beliefs is essential to any discussion regarding accountability since beliefs can have "pervasive effects on [teachers'] behavior,

influencing the learning environment that they create for children and for themselves" (Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976, p. 16). Previous research spanning the past two decades has cited the influence of teachers' beliefs on their perceptions and judgments, as well as the significance of understanding these beliefs in order to improve teachers' preparation and instructional practices (Bryan & Atwater, 2002; Calderhead, 1996; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Keys, 2005; Lumpe, Haney, & Czerniak, 2000; Nespor, 1985; Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996; Thompson, 1992; van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001; Wilson, 1990). Subsequently, an examination of teachers' beliefs in the context of this study may elucidate their potential influence on teachers' interpretations and adoption of state accountability initiatives. Although previous studies have not examined teachers' capability beliefs regarding high-stakes assessment, the following section synthesizes related findings documenting the role of teachers' efficacy beliefs in contexts of accountability. Moreover, literature on teachers' context beliefs regarding professional development and instructional resources is also outlined.

Teacher Efficacy

Teacher efficacy is defined as a "teacher's belief in his or her capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233). According to Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) integrated model of teacher efficacy, teachers analyze a teaching task and its context by measuring the importance of factors that may act as instructional constraints against their perceptions of instructional resources available. In addition, teachers assess their own teaching competence by

comparing their personal capabilities to personal weaknesses or the teaching context's limitations. Together, these assessments lead to teachers' judgments of self-efficacy.

Conceptually, efficacy can be visualized as cyclical in nature: teachers who have a greater sense of efficacy may exert more effort, resulting in positive instructional outcomes and, in turn, increased efficacy. In contrast, teachers who have a lower sense of efficacy may exert less effort, resulting in poorer instructional outcomes, and decreased efficacy. Overall, a review of the studies that follow provides evidence of the powerful influence of teachers' beliefs regarding their instructional capabilities on their instructional effectiveness and the educational process.

Factors Associated with Teacher Efficacy

Teacher experience. Several studies have demonstrated that an increase in teachers' years of experience is associated with higher levels of efficacy. For instance, Likert scale data derived from a questionnaire administered to a sample of 179 elementary teachers from 37 elementary schools in New Jersey showed that teacher experience was significantly related to personal teaching efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Similarly, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy's (2002) study of 255 elementary through high school in-service teachers at three universities in Ohio and Virginia revealed that teachers with a minimum of five years of teaching experience had a higher sense of efficacy regarding the implementation of instructional strategies than teachers with fewer than five years teaching experience.

More recently, Wolters and Daugherty (2007) administered an on-line survey to 1,024 K-12 teachers in one suburban Texas school district. Based on an analysis of the survey's Likert scale data, the researchers found that teachers with more years of teaching

experience had a higher sense of efficacy regarding their ability to implement instruction. In particular, first year teachers reported lower levels of efficacy than respondents who had one or more years of teaching experience. In addition, respondents who had one to five years of teaching experience reported lower levels of efficacy than respondents with more experience.

Although the preceding findings demonstrate a positive correlation between teaching experience and teacher efficacy, a few studies have presented contrasting findings. For instance, in a mixed methods study of 25 middle and high school teachers participating in an in-service staff development program in New York, Ghaith and Yaghi (1997) found that teacher experience was negatively correlated with teaching efficacy.

In another study, qualitative interview data derived from three new teachers (with fewer than two years of experience) and three veteran teachers (with a minimum of nine years of experience) in elementary through high schools revealed that the new teachers' efficacy was enhanced by the existence of Virginia's state assessment objectives, which they believed enabled them to meet their students' learning needs. In contrast, judgments of teachers' instructional capabilities based on students' test scores resulted in the veteran teachers' diminished efficacy (Winkler, 2002).

Instructional resources. In addition to teaching experience, the absence or presence of instructional resources has also been shown to have an impact on teachers' efficacy beliefs. In a longitudinal (three-year) study, Ramey-Gassert, Shroyer, and Staver (1996) examined factors influential in developing elementary teachers' science teaching efficacy. An analysis of the data derived from in-depth interviews with a purposeful sample of 10 teachers in the central United States revealed that they considered science

teaching resources to be a significant external factor that contributed to their ability to teach science.

In their study, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2002) examined teachers' beliefs regarding the resources available in their school contexts that were believed to contribute to their sense of efficacy. Likert scale data from surveys administered to 255 elementary through high school in-service teachers at three universities in Ohio and Virginia revealed a significant positive relationship between their perceived availability of instructional resources and teaching self-efficacy.

Although previous research has focused on factors contributing to teachers' efficacy as outlined above, the current study will attempt to broaden the literature base by shifting the focus from teachers' efficacy to their capability beliefs in Title I elementary schools. An examination of Title I, third grade teachers' beliefs about whether they possess the personal skills necessary for effectively carrying out instruction and assessment in relation to Florida's accountability goals may have significant implications for policy and the provision of instructional support.

Context Beliefs

Professional development and instructional resources have previously been identified as important forms of teacher support within school contexts (Firestone, Monfils, & Camilli, 2001). In particular, access to professional development learning opportunities can affect meaningful change in teachers' instructional practice (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Fullan, 2001; King & Newmann, 2000; Walker, 2003). Additionally, access to instructional resources (including curricular materials and supplies) is considered an important factor in any context involving teaching and learning (Gamoran, Secada, &

Marrett, 2000). Since the success of a state's accountability system depends largely on teachers' effectiveness (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Smith & Desimone, 2003; Smith & Rowley, 2005), understanding the extent to which access to professional development experiences and instructional resources contributes to their ability to meet state accountability goals is crucial in an era of high-stakes assessment.

Professional Development

Professional development is described as an ongoing learning process intended to affect change in teachers' instructional practices, attitudes, and beliefs, and to improve students' learning outcomes (Guskey, 2002). In the current context of educational reform, professional development serves as a means of preparing teachers to meet the mandates of high-stakes accountability. According to *No Child Left Behind* legislation, professional development should consist of activities that provide teachers instruction in using data and assessments to inform instructional practice (U.S. Statutes, 2002, 34A-xiv). The Act also calls for teachers of LEP students and students with special needs to receive the knowledge, skills, and methods necessary to work with these populations (U.S. Statutes, 34A-x, xiii). Overall, the professional development program should engage teachers in activities geared towards continuous, comprehensive change with a focus on student learning.

Although an extensive literature base focusing on professional development in the field of education is readily available, the following section of this review will present an examination of specific research that focuses on factors related to teachers' involvement in professional development activities. A discussion of teachers' access to professional development learning experiences, coherent professional development (i.e., professional

development experiences aligned with state or district standards and assessments), and professional development in the state of Florida will also be included. The remainder of topics commonly discussed in relation to professional development (including design and delivery, models, and barriers to effective implementation) were excluded from this review since they were not related to the research questions or hypotheses for this study.

Factors related to teachers' involvement. Few studies report the influence of teachers' level of education on their participation in professional development activities. In one rare study, Livneh and Livneh (1999) attempted to identify the characteristics that predict educators' involvement in professional development. An analysis of Likert scale data derived from a mail survey administered to 256 certified K-12 teachers and administrators in Oregon revealed that the respondents' educational level was the only demographic variable that was found to significantly predict teachers' involvement.

Participants with undergraduate degrees invested more time in continuing education in comparison to other respondents who attained higher levels of education. Subsequently, Livneh and Livneh (1999) imply that

> people with comparatively lower educational levels in professional fields often recognize the need to upgrade their educational skills and abilities. They may also be beginning their professional career, a time when they recognize the need for additional information and skill building. (p. 100, cited in Smith, Hofer, Gillespie, Solomon & Rowe, 2003)

However, the significance of Livneh and Livneh's findings merit further research in order to understand whether the level of degree teachers currently hold determines whether

they are aware of school site or district professional development opportunities available to further their knowledge of appropriate instructional practices in high-stakes settings.

Access to professional development learning experiences. Providing teachers with equitable access to professional development experiences is considered a major concern by researchers who focus on the design of professional development programs. Loucks-Horsley, Hewson, Love, and Stiles (1998) reasoned that factors within professional development designers' control such as scheduling, distance, resources necessary to implement what is learned, and school funding policies and practices may prevent teachers' participation. Yet in order to align instructional practice with state accountability policy, teachers need to be provided with multiple opportunities to learn the policy's implications for instruction (Cohen & Hill, 2000).

Various researchers have focused on the extent to which professional development opportunities increase or decrease as a result of state accountability policies. In Colorado, 53% of 357 elementary, middle, and high school teachers responding to a statewide survey reported that valuable professional development opportunities had increased under standards-based reform (Taylor, Shepard, Kinner, & Rosenthal, 2002). In addition, 55% of the teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that their school and district provided them with the necessary professional development to help students learn to high levels.

In contrast, data from on-site interviews with 360 elementary through high school teachers in Kansas, Michigan, and Massachusetts revealed that limited professional development opportunities were available, especially for those teachers working in rural and urban districts (Clarke et al., 2003).

Furthermore, Berry et al.'s (2003) case-study findings obtained from 24 schools in Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee revealed differences in the frequency and content of elementary teachers' professional development opportunities according to school performance and poverty levels. Teachers in high-performing schools and districts with less poverty had more access to formal and informal learning opportunities, whereby professional development was aligned with standards and curriculum to provide teachers with new focus and skills. In contrast, teachers in low-performing schools and districts with high poverty levels participated in professional development activities with a narrowed focus on reading and mathematics (subject areas tested on high-stakes tests).

Coherent professional development. Although various lists regarding the characteristics of effective professional development have been published within the last decade (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Educational Research Service, 1998; Kennedy, 1998; Kent & Lingman, 2000; Terzian, 2000; Wenglinsky, 2002) and analyzed (Guskey, 2003), the one feature of professional development that is directly related to contexts of accountability is coherence. This feature emphasizes alignment of professional development experiences with state or district standards and assessments, and is correlated with positive changes in teachers' instructional practices (Garet et al., 2001; Firestone, Mangin, Martinez, & Polovsky, 2005).

In one national study, Garet et al. (2001) focused on 207 mathematics and science teachers from 30 elementary through high schools in 10 school districts who had attended Eisenhower grant-funded professional development. In order to measure the coherence

of the professional development they received, the researchers asked the teachers to rate the extent to which their professional development activities were aligned with state or district standards and curriculum frameworks, as well as state and district assessments. Survey data collected during the span of three school years cited the teachers' positive ratings of the influence of coherent professional development activities on changes in their instructional practice. Based on their findings, Garet et al. inferred that teachers' participation in professional development that focuses on specific instructional practices may predict their increased use of those practices with their students.

Firestone et al. (2005) also emphasize the role of coherence in helping teachers adapt new understandings of effective teaching. The researchers utilized an action research approach to analyze professional development programs in three urban New Jersey school districts. Data derived primarily from structured interviews with 66 elementary through high school teachers revealed that teachers in districts that aligned professional development with district and state educational goals (versus districts with limited or a lack of coherence) resulted in their increased mathematics and literacy expertise and knowledge of specific instructional strategies. Firestone et al's implications also support Garet et al.'s (2001) research in that teachers' self-reported data reflected the relationship between coherent professional development and changes in instructional practice.

Professional development in Florida. In 2000, Florida Legislature enacted legislation aligned with NCLB's high-quality professional development mandate known as the *School Community Professional Development Act* (1012.98, F.S.). According to the Act, the purpose of professional development is to "increase student achievement"

and "enhance classroom instructional strategies that promote rigor and relevance throughout the curriculum" (Florida Senate, 2007, 1012.98). Specifically, the Statute cites the necessity of structuring professional development activities aligned with Florida's SSS and a focus on subject content, teaching methods, ongoing formal and informal assessments of student achievement, and data analysis.

Few researchers have examined the impact of Florida's accountability system on teachers' professional development. In one rare study, Williams and Bauer (2006) conducted action research with one urban elementary school's faculty. In an effort to provide the school's LEP students with necessary background knowledge in the content areas, the researchers and faculty collaboratively planned professional development sessions to select, evaluate, and align student texts with Florida's Standards. The sessions resulted in increased collaboration with media specialists and other school faculty, demonstrating the powerful implications of professional development in high-stakes accountability climates.

In an additional study, data derived from an on-line questionnaire of 708 third through fifth grade teachers across 30 Florida school districts in 2002 also provides some insight into the implications of participating in professional development (Jones & Egley, 2007). Teachers' perceptions of the degree to which professional development received at their school sites contributed to their teaching performance were correlated with their perceptions of the FCAT itself. Teachers who believed the test had positive consequences in relation to its impact on their teaching practices (e.g., increased focus on higher-order thinking skills; increased focus on real-life applications) were more likely to report positive outcomes of professional development. In contrast, teachers who believed

the FCAT had negative consequences in relation to its impact on their teaching practices (e.g., focus on lower-level thinking skills; teaching creativity stifled) reported negative outcomes of professional development (Jones & Egley, 2004; 2007).

Based on the paucity of research available on professional development in Florida, questions remain as to whether teachers in Florida are being provided with adequate access to professional development opportunities that may allow them to: effectively align lesson plans and instruction with the SSS; use appropriate instructional strategies with various student populations; and interpret and use assessment data to guide instruction. Hence, this study will attempt to gain insight into these themes, thereby contributing to the sparse literature base.

Instructional Resources

Various organizations have emphasized the necessity of students' access to instructional resources in contexts of accountability. In its *Position Statement on High-Stakes Testing in Pre-K – 12 Education*, the American Educational Research Association (2000) stressed the need for all students to be provided adequate resources aligned with content standards prior to being held accountable for high-stakes test performance. Similarly, the National Education Association (2008) also addressed providing students access to resources considered necessary to attain high standards in its statement on accountability systems. Resources have also previously been cited as a dimension of school capacity that may influence teachers' instructional practices and students' learning (McCaughtry, Martin, Kulinna, & Cothran, 2006; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000).

Few researchers have studied the impact of statewide assessments on the availability of instructional resources or their alignment to learning standards. In

Colorado, 49% of 357 elementary through high school teachers responding to a statewide survey either agreed or strongly agreed that their district and school provided them with the necessary resources (e.g., materials, time) needed to help students learn (Taylor et al., 2002). In contrast, data from on-site interviews with 360 elementary through high school teachers in Kansas, Michigan, and Massachusetts frequently revealed teachers' concerns about a lack of curriculum materials – especially in rural and urban districts (Clarke et al., 2003).

Instructional resources in Florida. An examination of Florida's third grade reading and mathematics standards tested on the FCAT (Florida Department of Education, 2001; 2005b) reveals that various instructional resources are necessary to teach students those standards. According to the 1996 Reading SSS, teachers need a wide array of texts to teach the reading and literature strands currently tested on the FCAT (Florida Department of Education, 1996a) (see Table 3).

Furthermore, the 1996 Mathematics SSS also cite the use of particular resources to learn standards currently tested on the FCAT (Florida Department of Education, 1996b) (see Table 4). Concrete materials are needed for all five math strands addressing number sense, concepts, and operations (strand A), measurement (strand B), geometry and spatial sense (strand C), algebraic thinking (strand D), and data analysis and probability (strand E). These materials would be useful for introducing concepts and aiding students in making "a conceptual shift to the symbolic form or operation" (Solomon, 2006, p. 10) because they attend to various learning styles (especially kinesthetic and tactual) and multiple intelligences.

Table 3

Instructional Resources Cited in Florida's Third Grade Reading SSS

SSS	Resources Cited	Purpose
LA.A. 1.2.3	Reference books	Develop vocabulary
LA.A. 2.2.1	Grade-level texts	Understand explicit & implicit ideas and information
LA.A. 2.2.2	Simple texts & stories	Identify the author's purpose
LA.A. 2.2.7	Simple texts & stories	Recognize the use of comparison & contrast
LA.A. 2.2.8	Reference books	Gather information
LA.E. 1.2.2	Grade-level texts	Understand plot development
LA.E. 1.2.3	Grade-level texts	Know similarities & differences (characters, settings, events)
LA.E. 2.2.1	Literary texts	Recognize cause & effect relationships

Note. From *Grade Level Expectations for the Sunshine State Standards: Language Arts Grades 3-5,* by Florida Department of Education, 1996a, Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Table 4

Instructional Resources Cited in Florida's Third Grade Mathematics SSS

SSS	Resources Cited	Purpose
MA.A. 5.2.1	Hundreds chart	Determine multiples of whole numbers
MA.B. 4.2.2	Measurement tools	Select & use for situational measures
MA.C. 2.2.1	Pattern blocks, geoboards, mirrors	Recognize symmetry, congruency, & reflections in geometric figures
MA.C. 2.2.2	Dot paper	Explore flips, slides, and 180^{o} turns
M.A.C. 3.2.1	Color tiles, grid paper	Compare area & perimeter
MA.D. 2.2.2	Cubes	Solve real-world equations and inequalities
MA.E. 1.2.2	Graphs	Display data and identify measures of central tendency
MA.E. 2.2.2	Spinners, coins	Predict the likelihood of simple events occurring

Note. From *Grade Level Expectations for the Sunshine State Standards: Mathematics Grades 3-5,* by Florida Department of Education, 1996b, Tallahassee, FL: Author.

Overall, an examination of Florida's Reading and Mathematics SSS indicates that access to a wide variety of resources is necessary for teachers to align their instruction with the Standards. Nonetheless, researchers have failed to examine Title I teachers'

context beliefs regarding access to the resources necessary to facilitate effective functioning and, in turn, attain state accountability goals. In addition, their capability beliefs regarding perceptions of being able to utilize instructional resources as outlined in the Standards also remains unknown.

Summary

The preceding review synthesized current literature on teachers' capability and context beliefs related to three significant factors in contexts of accountability: efficacy, professional development, and instructional resources. Whereas efficacy influences teachers' instructional effectiveness and the educational process, professional development represents an "engine of change" (Gamoran et al., 2000, p. 52); professional development is an essential mechanism for deepening teachers' content knowledge and instructional practices (Smith & Desimone, 2003). In addition, material resources are considered to be an important factor in any context involving teaching and learning (Gamoran et al.).

Due to the paucity of statistical data regarding the possible influence of teacher variables (such as years of teaching experience and educational degree held) on teachers' context and capability beliefs, compiling a meta-analysis resulting in an effect size estimate of the influence of each independent variable on each teacher measure being collected was not possible. Nevertheless, previous research does seem to imply the potentially powerful effect that teachers' beliefs regarding instruction, assessment, and school context has on their instructional practices and decisions.

The obvious lack of research elucidates the need for gaining insight into teachers' capability and context beliefs in relation to high-stakes accountability policy as a

necessary step towards improving instruction and learning. Eliciting teachers' capability and context beliefs may fill a critical gap in the research, thereby leading to significant insights regarding the provision of professional development activities and instructional resources that teachers believe can enable them to meet state accountability goals. In turn, teachers may potentially serve as mediators in bridging accountability policy and instructional practice.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study employed a mixed methods design, which included procedures for "collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study" (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006, p. 474) to answer research questions. The central premise underlying the use of mixed methods is that the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches together provides a more comprehensive understanding of research problems than either approach used by itself (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Mixed methods research has gradually emerged as a major methodological movement across the social sciences within the past decade, and has recently been recognized as a third major research approach (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Mixed methods designs differ from traditional research designs in that the researcher mixes, or explicitly relates, quantitative and qualitative datasets within the same study to obtain a better understanding of the research problem. Mixing of the datasets is determined by the type of mixed methods design used and can occur in one of three ways: merging (or integrating) the two datasets; embedding one dataset within the other as a means of support; or connecting the datasets, whereby the analysis of one dataset builds upon the analysis of the other (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The advantages of using a mixed methods design are that it enables the researcher to answer quantitative and qualitative questions simultaneously; enhances interpretations of quantitative and qualitative research findings; and may provide results that lead to more

accurate inferences (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Sutton, 2006; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

A triangulation design consisting of two concurrent phases (quantitative and qualitative) was utilized in this study. The aim of the design is to collect quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, merge the results of the two datasets by comparing them, and then use the results to understand a research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The advantage in using a triangulation design is that it combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative data collection, thereby providing a more holistic picture of the research problem (Plano Clark, Creswell, O'Neil Green, & Shope, 2008).

One of the triangulation design's variants is the validating quantitative data model. Using this model, quantitative and qualitative data are collected using one survey instrument (i.e., intramethod mixing) (Johnson & Turner, 2003). Quotes and themes are extracted from participants' open-ended survey responses to validate (or confirm) and expand on their quantitative survey responses. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are weighted unequally, whereby quantitative methods are given more priority in answering research questions (i.e., dominant-less dominant design) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In the event that contradictory results are derived from the quantitative analysis and the qualitative findings, the results are presented in parallel, with an indication that the collection of additional data is necessary (Creswell & Plano Clark).

Quantitative and qualitative data in this study were collected using a researcher-developed, Web-based survey instrument. Quantitative items elicited teachers' context and capability beliefs regarding factors that may have potentially contributed to their

ability to meet high-stakes accountability goals. Qualitative items also elicited teachers' context and capability beliefs, as well as their perceptions regarding the specific means by which they believed they were capable of being held accountable for their students' high-stakes test performance. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately. Independent variables were related to teachers' backgrounds, including years of teaching and highest educational degree earned. Dependent variables included teachers' capability and context beliefs. Thereafter, the researcher searched for quotes and themes from participants' open-ended responses that expanded on the quantitative survey data (see Figure 2).

Sampling

Purposeful sampling was utilized for this study. Since the focus of this study was on educators who faced the pressures of preparing "economically and educationally disadvantaged children" (Jennings, 2000, p. 516) in becoming proficient with grade level standards and tested content, individuals and research sites that could provide information to address the proposed research hypotheses and questions included the estimated population of approximately 720 Title I, third grade classroom teachers in Broward County and Palm Beach County, Florida. The researcher accessed the Broward County Public Schools website to identify all elementary schools that had the status of being a Title I school for the 2008-2009 school year. Similarly, the researcher accessed the Palm Beach County Public Schools website to identify all Title I elementary schools that were not prohibited from participating in research studies (i.e., Title I schools not participating in the Accelerated Academic Achievement Plan for the 2008-2009 school year). Seventy-six public elementary schools in Broward and 16 public elementary schools in

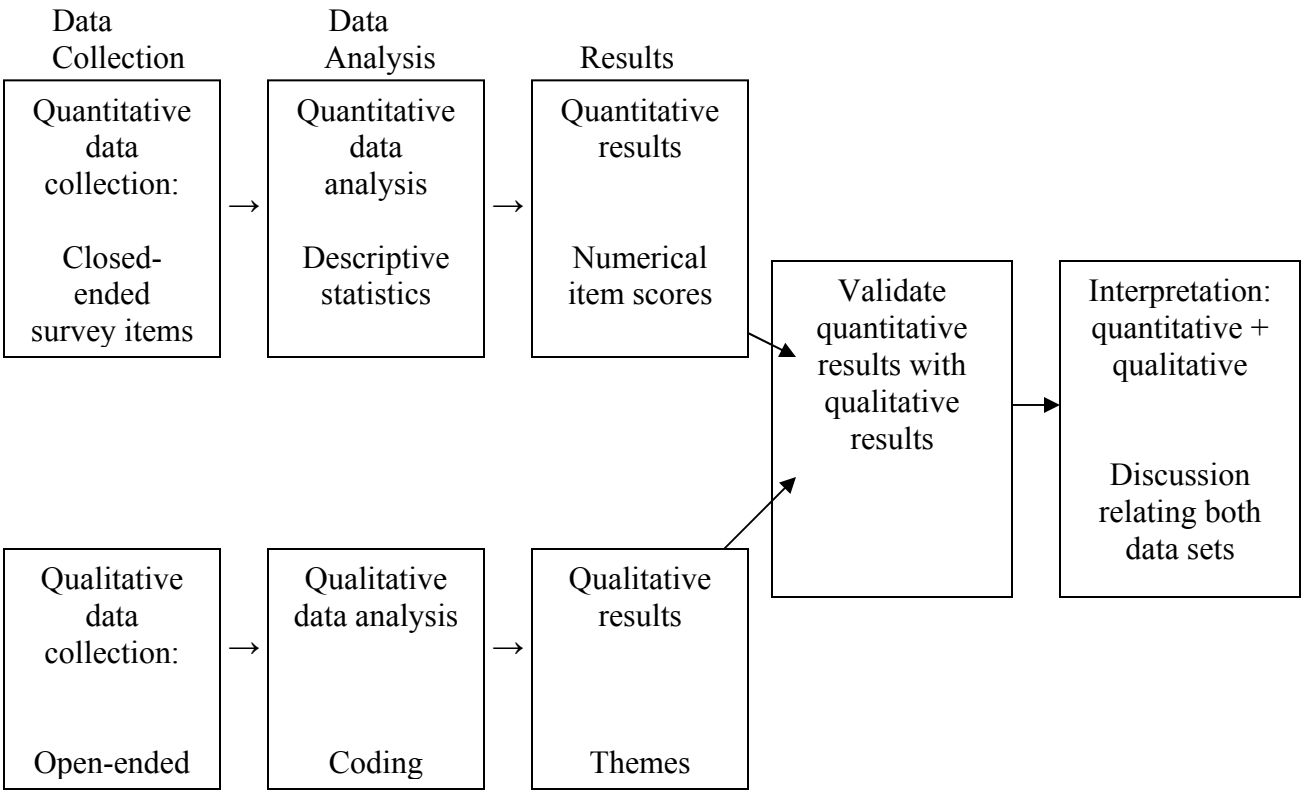

Figure 2. Triangulation design: Validating quantitative data model (adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Palm Beach were identified as Title I-funded schools eligible to participate in research studies (Broward County Public Schools, 2008a; Palm Beach County Public Schools, 2007).

Access to potential participants was gained through individual school principals. Once approval for conducting research was secured from appropriate Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) (Barry University, Broward County Public Schools, and Palm Beach County Public Schools Department of Research and Evaluation) (Appendix A), packets seeking permission to conduct the current study were mailed to 76 principals in Broward the first week of October, 2008, and 16 principals in Palm Beach whose schools were not prohibited from participating in research studies the second week of November, 2008. All packets contained four items: a personalized letter to school principals (Appendix B); a "*Request to Conduct Survey Research*" form (Appendix C); a memo to the school's contact person (Appendix D); and a self-addressed stamped envelope. In addition, packets mailed to principals in Broward also included a copy of the School Board of Broward County's IRB approval letter and District Office Approval Memorandum (Appendix A) as required by the district's IRB. Delayed approval received from Palm Beach County's Department of Research and Evaluation caused a delay in the mailings to that county's principals.

The "*Request to Conduct Survey Research Form*" (Appendix C) asked principals to indicate an accept (yes) or decline (no) decision to allow third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to participate in this study. Those principals who consented to their teachers' participation were asked to provide the following information: the name of a contact person (not in a supervisory role) who would be able

to receive and forward to third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers a cover letter [e-mailed by the researcher to the contact person] via their school e-mail addresses; the contact person's e-mail address; the exact number of third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers at the principals' schools; and the principals' signature as proof of permission granted allowing the teachers to participate in completing this study's on-line survey.

Initially, 19 (25%) of the 76 Title I elementary school principals in Broward County responded to the first mailing of packets sent out the first week of October, 2008. Subsequently, the researcher mailed a second packet three weeks later to all principals from whom a "*Request to Conduct Survey Research*" form had not been received. Thereafter, a total of 34 (45%) request forms were returned by principals as of November 6, 2008.

In order to achieve a desirable return rate, the researcher submitted a request to Broward County's IRB to allow for a second and third follow-up contact with administrators of the 42 schools who had not yet responded. Once approval was granted (Appendix A), a second follow-up contact was made the second week of November, 2008, in the form of a brief, non-coercive e-mail message sent by the researcher to the school e-mail addresses of the principals and assistant principals of the 42 schools who had not returned a "*Request to Conduct Survey Research*" form (Appendix E). The e-mail contacts increased the return rate to 53%, with 40 of the 76 Title I principals in Broward County having provided a response. A third and final follow-up contact was made three weeks later; packets were personally delivered by the researcher to the school sites of 17 more principals who had not yet responded. Deliveries increased the return

rate to 57%, with a final total of 43 Title I principals in Broward County returning a request form.

In Palm Beach County, 8 (50%) of the 16 Title I elementary principals of schools not prohibited from participating in research studies initially responded to the first mailing of packets mailed the second week of November, 2008. Subsequently, the researcher mailed a second packet two weeks later to all principals from whom a "*Request to Conduct Survey Research*" form had not been received, resulting in a total of 10 (63%) principals returning a form by early December, 2008. After considering the length of time it takes to receive research approval from the county's research department, as well as the proximity of the county's designated Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) blackout period beginning January 28, 2009 (Palm Beach County Public Schools, 2008a), the researcher decided against submitting a request for making additional contacts with administrators of the six schools who had not responded.

Overall, the return rate for Title I elementary principals in Broward and Palm Beach County who returned a "*Request to Conduct Survey Research*" form was 58%, with 53 of the 92 principals responding. The participation of 21 schools in Broward and 6 schools in Palm Beach was attained (28% of Title I elementary schools in Broward County; 38% of Title I elementary schools in Palm Beach County not prohibited from participating in research studies). Comments cited on the "*Request to Conduct Survey Research*" forms by principals who opted not to allow their teachers to participate included: "Our school is a struggling Title I school and my teachers are pressed to the limit," and "We just participated in a study last year."

Information provided by principals on the "*Request to Conduct Survey Research*" form allowed the researcher to calculate the total sample size by summing the number of third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers at each participating school site. A total of 150 teachers was reported by Broward County principals, and a total of 34 teachers was reported by Palm Beach County principals, resulting in an overall sample of 184 Title I, third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers for the present study.

Instrumentation

In accordance with the validating quantitative data model, data were derived from a Web-based survey instrument (Appendix F) hosted on SurveyMonkey, an on-line survey website. The advantages of using a survey were that it measured current attitudes and practices (Creswell, 2005; Fink, 2005), and was appropriate for determining how the members of a population (third grade teachers in Title I schools) distributed themselves on a variable (responses to accountability) (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Moreover, the advantages of using an electronic survey were that it provided a convenient form of data collection (Sue & Ritter, 2007) and participant anonymity (Mann & Stewart, 2000).

Since a survey related to this study's research hypotheses and questions did not already exist, an instrument was developed by the researcher that would be appropriate to collect the data required for this study. In order to develop the survey, instruments previously administered in research studies focusing on high-stakes assessment and accountability in elementary schools, as well as instruments that were developed based on Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory (MST), were examined. Literature on accountability, assessment, professional development, and instructional resources was

also examined. Best practices for constructing survey items were also studied in order to develop questions that would encourage participants to complete the survey. Finally, literature on designing Web-based surveys was consulted in an attempt to tailor the instrument to the needs of all participants.

This study's survey, entitled *High-Stakes Accountability in Florida*, was intended to measure teachers' context and capability beliefs regarding factors that may possibly have contributed to their ability to meet the state's accountability policy goals. Forty-four items were grouped by topic into the following 10 categories: (1) Background Information; (2) Accountability; (3) Professional Development: Planning and Instruction; (4) Professional Development: Assessment; (5) Resources; (6) Context Beliefs; (7) Capability Beliefs; (8) Teacher Beliefs: Planning and Instruction; (9) Teacher Beliefs: Resources and Instruction; and (10) Teacher Beliefs: Assessment. Thirty-eight Likert scale items measured teachers' context and capability beliefs, while six open-ended items elicited teachers' perceptions regarding assessment, accountability, school context, and instructional capability. The closed-ended questions allowed for consistent responses across participants, while the open-ended questions allowed participants to provide more individualized responses (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

The first three survey items elicited demographic information. A combination of three opened-ended and multiple-choice questions (#1–3) asked about teachers' background information, including years of teaching, highest educational degree earned, and school district where employed.

Thereafter, the items addressed three areas of interest relevant to the study: accountability, context beliefs, and capability beliefs. The first area of interest,

accountability, related to one survey category (Accountability) by focusing on teachers' perceptions regarding assessment and Florida's accountability policy. This section consisted of four open-ended items (#4A, 4B, 5A, 5B), including: "What types of classroom assessment are you currently using to assess your students' knowledge of third grade Reading and Mathematics Sunshine State Standards?" and "In your opinion, in what way(s) should third grade teachers be held accountable for their students' knowledge of Reading and Mathematics Sunshine State Standards assessed on the FCAT?" Data derived from survey item #5A were intended to expand on the capability beliefs Likert scale data (#10A-10C) and the context beliefs Likert scale data (#6A, 6B, 7).

The second area of interest, context beliefs, related to three survey categories (Professional Development: Planning and Instruction; Professional Development: Assessment; and Resources) by focusing on teachers' evaluations about whether elements within their school environments that may support effective functioning were available to them. Sample items from each category included: "My school and/or district provides professional development courses that can help me learn about how to utilize appropriate instructional strategies for third grade students identified as gifted/talented," "My school and/or district provides professional development courses that can help me learn about how to interpret reports of third grade students' FCAT results," and "My school provides me with access to adequate reading textbooks/ basals." Altogether, respondents rated 19 items (#6A, 6B, 7) according to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5 points) to strongly disagree (1 point).

A total possible score for the three context beliefs categories can be obtained by summing the Likert scale items. The possible range of scores is from 19 (obtained by responding with a 1 to all 19 statements) to 95 (obtained by responding with a 5 to all 19 statements), with higher values representing more positive context beliefs. In order to assign participants' total scores to one of three categories aligned with Ford's (1992) context beliefs, rationally derived cut-off scores were established by dividing the possible range of scores into thirds: negative (19-44); neutral-variable (45-69); and positive context beliefs (70-95).

In addition, an open-ended item (#8) was included in a section of the survey entitled "Context Beliefs" to further elicit teachers' perceptions regarding additional instructional resources and professional development topics that they believed would help them better teach their students the third grade Reading and Mathematics Standards. Data derived from this item were intended to expand on the context beliefs Likert scale data (#6A, 6B, 7).

The third area of interest, capability beliefs, was related to three survey categories (Teacher Beliefs: Planning and Instruction; Teacher Beliefs: Resources and Instruction; and Teacher Beliefs: Assessment) by focusing on teachers' perceived ability to meet state-mandated, high-stakes accountability goals. The three categories consisted of 16 items (#10A–10C) that asked teachers to indicate their degree of confidence in their personal ability to carry out various instructional tasks and utilize appropriate instructional materials. Sample items from each category included: "Align third grade mathematics lesson plans with Florida's SSS for Mathematics," "[Utilize] manipulatives/hands-on materials," and "Use reports of third grade students' FCAT

results to improve classroom instruction." Respondents rated each item on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strong ability (four points) to not certain (one point).

A total possible score for the three capability beliefs categories can be obtained by summing the Likert scale items. The possible range of scores is from 16 (obtained by responding with a 1 to all 16 statements) to 64 (obtained by responding with a 4 to all 16 statements), with higher values representing stronger capability beliefs. In order to assign each participant's total score to one of three categories aligned with Ford's capability beliefs, rationally-derived cut-off scores were established by dividing the possible range of scores into thirds: weak (16-31); moderate-variable (32-48); and strong capability beliefs (49-64).

Additionally, an open-ended item (#9) was included in a section of the survey entitled "Capability Beliefs" to elicit teachers' perceptions regarding any special abilities that they believed they brought to the classroom when teaching students the third grade Reading and/or Mathematics Standards. Data derived from this item were intended to expand on the capability beliefs Likert scale data (#10A–10C).

Several of the instrument's items (i.e., #1, 2, 6A, 10A) were adapted from one survey designed to measure elementary and middle school science and mathematics teachers' practices in California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, as well as their contextual factors associated with NCLB components (Hamilton et al., 2007). Although the validity and reliability of Hamilton et al.'s instrument have not been established, pilot tests were conducted (including cognitive interviews), and the instrument was revised (B. Stecher, personal communication, January 30, 2008).

In addition, a few items (i.e., #6B, 10C) were adapted from one questionnaire designed to measure elementary and middle school reading and writing teachers' practices and attitudes related to Maryland's high-stakes performance-based assessment program (Parke, Lane, & Stone, 2006). The questionnaire's validity was established by language arts teachers in Maryland, and its coefficient alpha reliability estimates ranged from .68 to .95 (Parke et al., 1999). Permission to adapt items from both of the aforementioned instruments was secured via e-mail (Appendix G).

The survey's open-ended questions were worded precisely, using simplified language focusing on single concepts. The use of ambiguous items, including double- or triple-barreled questions, negative wording, or jargon was avoided (Fink, 1995). Efforts were also made to avoid a high non-response rate, item non-response, and break-offs by designing the survey's length of a maximum of 15 minutes to complete (Czaja & Blair, 2005), as well as providing a progress bar at the top of each survey page appearing on participants' computer screens (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Additionally, survey instructions and questions were developed to be self-explanatory (Czaja & Blair).

The survey's face and content validity were established by consulting with various individuals who have expertise in developing surveys and are knowledgeable about assessment. Revision of the instrument was based upon the experts' recommendations regarding the survey's content, clarity, format, and use of Likert scales. The survey was then given to classroom teachers for the purpose of providing feedback to the researcher to ensure the instrument's usability. Further revisions were made based upon their feedback.

The first page of the survey appearing on participants' computer screens asked them to indicate voluntary consent to participate in the research study. SurveyMonkey's question skip logic function was utilized. Those individuals who chose not to participate were automatically directed to the last page of the survey to exit the screen; those individuals who chose to participate were directed to subsequent pages of the survey to continue. The survey was created in such a manner that all participants had the option of skipping any question that they did not feel comfortable answering or chose not to answer. Likewise, participants could return to any question previously viewed at their discretion. Once participants completed the survey, their responses were automatically stored in the Web-based database software at www.surveymonkey.com (accessible only to the researcher through a username and password).

Data Collection

Data collection occurred between October and December, 2008. This time frame was considered optimal by the researcher due to Broward and Palm Beach County School Boards' restrictions on conducting research at the start and end of the school year, as well as during a designated FCAT testing blackout period (Broward County Public Schools, 2008b; Palm Beach County Public Schools, 2008a). Cover letters inviting third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to participate in this study were sent via e-mail by the researcher to 21 contact persons in Broward County's Title I elementary schools and 6 contact persons in Palm Beach County's Title I elementary schools beginning October 6, 2008 (Appendix H & I).

Cover letters included an appeal to teachers' self-interest by indicating that their participation may contribute to the field of education and the literature focusing on the

impact of high-stakes accountability policy on elementary teachers in Title I schools. A description of the risks to teachers, as well as their potential contribution to the field of education possibly resulting from their participation, were also included. Anonymity of teachers' identity, Internet protocol (IP) addresses, and survey data were assured. Details regarding procedures carried out by the researcher to safeguard the privacy of all data were provided. How the data would be utilized and reported, and who would have access to it, were also described.

Teachers who responded to the e-mail were directed to access the on-line survey through an active link contained in the cover letter (as a form of convenience). Since the use of follow-up contacts have the potential to increase survey response rates (Sue & Ritter, 2007), the researcher sent a second e-mail (Appendix J) to each school's contact person two weeks after the first e-mail was sent. The e-mail requested that the contact person forward the cover letter a second time to all third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers. Seven to 14 days later, hard copies of the survey's Web address were mailed to contact persons to distribute to the teachers.

The number of potential participants from Broward and Palm Beach County comprising this study's purposeful sample was 184, based upon the information returned to the researcher by school principals. Of the 184 teachers that were assumed to have been forwarded a cover letter by their school's designated contact person, 37% (N=68) responded to this study's survey. This rate is slightly lower than the average response rate of 39.6% previously documented for Web-based questionnaires (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000). Of the 68 surveys returned, a total of 2 surveys were excluded from analysis due to excessive missing quantitative data.

Names or other identifiers were not requested or collected on any of the survey instruments. Participants' IP addresses were not tracked. Participants' survey data were automatically submitted electronically and stored in the on-line database as soon as they completed the survey. Survey responses were then printed out in order to obtain hard copies of the data and conduct data analysis procedures.

Hard copies of the survey data were kept in a locked file in the researcher's office. Survey data were downloaded and stored on storage media after completion of data collection; data contained within the Internet database were then deleted immediately thereafter. Data saved on the storage media will be retained for a minimum of five years following the completion of this study and then deleted.

Data Analysis

This study utilized concurrent data analysis procedures (see Figure 3). Quantitative and qualitative survey data initially remained independent of each other during the first stage of analysis, which consisted of four phases: data preparation, data exploration, data analysis, and data representation. Thereafter, the quantitative and qualitative datasets were merged during the second stage of analysis through a comparison of the results. Data interpretation and legitimation then followed.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Demographic and Likert scale items from each section of the survey instrument were pre-coded manually. Coding procedures consisted of naming each variable, associating a description with each variable, and assigning each variable numerical values (Cronk, 2006). A manual (codebook) was simultaneously developed (Appendix K). A

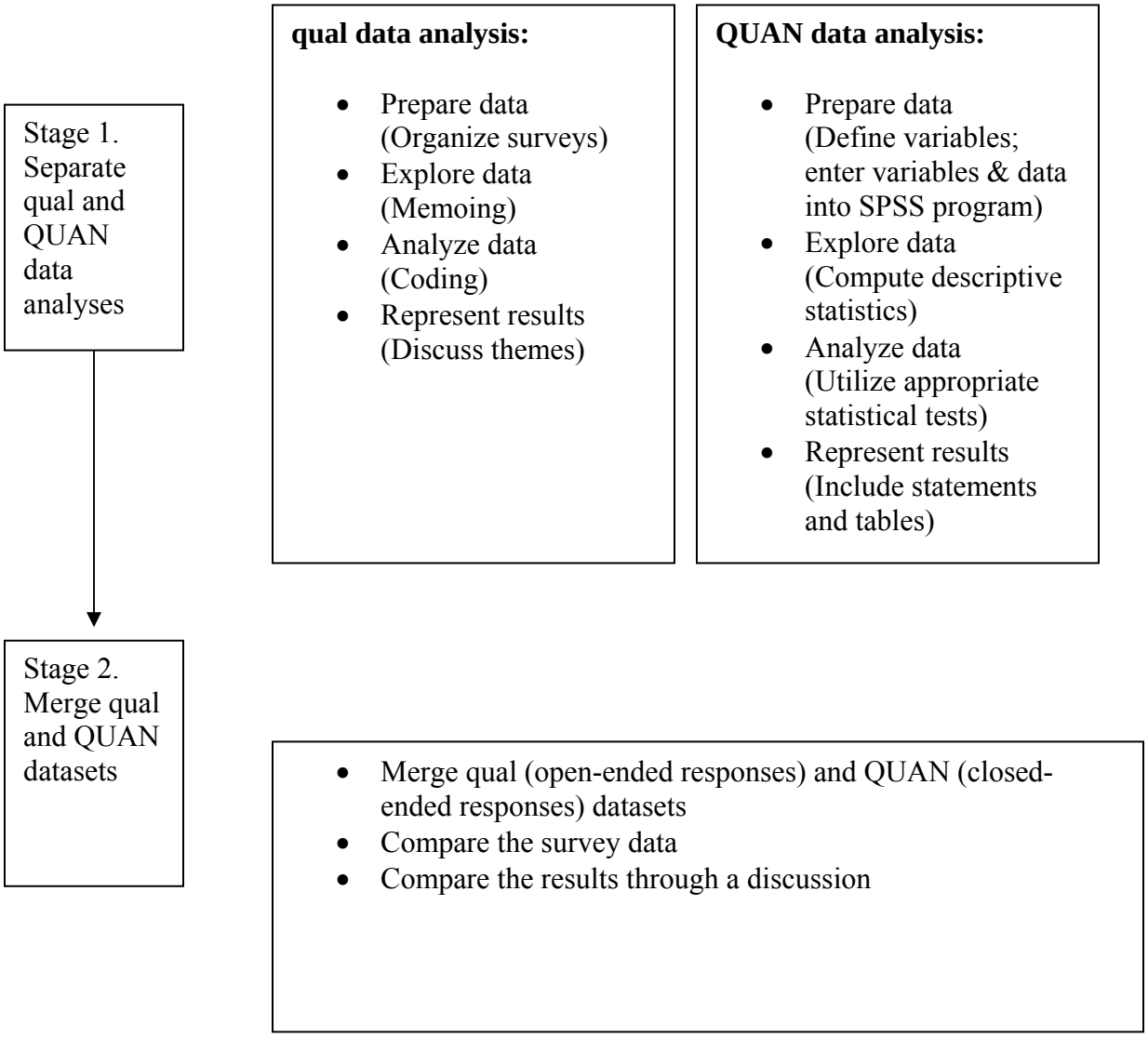

Figure 3. Concurrent data analysis procedures (adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

data file was prepared by entering the information about the variables into a statistical program.

Surveys were organized by assigning a unique two-digit identification number to each instrument upon retrieval. A response rate was calculated for the percentage of surveys returned. Survey data were then coded and entered into the statistical program. All data were cleaned; the database was spot-checked with the original surveys for correct coding, and visually inspected for possible scores that were outside of the accepted range (Czaja & Blair, 2005).

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize survey data, whereby frequency distributions were computed to obtain information regarding sample demographics. Descriptive statistics were also used to summarize teachers' context and capability beliefs Likert scale ratings (#6A-7, 10A-10C). Missing responses were identified and imputed for 10 context and capability beliefs items on 8 respondents' surveys through the use of mean imputation (i.e., means calculated for each variable across participants were substituted for each of the corresponding missing items) (Weisberg, 2005).

Next, two new variables were computed to calculate a total score for respondents' context and capability beliefs ratings. The context variable reflected respondents' total score for survey items #6A, 6B, and 7. The capability variable reflected respondents' total score for survey items #10A, 10B, and 10C. These two variables were then recoded to create two more new variables. The context level variable was used to assign one of Ford's (1992) context belief levels (negative, neutral-variable, or positive) to each teacher's context beliefs total score; similarly, the capability level variable was also used

to assign one of Ford's (1992) capability belief levels (weak, moderate-variable, or strong) to each teacher's capability beliefs total score.

Frequency distributions were computed to calculate the percentage of teachers who exhibited each level of context beliefs and each level of capability beliefs. Additionally, cross-tabulations and a chi-square test were used to identify the percentage of teachers who exhibited each level of context beliefs and capability beliefs simultaneously, and determine if the percentages of teachers exhibiting each possible combination of context and capability belief levels significantly differed from one another.

Next, quantitative survey data were analyzed with regard to the following research hypotheses:

1. Third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have an undergraduate degree will possess more positive context beliefs regarding access to professional development that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have a graduate degree.
2. Experienced third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with five or more years of teaching experience will possess stronger capability beliefs regarding planning, instruction, and assessment practices that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than novice third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience.

Survey data were analyzed using nonparametric inferential statistics. Nonparametric tests are appropriate when the assumptions of parametric tests have not been met (i.e., scores in the population sampled are not normally distributed; data do not represent the interval or ratio scale of measurement; selection of participants is not independent; the variance of scores in the population are unequal) (Kiess, 2002). However, a disadvantage of nonparametric tests is that they are less powerful than parametric methods and, therefore, less likely to identify actual population differences (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003).

In particular, Mann-Whitney *U* tests are useful for analyzing ranked data from the scores of two groups (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). Test requirements include a categorical independent variable and a minimum of one ordinal variable (Cohen et al., 2007). The test compares the number of times a score from one group is ranked higher than a score from another group, resulting in a *U* statistic. Assumptions underlying the Mann-Whitney *U* test are that each participant contributes a maximum of one score to the data, and scores for both groups are at least at the ordinal level of measurement (Cronk, 2006; Kiess, 2002).

In addition, chi-square tests are useful for analyzing data reported in categories by comparing observed (actual) frequencies with expected frequencies (frequencies expected if there is no relation between two dimensions) to develop a test statistic (χ^2) (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003; Kiess, 2002). Chi-square test requirements include a categorical independent variable (with a minimum of two levels), a categorical dependent variable, data (frequencies) measured at the nominal level, and a between-groups design (Gliner & Morgan, 2000). Few assumptions underlie the test; each category's expected frequencies

(i.e., frequencies one would expect to obtain assuming that the independent variable is not related to the dependent variable) should be a minimum of 1, and a maximum of 20% of the categories should have expected frequencies of less than 5 (Cronk, 2006).

In this study, a Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to examine the difference in the context beliefs scores of third grade teachers who have an undergraduate degree and third grade teachers who have a graduate degree. Additionally, a chi-square test was used to examine the difference in the percentages of third grade teachers exhibiting each level of context beliefs (i.e., negative, neutral-variable, and positive) according to highest educational degree held. The independent variable, educational degree, consisted of two levels: graduate and undergraduate. The dependent variable, context beliefs, consisted of three levels: negative, neutral-variable, and positive.

Since this study's first hypothesis addresses teachers' context beliefs specifically related to professional development (rather than professional development and instructional resources combined), a new variable was computed for the respondents' total score for survey items #6A and #6B. Further, in order to conduct the chi-square test, an additional variable was created to assign one of Ford's (1992) context belief levels (negative, neutral-variable, or positive) to each teacher's context beliefs total score. The possible range of scores for answering each corresponding Likert scale item is from 13 (obtained by responding with a 1 to all 13 statements) to 65 (obtained by responding with a 5 to all 13 statements), with higher values representing more positive context beliefs. Rationally-derived cut-off scores were established by dividing the possible range of scores into thirds: weak (13-30); neutral-variable (31-47); and positive context beliefs (48-65).

Next, a Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to examine the difference in the capability beliefs scores of novice third grade teachers (with fewer than five years of teaching experience) and experienced third grade teachers (with five or more years of teaching experience). Additionally, a chi-square test was used to examine the difference in the percentages of third grade teachers exhibiting each level of capability beliefs (i.e., weak, moderate-variable, or strong) according to years of instructional experience. The independent variable, experience, consisted of two levels: novice and experienced. The dependent variable, capability beliefs, consisted of three levels: weak, moderate-variable, and strong. Test data from both statistical analyses allowed the researcher to address this study's second hypothesis.

A significance level (α) (or probability level) was set at the conventional level of .05 for all Mann-Whitney *U* tests and chi-square tests to quantify the level of risk the researcher was prepared to take in committing a Type I error. Thereafter, Cronbach's alpha and the Quantitative Legitimation Model (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; 2003) were used for data legitimation.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis procedures included identifying and organizing those surveys that contained responses to the open-ended items. The researcher then engaged in epoché as an initial step in the analysis (Patton, 2002). This process allowed the researcher to examine personal experiences of high-stakes testing and reflect on personal viewpoints and preconceptions regarding the phenomenon in order to prevent any prejudgments of the respondents' statements.

Next, the researcher conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis by reading through the participants' free text comments in order to gain a general understanding of the data as a whole. Phrases and potentially significant quotes that immediately stood out were highlighted. Memos (short phrases or ideas that occurred to the researcher) were also written on index cards to record initial thoughts (Glaser, 1978; Schwandt, 2001).

Respondents' open-ended survey data were coded manually. The coding process involved identifying and bracketing text that related to a single concept, and assigning a code (i.e., an abbreviation of a key word) that succinctly described the meaning of the text. Each code was written in the left-hand margin of the survey beside the text (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Moreover, a qualitative codebook containing a list of code words was developed (Appendix L). All codes were examined for overlap, whereby similar codes were grouped and redundant codes were eliminated. A list of operational definitions corresponding with each code was developed (Miles & Huberman, 1994) (Appendix M). Codes that occurred most often in the data were grouped into broad themes (or categories) that formed major concepts. Each theme was assigned a label and noted in the right-hand margin of the survey. Similar themes were grouped and interrelated (Miles & Huberman; Patton, 2002). Thereafter, interrater agreement was used for qualitative data legitimation.

Merging the Quantitative and Qualitative Data

After analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data separately, the researcher merged (or explicitly brought together) the two sets of results during the second stage of concurrent data analysis procedures, or the interpretation phase (Creswell & Plano Clark,

2007; Creswell et al., 2003; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Statistical results derived from the quantitative data were compared with themes derived from the qualitative data. In particular, open-ended data derived from survey item #8 were compared with Likert scale data obtained from items #6A, 6B, and 7; open-ended data derived from survey item #9 were compared with Likert scale data obtained from items #10A-10C; and open-ended data derived from survey item #5A were compared with all Likert scale data.

Inferences about quantitative data were made based upon statistical analysis results; inferences about qualitative data were made based upon the themes derived from the participants' open-ended responses. Meta-inferences, or the integration of the inferences based on the quantitative and qualitative strands (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), were then made by the researcher regarding the extent to which the data derived from the qualitative survey questions explained the quantitative survey findings.

Summary

A mixed methods research design was used to address this study's research hypotheses and questions. An on-line survey developed by the researcher elicited third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' context and capability beliefs regarding factors that may have contributed to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I schools in Broward and Palm Beach County. Concurrent with this data collection, open-ended questions were included in the same instrument to explore the teachers' perspectives regarding the means by which they believed they were capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance. Frequency distributions, Mann-Whitney *U* tests, and chi-square tests were used to analyze quantitative survey data; coding and a search for themes were

used to analyze qualitative survey data. Data were then merged and compared, and meta-inferences were made regarding the extent to which the data derived from the qualitative survey items explained the quantitative survey results. Thereafter, Cronbach's alpha and the Quantitative Legitimation Model (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; 2003) were used to legitimate the quantitative survey data, while interrater agreement was used to legitimate the qualitative survey data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures used to address this study's research hypotheses and questions. Separate but concurrent analyses were utilized in accordance with the validating quantitative data model. Quantitative methods of analysis included descriptive statistics (frequency distributions) and nonparametric inferential statistics (Mann-Whitney *U* tests and chi-square tests). Qualitative methods of analysis included coding and a search for significant themes.

Data analysis results are discussed in two separate sections to address the quantitative and qualitative findings. Thereafter, comparisons resulting from the merging of the findings are presented. Finally, a discussion of the legitimation methods used to assess the validity or trustworthiness of the study's data is provided.

Quantitative Data Analysis

A total of 68 respondents submitted an on-line survey; however, two surveys were discarded due to excessive missing data. Thus, data analysis results for 66 completed surveys are presented in the following sections.

Demographic Data

A summary of demographic information for the third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers surveyed in Title I elementary schools in Broward and Palm Beach County, Florida, is presented in Table 5. The majority of respondents (80%) were experienced teachers with five or more years of full-time teaching experience,

Table 5

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Variable	*n*	%
Full-Time Teaching Experience		
Novice	13	19.7
Experienced	53	80.3
Highest Degree Held in Education		
Bachelor's	39	61.9
Graduate	24	38.1
School District Where Employed		
Broward	57	86.4
Palm Beach	9	13.6

while 20% were novice teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience. Of those individuals reporting educational level, most (62%) indicated that the highest degree they obtained in education was a bachelor's degree, whereas 38% held a graduate degree. Finally, 86% of respondents worked in a Title I public elementary school in Broward County, while 14% worked in a Title I public elementary school not prohibited from participating in research studies in Palm Beach County.

Scale Items – Frequency Distributions

Context beliefs. Frequency distributions were computed to summarize teachers' evaluations regarding the availability of professional development courses that could help them learn about planning, instruction, and assessment as provided by their schools or school districts (see Table 6). The majority of teachers surveyed consistently rated each of the corresponding items with a Likert scale response of "agree." In terms of planning and instruction courses, teachers were in highest agreement regarding the availability of professional development that focused on aligning third grade mathematics lesson plans (88%) and reading lesson plans (86%) with the Standards. Similarly, approximately the same percentage of teachers agreed that courses on teaching reading (85%) or mathematics (83%) using the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) were also available. In comparison, a slightly lower percentage of respondents (71%) agreed that courses on using appropriate instructional strategies for low-achieving third grade students, Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, or students with disabilities were available, while 29% disagreed or were not certain regarding these items. Thereafter, teachers were less likely to agree regarding the availability of professional development courses on using appropriate instructional strategies for gifted or talented students (65%), while 26% were not certain.

In terms of high-stakes assessment, teachers were most likely to agree regarding the availability of professional development that focuses on the content of skills assessed by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) (92%). Thereafter, a decrease in the percentage of teachers in agreement regarding the availability of courses focusing on

Table 6

Context Beliefs Items with Title I Teachers' Likert Scale Responses

Survey Item	Response (%)				
	SA	A	NC	D	SD
My school and/or district provides PD courses that can help me learn about…					
Aligning reading lesson plans with Florida's Reading SSS	27[a]	59	9	5	0
Aligning mathematics lesson plans with Florida's Mathematics SSS	29	59	6	6	0
How to teach reading using Florida's Reading SSS	26	59	8	8	0
How to teach mathematics using Florida's Mathematics SSS	26	58	11	6	0
Utilizing appropriate instructional strategies for low-achieving students	24	47	18	9	2
Utilizing appropriate instructional strategies for LEP students	24	47	20	9	0
Utilizing appropriate instructional strategies for students with disabilities	19	52	15	12	2
Utilizing appropriate instructional strategies for gifted/talented students	18	47	26	9	0
The purpose of the FCAT	24	30	23	18	5
The format of FCAT questions	31	49	8	11	2
The content of skills assessed by the FCAT	29	64	3	5	0
How to interpret FCAT results	21	55	12	9	3
How to use FCAT results to improve classroom instruction	23	56	11	9	2
My school provides me with access to…					
Adequate reading textbooks/basals	36	53	2	8	2
Adequate supplemental trade books/children's literature	36	44	0	16	5
Adequate reference books	29	41	2	23	6
Adequate visual aids	30	39	2	23	6
Adequate manipulatives/hands-on materials	29	55	5	9	3
Adequate measuring tools	29	45	6	19	2

Note. SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree NC= Not Certain D=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree
[a]Values are rounded up.

the format of FCAT questions was evident (80%). Whereas 79% of teachers agreed that courses focusing on using students' FCAT results to improve classroom instruction were available, 11% of teachers disagreed and 11% were not certain. Also, 76% of teachers

agreed that courses on interpreting FCAT results were available, while 12% of teachers either disagreed or were not certain. Finally, a little more than one-half of the teachers surveyed (55%) agreed that courses regarding the purpose of the FCAT were available, while 23% either disagreed or were not certain.

Teachers' evaluations regarding the Resources scale items (#7a-f) were similar to their responses regarding the availability of professional development; when asked about the adequacy of instructional resources available at their school sites, the majority of teachers surveyed tended to consistently rate each of the corresponding items with a Likert scale response of "agree," indicating that they were adequate. Teachers were in highest agreement regarding the adequacy of reading textbooks or basals (89%) at their school sites, followed by manipulatives or hands-on materials (83%). A slightly lower percentage (80%) of teachers agreed regarding the adequacy of supplemental trade books or children's literature. Thereafter, teachers were less likely to agree (74%) regarding the adequacy of measuring tools. Likewise, teachers were also less likely to agree regarding the adequacy of reference books (70%) and visual aids (70%), while 29% disagreed regarding the adequacy of either of these items.

Once frequency distributions were computed for teachers' Likert scale items, missing responses were imputed for 10 items on 8 surveys through the use of mean imputation. Thereafter, a total score was calculated for each respondent's Professional Development and Resources scale ratings for items #6A, 6B, and 7, and then recoded into one of three levels of context beliefs. Frequency distributions provided a summary of the percentage of teachers who possessed each level of context beliefs as follows: 2% negative, 35% neutral-variable, and 64% positive.

Capability beliefs. Frequency distributions were also computed to summarize teachers' evaluations of their own instructional abilities regarding three survey categories: Teacher Beliefs: Planning and Instruction; Teacher Beliefs: Resources and Instruction; and Teacher Beliefs: Assessment (see Table 7). Respondents frequently rated each of the corresponding survey items (#10A-10C) with a Likert scale response of "strong ability." In terms of planning and instruction, the majority of teachers surveyed (80%) indicated a strong personal ability to align third grade mathematics lesson plans with Florida's Mathematics SSS and teach mathematics using the Standards. Further, 74% of teachers indicated a strong ability to align third grade reading lesson plans with Florida's Reading SSS and teach reading using the SSS, while 26% rated their ability regarding either task as moderate.

The percentage of teachers evaluating their instructional ability as strong continued to decrease upon being presented with survey statements regarding the use of appropriate instructional strategies with particular student populations, including low-achieving third-grade students (65%) and LEP students (56%). Thereafter, only one-half of the teachers surveyed (50%) ranked their ability for using appropriate instructional strategies with students with disabilities as strong, while 44% indicated a moderate ability. Last, an equal percentage of teachers (47%) ranked their ability for using appropriate instructional strategies with students identified as gifted or talented as strong or moderate.

In terms of resources, most teachers surveyed (89%) indicated they possessed a strong ability to utilize visual aids in their instruction of the third grade Reading and Mathematics SSS, followed by reading textbooks or basals (88%). In addition,

Table 7

Capability Beliefs Items with Title I Teachers' Likert Scale Responses

Survey Item	Response (%)			
	SA	MA	ma	NC
Indicate your degree of confidence in your personal ability to carry out each of the following tasks.				
•Align reading lesson plans with Florida's Reading SSS	74[a]	26	0	0
•Align mathematics lesson plans with Florida's Mathematics SSS	80	18	2	0
•Teach reading using Florida's Reading SSS	74	26	0	0
•Teach mathematics using Florida's Mathematics SSS	80	19	2	0
•Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for low-achieving students	65	32	3	0
•Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for LEP students	56	38	5	2
•Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for students with disabilities	50	44	3	3
•Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for gifted/talented students	47	47	3	3
•Interpret reports of students' FCAT results	62	32	5	2
•Use reports of students' FCAT results to improve classroom instruction	63	32	3	2
Indicate your degree of confidence in your personal ability to utilize each of the following resources in your instruction of the 3rd grade Reading & Mathematics SSS.				
•Reading textbooks/basals	89	11	0	0
•Supplemental trade books/children's literature	80	17	3	0
•Reference books	82	17	2	0
•Visual aids	89	9	2	0
•Manipulatives/hands-on materials	83	17	0	0
•Measuring tools	80	18	2	0

Note. SA=Strong Ability MA=Moderate Ability ma= Minimal Ability NC=Not Certain

[a]Values are rounded up.

approximately the same percentage of teachers indicated a strong ability to use manipulatives or hands-on materials (83%) and reference books (82%). Thereafter, an equal percentage of teachers (80%) rated their ability to use supplemental trade books or

measuring tools as strong, while most of the remaining teachers indicated a moderate ability.

Finally, responses obtained from capability beliefs Likert scale items focusing on assessment indicated that although many of the teachers surveyed (63%) rated their ability to use reports of third grade students' FCAT results to improve classroom instruction as strong, a little over one-third (35%) indicated a moderate or minimal ability. Moreover, whereas most teachers surveyed indicated a strong ability to interpret reports of students' FCAT results (62%), a considerable percentage of teachers (37%) rated their ability as moderate or minimal.

After frequency distributions were computed for teachers' Likert scale items, a total score was calculated for each respondent's capability beliefs ratings (items #10A-10C) and then recoded into one of three levels of beliefs. Frequency distributions provided a summary of the percentages of teachers who possessed each level of capability beliefs as follows: 9% moderate-variable and 91% strong.

Classification of Context and Capability Beliefs

Cross-tabulations were used to categorize the context and capability belief levels that each respondent simultaneously possessed according to nine categories aligned with Ford's (1992) belief levels (see Table 8). Examination of cross-tabulations output using a chi-square test revealed that the percentages of teachers simultaneously exhibiting each possible combination of context and capability belief levels significantly differed from one another ($\chi^2(2) = 10.197$, $p = .006$). The majority of respondents surveyed (59%) possessed positive context beliefs and strong capability beliefs. The second largest percentage of teachers (32%) possessed neutral-variable context beliefs and strong

Table 8

Categorization of Teachers' Levels of Context and Capability Beliefs

	Capability Beliefs		
Context Beliefs	Strong	Moderate–Variable	Weak
Positive	39 (59.1%)	3 (4.5%)	0
Neutral–Variable	21 (31.8%)	2 (3%)	0
Negative	0	1 (1.5%)	0

capability beliefs. Few teachers possessed moderate-variable capability beliefs and positive context beliefs (5%), neutral-variable context beliefs (3%), or negative context beliefs (2%), while none of the respondents possessed weak capability beliefs.

Analyses of Professional Development Context Beliefs

Quantitative survey data were analyzed using nonparametric inferential statistics. A Mann-Whitney *U* test was calculated examining the difference in the professional development context beliefs scores of those third grade teachers who reported having an undergraduate degree and those who reported having a graduate degree in education. No significant difference was found (U =387.50, p = .253). Third grade teachers who have an undergraduate degree averaged a score of 29.94, while third grade teachers who have a graduate degree averaged a score of 35.35. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Further, based on a chi-square analysis, the percentages of third grade teachers exhibiting each level of professional development context beliefs (i.e., negative, neutral-variable, and positive) according to highest education degree held (undergraduate or graduate) did not significantly differ from one another ($\chi^2(2) = 2.91$, $p = .233$) (see Table 9).

Table 9

Teachers' Context Beliefs Levels According to Education Degree Held

	Highest Education Degree	
Context Beliefs	Bachelor's	Graduate
Positive	25 (64.1%)	20 (83.3%)
Neutral–Variable	13 (33.3%)	4 (16.7%)
Negative	1 (2.6%)	0

Analyses of Capability Beliefs

A Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to examine the difference in the capability beliefs scores of novice third grade teachers (with a maximum of four years teaching experience) and experienced third grade teachers (with a minimum of five years teaching experience). No significant difference was found ($U = 288$, $p = .358$). Novice third grade

teachers averaged a score of 37.85, while experienced third grade teachers averaged a score of 32.43. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

A chi-square test also showed that the percentages of teachers exhibiting each level of capability beliefs (weak, moderate-variable, or strong) according to years of full-time instructional experience (novice or experienced) did not significantly differ from one another (χ^2 (1) = .04, p = .845) (see Table 10).

Table 10

Teachers' Capability Beliefs Levels According to Instructional Experience

Capability Beliefs	Instructional Experience	
	Novice (0-4 yrs.)	Experienced (5+ yrs.)
Strong	12 (92.3%)	48 (90.6%)
Moderate–Variable	1 (7.7%)	5 (9.4%)
Weak	0	0

Qualitative Data Analysis

Open-ended data for 66 respondents' surveys were manually coded by the researcher. The coding process involved identifying and bracketing text that related to a single concept, and assigning a descriptive code that succinctly described the meaning of the text. Codes that occurred most often in the data were grouped into broad themes (or

categories) that formed major concepts, whereby similar themes were grouped and interrelated (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). A description of each of those themes is provided in the following sections.

Classroom Assessment

Open-ended survey item #4A elicited teachers' responses regarding the types of classroom assessment they were using to assess students' knowledge of the third grade Reading and Mathematics Standards. All 66 participants responded to this item, thereby resulting in the identification of 7 types of classroom assessment: textbook-derived assessments; benchmark assessments; traditional forms of assessment; alternative forms of assessment; subject area diagnostics and inventories; test preparation assessments; and supplemental program assessments.

Almost all respondents surveyed indicated that they relied on some component from their core reading or mathematics textbook series (including Harcourt Reading, Harcourt Math, and MacMillan Reading) as a form of classroom assessment. In particular, chapter tests were the most commonly mentioned type of textbook-derived assessment. Additionally, a second popular form of classroom assessment identified by respondents was benchmark assessments (i.e., assessments specifically aligned with the SSS). Teachers referring to this category of assessments noted their use of benchmark assessment tests (i.e., district-mandated tests that assess students' knowledge of the third grade Reading and Mathematics benchmarks twice a year prior to the administration of the FCAT) and mini-benchmark assessment tests (i.e., informal assessments that assess students' knowledge of the third grade Reading and Mathematics benchmarks on a weekly basis).

Thereafter, several respondents indicated their use of traditional forms of classroom assessment (i.e., paper-and-pencil tests). Teacher-made tests were most often cited, followed by mini-assessments. Pretests and quizzes were also mentioned. Moreover, approximately the same number of respondents indicated their use of alternative forms of assessment (i.e., alternatives to traditional paper-and-pencil tests). Observations were the most common type noted, followed by anecdotal records, oral assessments, rubrics, portfolios, projects, reports, class work, and homework assignments. Further, computer-based assessments were an additional form of alternative assessment to which respondents referred. Specific computer-based assessment programs cited included FCAT Explorer, Accelerated Reader, STAR Reading, Scholastic Reading Inventory, Breakthrough to Literacy, Odyssey Reading and Math, and First in Math.

Some respondents indicated their use of subject area diagnostics and inventories. Diagnostic Assessments of Reading (DARs) were usually listed, followed by running records, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), math inventories, Informal Reading Inventories (IRIs), and SSS diagnostics. Few respondents mentioned their use of commercial test-preparation materials from which they obtained FCAT practice assessments. Those teachers who did refer to test-preparation materials listed workbooks such as Fast Track to FCAT, FCAT Coach, Strategies to Achieve Reading Success, Reading Connections, Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Strategies, Comprehensive Assessment of Mathematics Strategies, Blast-Off, and Buckle Up. Similarly, a few respondents indicated their use of assessments derived from commercial supplemental programs (i.e., educational programs used to supplement the core reading or mathematics program), including Kaleidoscope and Math Acaletics.

Survey item #4B sought teachers' elaboration on their responses to the previous survey item by asking them to note the extent to which they believed the forms of classroom assessment they listed in item #4A were effective in providing them with feedback regarding their students' learning. All but one participant provided a response to this item.

Teachers who commented on the use of textbook-derived assessments indicated that such assessments provided information regarding students' mastery of content, as well as areas of instruction that required further remediation. Responses included, "The end of chapter tests are used to see growth or if additional enrichment is needed" and "The textbook assessments help identify the [question types] and skills that students still need extra help on from the Math chapter, or Reading skills that I am teaching." However, one respondent indicated that "The math tests… are not as good a predictor of true mathematical understanding as tested by the FCAT." Another respondent explained, "Trophies Reading Tests only have comprehension problems, I prefer …higher level questions on the test."

Most respondents who reported using benchmark assessments also described them as being effective or very effective in determining students' mastery of the benchmarks and providing implications for subsequent instruction. Comments included, "It allows me the chance to see if my students are making any gains in what has been taught. It also allows me to see what I need to focus on more" and "…It allows me to specifically determine what benchmarks my students are grasping." In contrast, one respondent stated, "The Reading Mini Bats [benchmark assessment tests] seem too difficult in the beginning of the school year due to readability." Also, one other

respondent discussed the lack of congruence between benchmark tests and other assessments:

> Test results are NOT consistant [*sic*]. They are used for grouping and reordering lessons. Unfortunately, this is done after each test so we find ourselves jumping from topic to topic with little regard for hierarchy skills. We have focus calendars that we must follow and give mini-benchmark tests on schedule but they do not go along with what other tests tell us. Everything conflicts with everything else.

Traditional forms of assessment were primarily described as being effective in identifying students' weaknesses or areas of difficulty that required additional instructional support. One participant stated, "They are very effective because I can then target the individual skill that needs more work with each child." Similarly, alternative forms of assessment were considered effective in providing feedback regarding students' strengths and weaknesses, as well as whether mastery of particular concepts was attained.

Further, subject area diagnostics and inventories were considered useful for providing specific information regarding individual student's reading and mathematics skills. As noted in the following comments, "They provide me with information such as the student's fluency rate, comprehension, and phonics level. I am able to identify areas of strengths and weakness based on their effective results" and "The diagnostic tests … are effective in determining if they are getting the whole picture."

FCAT practice tests derived from commercial test preparation materials were mostly considered effective in providing teachers feedback regarding students' strengths and weaknesses, and whether remediation was necessary. Information derived from these materials was also considered useful for grouping students according to ability for instruction. Respondents' comments included, "I am able to see what areas my students are having difficulty in and need extra support" and "The tests provide data that then

allow us to group the students for individualized instruction, allowing them to reach their full potential."

Finally, information derived from supplemental program assessments was also considered useful for identifying students' weaknesses, grouping students, and guiding instruction. Teachers' remarks included, "I consistently know my students' strengths and weaknesses. This effectively helps me to drive student instruction to meet the needs of my students" and "…it shows me if my students are on or below grade level, and which skills I need to work on with my students in order to better prepare them for the FCAT."

Perceptions of Teacher Accountability

Open-ended survey item #5A asked respondents, "In your opinion, in what way(s) should third grade teachers be held accountable for their students' knowledge of Reading and Mathematics Sunshine State Standards assessed on the FCAT?" Sixty-two of the 66 participants responded. Preliminary analysis of the survey responses resulted in the discovery of an overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledging a general need for teacher accountability, with many of their comments beginning with phrases such as "Third grade teachers should be accountable…" and "We should be held accountable…" Thereafter, closer examination of participants' responses resulted in the identification of three specific types of teacher accountability: contingency-based accountability, accountability for student growth, and instructional accountability (see Table 11).

Contingency-based accountability. The most frequently recurring theme emerging from teachers' open-ended responses was contingency-based accountability, whereby the majority of respondents indicated that teacher accountability should be

Table 11

Title I Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Florida

Proposed Views	Examples
Contingency-Based Accountability	
1. Accountability for others	Students, parents, previous teachers
2. Personal student factors	Ability, home environment, academic experience, behavior, testing factors, student population
3. Students' level of academic performance upon entering third grade	Mastery of second grade skills
Accountability for Student Growth	
4. Student growth as specified by the *A+ Plan*	Students gain one year's worth of knowledge in one year's length of time
5. Modifications of the *A+ Plan's* specifications of student growth	Growth model, general gains
Instructional Accountability	
6. Whether teachers implement instruction of the curriculum	Implementation of reading and mathematics instruction, reinforcement of concepts
7. How teachers implement instruction of the curriculum	Effective instruction

contingent or dependent upon the consideration of certain factors. Such responses were usually signaled by words and phrases such as "if…, then," "depending on," "unless," "only," and "rather than." In particular, three types of contingencies in need of consideration were noted: accountability for others; personal student factors (beyond the teacher's control); and students' level of academic performance upon entering third grade.

Several respondents referred to accountability for others as a contingency upon which teacher accountability should be based. As noted by two respondents, "I don't mind [being] held accountable, but I do mind being the only one accountable" and "There are so many factors that contribute to learning that it would be unfair to hold one person accountable." Specifically, respondents identified various individuals (in addition to third grade teachers) who should also be held accountable for students' knowledge of the Reading and Mathematics Standards. These individuals included students, students' previous teachers, and parents.

A few respondents referred to the need for student accountability to precede teacher accountability: "Children should show one [year's worth of] growth before entering third grade;" "I feel that the student's academic performance and classifications should be looked at… I think after looking at that data, then we need to look at the teacher." Accountability for current and previous teachers was also mentioned: "…it is not just up to the third grade teacher - the previous teachers should also be held accountable because they must teach foundations upon which third grade teachers build knowledge." Also, a need for teacher and parent accountability was cited: "I think we should have to show a reasonable amount of growth per child per year. If you hold me

accountable then the PARENTS should also be held to the same accountability." Finally, simultaneous accountability for multiple individuals was suggested, with the bulk of responsibility falling upon teachers' shoulders: "I think it is a 50/25/25; teachers, students and parents should be held accountable for a child's knowledge of the above subject areas."

In contrast, several respondents shunned teacher accountability for students' knowledge of the Reading and Mathematics SSS assessed on the FCAT altogether: "Third grade teachers should not be held accountable no shape or form;" "I think that for grade three teachers they cannot be held accountable because there is no prior year FCAT to compare scores with;" "Some students are below level and find it difficult to do third grade work because they are not exposed to basic knowledge depending on their backgrounds. I don't think that we should be held accountable."

Personal student factors beyond the teachers' control was the second most commonly cited contingency upon which respondents believed teacher accountability should be based. The majority of respondents referred to student ability (including learning ability, capability, and disabilities) as one such factor. Corresponding statements included, "[Teachers] should be held accountable for the progress the students make, depending on the student's capability;" "Teachers should be held accountable to a certain degree. All students should be able to show gains in the academic areas, unless there is a severe disability;" "If the students are not reading at a third grade level due to their inability then the teacher should NOT be held accountable for the student receiving a [Level] 1 on the FCAT."

Several respondents also referred to factors or issues stemming from students' home environments as personal factors beyond the teacher's control that need to be considered when holding teachers accountable for students' FCAT performance, including "reinforcement of [the SSS] from home," "divorce, negligence," and "social/home issues." Additional factors included students' previous academic experience ("It should only go only to certain extent, especially since there are many things that they were not taught in previous grades"); students' behavior; testing factors ("The child … could also be a nervous test taker"); and students' backgrounds ("…the population of the students should also be considered").

In addition to personal student factors, the third type of contingency respondents believed teacher accountability should be dependent upon was students' level of academic performance upon entering third grade. Related responses included, "Students who are missing skills from second grade come into third with a disadvantage. I think teachers should be accountable for those who are ready to learn all third grade Reading and Math skills as tested on the FCAT;" "We should be held accountable for students within the time they have been in our class from the beginning. This should include only those students who enter with mastery of second grade skills;" and "If a student enters the third grade below level we should not be held responsible."

Accountability for student growth. A second theme emerging from teachers' responses to survey item #5A was teacher accountability for student growth. In particular, two types of student growth were referred to: student growth as specified by the *A+ Plan*; and modifications of the *A+ Plan's* specifications of student growth. Several respondents indicated that they should be held accountable for their students'

knowledge of the Reading and Mathematics SSS by demonstrating that their students' gained a year's worth of knowledge in a year's length of time (as is consistent with the *A+ Plan's* underlying premise). A few respondents provided statements similar to the following, "We should be accountable for showing one year of growth in student progress [in] both reading and mathematics." However, other respondents discussed modifications of student growth as defined by the *A+ Plan*. For instance, a few respondents indicated a general amount of growth that should be required of students when holding teachers accountable: "I think we should have to show a reasonable amount of growth per child per year;" "Teachers should be held accountable for the gains students make;" "…third grade teachers should be held accountable for overall growth." One respondent also indicated that growth should be determined by each student's point of academic origin upon entering third grade: "We should be held accountable for moving our students. We should be expected to move our students a minimum of a year from where they came to us." Another respondent suggested, "There should be a growth model…," but did not provide details regarding this suggestion.

Instructional accountability. Accountability for curriculum and instruction was a third theme emerging from respondents' comments to survey item #5A. Rather than being held accountable for students' knowledge of Reading and Mathematics SSS, participants described teacher accountability in relation to whether or how teachers implement instruction of the third grade reading and mathematics curriculum. Responses included, "Teachers should be held accountable for effectively teaching the 12 reading strategies and math concepts;" "… third grade teachers should be held accountable [for teaching] the new concepts and reinforcing it [*sic*] as well;" and "They should be held

accountable to the degree that each standard was taught and assessed prior to the FCAT." The need for sources of documentation was also cited: "Teachers should be held accountable by having all the necessary documents showing what they did with that particular student and how they helped them [*sic*] better prepare for the FCAT;" "If the majority of students have scored on or above grade level on the test, that should be sufficient to prove the skills had been taught and learned."

Survey item #5B sought teachers' elaboration on their responses to the previous survey item by asking them to note whether they had seen or heard about the specific means of teacher accountability they cited in item #5A actually working in other schools, districts, or states. Interestingly, of the 50 respondents who provided comments to item #5B, only a few teachers indicated they had any prior knowledge of the types of teacher accountability they described in their previous response to item #5A. One respondent indicated that the personally proposed means of teacher accountability suggested in item #5A were currently in effect within the state of Florida: "Yes. A plus funds" [referring to teacher bonuses for students scoring at a Level 3 or above]. One respondent also cited personal knowledge of incentives being provided in relation to teacher accountability for students' gains: "There has been some talk about giving incentives for teachers who have students that show higher gains."

Additionally, two respondents indicated that the proposed means of teacher accountability described in item #5A were known due to personal experience: "When I was in elementary school this is what they [used] to do and it was successful;" "My grade team decided to teach each benchmark specifically twice before the test while review and remediation happen continuously." Finally, one respondent referred to personal opinion

as a basis for citing whether the proposed means of teacher accountability recommended in item #5A had actually been seen or heard working in other schools, districts, or states: "The teaching of the curriculum has always worked, using the methods and style most effective for the individual child."

Accountability-related concerns. In addition to responding to the questions posed in survey items #5A and #5B, several teachers used either of these items to further voice their beliefs regarding teacher accountability for third grade students. One common concern raised by several respondents was related to third grade teachers being held to the *A+ Plan's* performance standards, regardless of students' preparedness for the third grade. Respondents who voiced this concern repeatedly discussed teacher accountability for students who were below grade level upon entering third grade or unprepared for the third grade curriculum. Comments included, "…we are accountable for all students to be on grade level. This is not possible because they do not come into third grade on third grade level;" "…teachers are held accountable for having students perform at grade level by the end of the grade. Often times, these requests are very difficult to obtain, as we do not have enough time with the students when they come in extremely below grade level;" and "Many students arrive in third grade unprepared for the course work. It is difficult to get all of the curriculum under their belts in 7 months and be 100% accountable for what they are able to do or not do."

A second accountability-related concern raised by other respondents was the use of the FCAT itself as a measure of accountability. Recommendations were made by some teachers for the use of other forms of assessment in addition to the FCAT to measure students' knowledge of the Standards. Such statements included: "I think the

FCAT should be used only as one tool to measure a student's learning;" and "…I do believe in assessing students [on] a more frequent basis, not just using the FCAT as a major tool to identify students' or teachers' success." In contrast, a few other teachers rejected the use of the FCAT altogether by stating that "…we should have some form of accountability through standardized data, but not in the form we have right now," and that the FCAT does not accurately reflect students' knowledge or teachers' instructional effectiveness.

Context Beliefs

Open-ended survey item #8 asked respondents, "What additional instructional resources and/or professional development topics do you believe would help you to better teach your students the third grade Reading and Mathematics Sunshine State Standards?" Analysis of 59 teachers' responses resulted in the identification of two categories of needs (instructional resource needs and professional development needs), whereby most of the respondents cited a need for additional instructional resources (see Table 12). A description of themes that emerged from each of these categories is provided in the following sections.

Instructional resources. Many teachers who responded to item #8 indicated a need for additional supplemental materials (i.e., instructional resources used to supplement the core reading or mathematics program). In particular, manipulatives and hands-on learning activities were the most common type of supplemental resource requested. Several teachers' responses were general ("More manipulatives and hands on [*sic*] materials), while others were more specific: "Educational games that incorporate the SSS …, making it fun for children to learn;" and "Literacy centers for reading to focus on

Table 12

Title I Teachers' Needs for the Instruction of Florida's Reading and Mathematics Standards

Needs	Examples
Instructional Resources	
1. Supplemental materials	Manipulatives Hands-on learning activities Books Test preparation materials
2. Technology equipment	Laptops Computers SMART classrooms
Professional Development	
3. Instructional support	Instructional supervision Subject area instruction Differentiated instruction Strategies & skills instruction
4. Curriculum-related skill enhancement	Technology Centers

skills for reading assessment." One respondent explained the urgency for such a need by stating,

> I would like to have more hands-on items for reading. We have plenty for math, but almost nothing for reading. The budget does not allow us to buy anything. I work in a very low economic area and the parents can't help either.

Teachers' needs for manipulatives and hands-on learning activities were closely followed by their requests for additional books, including "chapter books," "up-to-date books," and "consumable workbooks." Further, a few teachers also cited a need for additional test preparation supplemental resources, such as "small-group test preparation materials" and "high-interest test material."

In addition to the aforementioned supplemental resources, technology was the second most commonly cited instructional resource needed. In particular, a need for laptops was most frequently mentioned, followed by requests for additional computers and SMART classrooms equipped with "state-of-the-art technology." Several teachers provided reasons for citing such needs by describing the shortage of technology equipment at their school sites, as noted in the following statements: "…there [are] 11 third grade classes. We currently only have 20 laptops to share;" "…we do not have enough computers for our students." One teacher further elaborated,

> The students are required to go to reading websites including Riverdeep and FCAT Explorer. The students are only able to go on the computer for 20 minutes a day to be considerate to 10 other classrooms that share the current laptop cart.

Professional development. In comparison to the volume of open-ended responses related to teachers' needs for additional instructional resources, a need for additional professional development was less frequently cited by respondents. However, those teachers that did indicate a need for additional professional development were specific in their responses, whereby professional development with a focus on providing teachers with instructional support was the most common recurring theme. Requests for various professional development topics were made, such as differentiated instruction, small-

group instruction, mathematics instruction, benchmarks instruction, and test-taking skills instruction.

A need for addressing students' weaknesses also existed ("…how to reach struggling readers;" "Specific courses on how best to help a student lacking a particular skill set"), whereby one respondent cited an issue with district-provided professional development courses, as indicated in the following remark: "I think we all know how to test students and find their weaknesses, but the county doesn't clearly explain in any workshop I have attended what you should do once you know the child's deficits to help them more." A few individuals also commented on the need for professional development that provides opportunities for the application of learned concepts: "During professional development, actually going into the classroom of students and using what we have learned that day to apply with the watchful eye of the instructor;" "Hands-on professional development that increases student performance in the classroom."

A second theme related to professional development was teachers' needs for curriculum-related skill enhancement. Responses corresponding with this theme reflected specific skills and strategies requested by teachers to provide the foundation for their instruction. A few respondents indicated a need for professional development with a focus on technology ("A virtual course review… to refresh my skills;" "…lots of SMART training for the teacher to use the equipment effectively"), whereas a few others cited a need for professional development focusing on learning centers ("How to provide a variety of practice for each benchmark at centers;" "I would like professional development in incorporating more strategies with my reading centers").

Whereas the majority of teachers responding to survey item #8 indicated an instructional resource need, a professional development need, or a combination of both, a couple of respondents indicated that a need for either did not exist. Corresponding statements included, "We already have so many instructional resources to use to teach the Sunshine State Standards;" "My school provides ample professional development towards SSS;" and "N/A."

Capability Beliefs

Survey item #9 asked respondents to describe the special abilities they believed they brought to the classroom when teaching their students the third grade Reading and Mathematics Standards. Analysis of 59 teachers' responses resulted in the identification of three categories of special abilities: instructional approaches, curriculum and instruction familiarity, and supportiveness (see Table 13). Aside from these three main categories of responses provided, only one respondent provided a response of "none." A description of themes that emerged from each of the three categories is provided below.

Instructional approaches. The majority of teachers who responded to item #9 cited a special personal ability to utilize specific instructional approaches. In particular, three types of approaches were identified: making learning enjoyable, engaging students in learning, and utilizing multiple teaching methods. Making learning enjoyable was the most commonly cited instructional approach, with responses ranging from making learning fun and motivating students, to having enthusiasm and a positive attitude. As indicated by several participants, "…I try and make each lesson fun and exciting, so they look forward to learning;" "I do everything I can to make learning and reading fun and

Table 13

Special Abilities Contributing to Title I Teachers' Instruction of Florida's Reading and Mathematics Standards

Special Ability	Examples
Instructional Approaches	
1. Make learning enjoyable	Fun Enthusiasm Motivation Positive attitude
2. Engage students in learning	Hands-on activities Relevant content Personal talents
3. Utilize multiple methods	Teaching styles Modes of presentation
Curriculum & Instruction Familiarity	
4. Knowledge of curriculum	Subject areas Instructional programs Materials
5. Knowledge of implementing instruction or experience with providing instruction	Instructional strategies Learning strategies
Supportiveness	
6. Listen	
7. Relate	Ability to communicate with students
8. Patience	
9. Empathy	Understanding of what is asked of students

enjoyable;" and "The special abilities I bring to the classroom include enthusiasm for reading and math."

The second most commonly cited instructional approach was teachers' special ability to engage students in the learning process either by making the content relevant to students, using hands-on activities, or utilizing personal talents. A few participants provided general statements regarding this special ability, such as, "I try to make whatever activity or lesson we are doing … engaging;" and "The ability to actively engage my students in the task at hand." Several participants described how they made curriculum content relevant to students' interests or prior knowledge: "I am able to relate the content to their areas of [interest];" "I can show them how to relate what we are trying to learn to something they understand;" "...relate topics to the students' lives." Others indicated using hands-on manipulatives or activities to engage their students in learning: "I have the ability of getting the students involved in the lesson and creating hands on [*sic*] activities. I do not want the students to constantly feel like they are being assessed…" Finally, a few participants made referred to the use of personal talents to engage students in learning: "One of the most important abilities I possess is that of being a story teller. I can get them involved and get them to listen;" "I have a wide-range of talents, including music, story-telling…"

A third instructional approach cited by a few respondents was teachers' ability to utilize multiple teaching methods, including various teaching styles and modes of presentation. Corresponding statements included: "…I bring a mixture of many different teaching styles and methods to try to help all my students learn;" and

"Presenting skills and concepts in a variety of ways so that students of varying abilities can learn."

Curriculum and instruction familiarity. A second category that emerged from teachers' responses regarding their special abilities was their familiarity with curriculum or instruction. Several of the responses in this category were related to teachers' knowledge of the curriculum, including specific subject areas, instructional programs, and materials. Respondents stated, "Knowledge about …various reading programs, trained in administering several different reading diagnostic tools;" "I am well-trained [attending] workshop[s] to enhance my subject knowledge of the curriculum;" and "… [I] have been teaching third grade for the seventh year, so I find myself somewhat proficient in what is needed to be taught."

The remainder of responses in this category reflected teachers' knowledge of implementing instruction or experience in providing instruction. Teachers' knowledge of implementing instruction was related to instructional strategies ("moving [student] levels") and learning strategies ("The knowledge that all students do not learn the same way. You have to figure out the missing skills and the best way for that student to learn them").

Supportiveness. Finally, a third category emerging from several teachers' responses to survey item #9 was their supportiveness of students. In particular, respondents referred to their special ability to listen and relate to students, and be patient and empathetic. Corresponding remarks included, "My ability to relate and communicate with students;" "I am patient with them and I use a lot of praise and reinforcement;" and "An understanding of how difficult what we are asking kids to do at the age of eight."

Merging the Quantitative and Qualitative Data

After the quantitative and qualitative survey data were analyzed separately, an attempt was made to merge (or bring together) and compare both sets of data in accordance with the validating quantitative data model. Overall, the majority of quantitative and qualitative data reflected mostly non-overlapping sets of information. Since limited integration of qualitative themes with quantitative Likert scale data was possible, qualitative data could only be used to provide additional insights into respondents' context and capability beliefs not reflected in their quantitative survey data. A discussion of comparisons made for each set of corresponding quantitative and qualitative survey items follows.

Context beliefs. Quantitative Likert scale data derived from survey items #6A, 6B, and 7 indicated that the majority of teachers surveyed consistently agreed that their schools or school districts provided professional development that could help them learn about aligning lesson plans and instruction with Florida's Reading and Mathematics SSS, use appropriate instructional strategies with various student populations, and interpret and use students' FCAT data to guide instruction. Quantitative results also indicated that the majority of teachers surveyed agreed that their schools provided them with access to adequate or sufficient instructional resources aligned with the Reading and Mathematics Standards.

One instance upon which participants' open-ended responses could be compared with quantitative items occurred with survey item #7e. Quantitatively, the data indicated that the majority of participants (83%) were in agreement regarding the adequacy of manipulatives or hands-on materials at their schools sites. Qualitatively, the data

revealed that the teachers needed additional supplemental reading and mathematics materials (including manipulatives and hands-on activities) to better teach their students the third grade Reading and Mathematics Standards. Most participants' surveys provided evidence of data validation; a need for manipulatives as indicated in their open-ended responses validated those teachers' Likert scale ratings of "disagree" regarding the adequacy of manipulatives or hands-on materials at their school sites (see Table 14).

Table 14

Merging Quantitative and Qualitative Data for Title I Teachers' Context Beliefs

Quantitative	Qualitative
My school provides me with access to adequate manipulatives/ hands-on materials	What additional instructional resources/ professional development topics do you believe would help you to better teach your students the third grade Reading & Mathematics SSS?
Agree	"More manipulatives and hands-on materials"
Disagree	"Manipulatives and hands-on activities"
Disagree	"I would like to have more hands-on items for reading"
Disagree	"Manipulatives"
Not Certain	"Hands-on manipulatives for all areas"

A second instance upon which participants' open-ended responses were compared with quantitative items occurred with survey items #7a-c. Quantitatively, the data indicated that 83% of teachers were in agreement regarding the adequacy of reading textbooks or basals at their school sites, followed by supplemental trade books or children's literature (77%) and reference books (70%). Qualitatively, the data suggested that books were one type of supplemental material requested by teachers. However, whereas the Likert scale items referred to the specific types of books previously cited in this paragraph, teachers' open-ended responses reflected their requests for other types of books, including "chapter books," "up-to-date books," and "consumable workbooks."

Despite the aforementioned instances of comparisons made between open-ended item #8 and specific scale items, overarching themes emerging from responses to survey item #8 could not be used to validate or confirm the quantitative data for items #6A, 6B, and 7. Qualitatively, the data revealed that the teachers believed additional professional development topics (with a focus on instructional support and curriculum-related skill enhancement) and instructional resources (including supplemental materials and technology equipment) that were not cited in the survey's Likert scale items could aid their instruction of the Reading and Mathematics Standards. Hence, a comparison of both data sets resulted in different findings. Qualitative data provided additional insights into respondents' context beliefs not reflected in their quantitative survey data.

Capability beliefs. Quantitative Likert scale data derived from survey items #10A-10C indicated that most teachers surveyed possessed strong evaluations regarding their ability to plan, instruct, and utilize instructional resources and FCAT data. Themes derived from corresponding survey item #9 revealed that the teachers believed they

brought three types of special abilities to the classroom when teaching their students the third grade Reading and Mathematics SSS: instructional approaches (including making learning enjoyable, engaging students in learning, and utilizing multiple methods), curriculum and instruction familiarity, and supportiveness of students. Together, both sets of data reflected mostly non-overlapping sets of information, whereby teachers' qualitative responses provided additional insights into their capability beliefs not derived from the Likert scale items.

Perceptions of teacher accountability. Qualitative data derived from open-ended survey item #5A provided insights into participants' perceptions regarding three specific types of teacher accountability: contingency-based accountability, accountability for student growth, and instructional accountability. Overall, the data suggested that the majority of respondents acknowledged the need for teachers to be held accountable for their students' knowledge of Reading and Mathematics SSS assessed on the FCAT. This broad perception of the need for teacher accountability seemed to confirm the overall strength of teachers' capability beliefs regarding their own instructional abilities as educators as indicated by the Likert scale data (#10A-10C). However, qualitative data could not be used to validate teachers' abilities regarding planning, instruction, resources, and assessment as reflected in the Likert scale items.

Similarly, merging the qualitative data with the context beliefs Likert scale data (#6A, 6B, 7) was not possible since quantitative data reflected most teachers' positive context beliefs regarding the availability and adequacy of professional development courses and instructional resources provided by their school sites or school districts. Both sets of data reflected non-overlapping information. Hence, qualitative data

supported the capability beliefs derived from quantitative data to some extent, yet could not be used to corroborate and expand upon teachers' individual context and capability beliefs Likert scale data.

Data Legitimation

Data legitimation involves assessing the validity or trustworthiness of a study's data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). In particular, legitimation is considered a pertinent phase in mixed methods research because the process holds researchers fully accountable for documenting the legitimacy of both quantitative and qualitative findings, thereby lending rigor to the overall study (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Subsequently, three methods were used to legitimate the current study's data: Cronbach's alpha, the Quantitative Legitimation Model (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; 2003), and interrater agreement. A description of each of these methods is outlined in the following sections.

Quantitative Data Legitimation

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the survey instrument's internal consistency, or the degree to which the closed-ended items related to each other and the instrument as a whole (Cronk, 2006). The instrument's reliability of .94 can be considered relatively high, since coefficients greater than .90 are considered very highly reliable, and coefficients less than .60 indicate unacceptably low reliability (Cohen et al., 2007).

Additionally, the Quantitative Legitimation Model (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; 2003) was used to assess possible threats to internal validity and external validity relevant to the quantitative component of this study. The model builds upon the works of Campbell and

Stanley (1963), Smith and Glass (1987), Huck and Sandler (1979), and McMillan (2000), and is rooted in the contention that threats to internal and external validity can occur in various types of quantitative research - not just experimental designs. In turn, the model is intended to address the "realm of pertinent threats" (Onwuegbuzie, 2003, p. 72) to validity in all quantitative research, regardless of the design.

According to the Quantitative Legitimation Model (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; 2003), 50 potentials threats to internal and external validity must be assessed at three stages of the research process: data collection; data analysis; and data interpretation (see Table 15). Specifically, 22 possible threats to internal validity should be assessed during the data collection phase. Of those threats, instrumentation, or an instrument's lack of reliability or consistency that can result in invalid scores (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003), was initially considered a possible threat to this study. As noted by Onwuegbuzie (2000), "instrumentation can never be fully eliminated as a potential threat to internal validity because outcome measures can never yield scores that are perfectly valid or reliable" (p. 8). Nevertheless, an alpha coefficient of .94 provided strong reassurance of the instrument's reliability.

Further, the Quantitative Legitimation Model outlines 12 possible threats to external validity that should also be assessed during the data collection phase. In particular, three threats were considered relevant to this study. First, population validity, or the ability to generalize results from the sample to the target population, as well as across subpopulations within the target population (Johnson & Christensen, 2007), was difficult to attain. Whereas random sampling may increase the population validity of a study's results, drawing a random sample from the target population for this study was

Table 15

Threats to Internal and External Validity

Research Design/ Data Collection Phase	Data Analysis Phase	Data Interpretation Phase
Threats to Internal Validity		
History	Statistical regression	Effect size
Maturation	Restricted range	Confirmation bias
Testing	Mortality	Statistical regression
Instrumentation	Non-interaction seeking bias	Distorted graphics
Statistical regression	Type I – Type X error	Illusory correlation
Differential selection of participants	Observational bias	Crud factor
Mortality	Researcher bias	Positive manifold
Selection interaction effects	Matching bias	Causal error
Implementation bias	Treatment replication error	
Sample augmentation bias	Violated assumptions	
Behavior bias	Multicollinearity	
Order bias	Misspecification error	
Researcher bias		
Matching bias		
Treatment replication error		
Evaluation anxiety		
Multiple-treatment interference		
Reactive arrangements		
Treatment diffusion		
Time x treatment interaction		
History x treatment interaction		
Threats to External Validity		
Population validity	Population validity	Population validity
Ecological validity	Researcher bias	Ecological validity
Temporal validity	Specificity of variables	Temporal validity
Multiple-treatment interference	Matching bias	
Researcher bias	Misspecification error	
Reactive arrangements		
Order bias		
Matching bias		
Specificity of variables		
Treatment diffusion		
Pretest x treatment interaction		
Selection x treatment interaction		

Note. From "Expanding the Framework of Internal and External Validity in Quantitative Research," by A. J. Onwuegbuzie, 2003, *Research in the Schools, 10*(1), 71-89.

not possible. The researcher did not have access to a list of third grade teachers' names in Title I elementary schools in Broward or Palm Beach County; therefore, the use of purposeful sampling was necessary. As such, these circumstances coincide with Onwuegbuzie's (2000) claim that population validity poses a threat to virtually all educational studies due to practical considerations.

Second, since the results of this study are specific to Title I elementary school settings in Florida, establishing ecological validity, or the extent to which results are generalizable across settings (Johnson & Christensen, 2007), was not possible. However, the paucity of existing research on elementary teachers' responses to Florida's high stakes accountability policy in Title I schools emphasized the necessity of establishing preliminary findings relative to such settings. In turn, subsequent findings may elucidate contextual and personal factors that may stimulate or hinder Title I teachers from meeting policy goals.

Third, the absence of temporal validity, or the extent to which research results can be generalized across time (Johnson & Christensen, 2007), posed a threat to this study's external validity. Temporal validity is pertinent to educational studies, as well as cross-sectional survey designs, in particular, because they are conducted at one point in time. Although data are valid for the time period in which they are collected, it remains unknown whether this study's data would hold true for Title I, third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers in the future. Nevertheless, a cross-sectional survey design was deemed most appropriate for this study because it provided a means of allowing teachers to voice their present beliefs and perceptions regarding high-stakes accountability policy currently being implemented throughout the state of Florida.

In addition to the aforementioned threats, the Quantitative Legitimation Model also outlines 21 possible threats to internal validity that should be assessed during the data analysis phase. Of those threats, the violated assumptions threat was initially considered a possible threat to this study. This threat is attributed to a researcher's failure to check a statistical test's underlying assumptions regarding the data being used (Onwuegbuzie, 2003), thereby possibly resulting in misleading data interpretations. Subsequently, an attempt to avoid this threat was made by reporting the assumptions underlying Mann-Whitney *U* and chi-square tests, as discussed in Chapter III.

One additional threat to internal validity assessed during this study's data analysis phase was Type I error, or the researcher's rejection of a null hypothesis which is actually true (Gay & Airasian, 2000). This study's first hypothesis indicated that third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have an undergraduate degree will possess more positive context beliefs regarding access to professional development that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have a graduate degree. However, statistical analyses revealed that no significant difference in the context beliefs scores of both groups was found, and that the percentages of teachers exhibiting each level of beliefs according to educational degree did not significantly differ from one another.

Also, this study's second hypothesis indicated that experienced third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with five or more years of teaching experience will possess stronger capability beliefs regarding planning, instruction, and assessment practices that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated,

high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than novice third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience. Statistical analyses also indicated that no significant difference in the capability beliefs scores of both groups was found, and that the percentages of teachers exhibiting each level of capability beliefs did not differ significantly from each other.

Of the five possible threats to external validity assessed during the data analysis phase, none were considered relevant. Thereafter, seven possible threats to internal validity were assessed during the data interpretation phase, whereby none were considered relevant. However, three possible threats to external validity during this phase were considered relevant: population, ecological, and temporal validity. First, since a small, non-random sample was used in this study, the researcher acknowledged the population validity threat by refraining from overgeneralizing data analysis results to the target population. Next, since this study's results were specific to Title I elementary school settings in Florida, the researcher acknowledged the ecological threat by refraining from making generalizations across settings or other grade levels. Finally, the researcher acknowledged the temporal validity threat by refraining from implying that this study's data would hold true for Title I, third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers in relation to future accountability policies in Florida.

Overall, one advantage of using the Quantitative Legitimation Model was that the researcher's discussion of possible sources of invalidity allowed the reader to situate the findings in an appropriate context. An additional advantage was that the identification of specific threats to the current study's internal and external validity served as a benefit to

future researchers in designing replication studies with a focus on minimizing those threats (Onwuegbuzie, 2003).

Qualitative Data Legitimation

The dependability of the qualitative data was established through interrater agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher provided one peer reviewer external to the study with clean copies of participants' responses to all open-ended survey items. The individual was asked to independently code the responses and search for subsequent themes that emerged from the data. Coding results and themes were then reviewed and compared to the researcher's in a debriefing session to determine whether similar interpretations were made from the qualitative data. The rate of agreement was 94% across all open-ended responses.

Summary

This chapter provided results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures utilized in this study. A significant difference existed in the percentages of teachers exhibiting each possible combination of context and capability beliefs, with the majority of Title I, third grade reading and mathematics teachers surveyed possessing positive context beliefs and strong capability beliefs simultaneously. Most teachers tended to agree regarding the availability of professional development courses, as well as the adequacy of instructional resources available to them at their school sites. The majority of teachers surveyed also tended to report high ratings of their own ability to plan, instruct, and utilize instructional resources and FCAT data.

Two hypotheses were tested for the quantitative data. Teachers' context and capability beliefs scores did not significantly differ according to highest level of

educational degree held or years of full-time teaching experience. The percentages of teachers exhibiting each level of context and capability beliefs also did not significantly differ according to educational degree or instructional experience.

Themes derived from open-ended survey responses revealed that the sample of Title I teachers surveyed relied on various types of classroom assessment to assess their students' knowledge of the third grade Reading and Mathematics SSS prior to being held accountable for students' FCAT performance, with textbook-derived assessments most commonly used. Further, qualitative data revealed teachers' specific needs for additional instructional resources (supplemental reading and mathematics resources and technology equipment) and professional development topics (instructional support and curriculum-related skill enhancement) that they believed could contribute to their improved instruction of the Reading and Mathematics Standards. Qualitative data also elucidated teachers' perceptions of their special instructional abilities, as well as their perceptions of the need for contingency-based accountability, accountability for student growth, and instructional accountability. Since the majority of quantitative and qualitative data derived from the survey's Likert scale and open-ended items reflected non-overlapping sets of information, limited merging of the datasets was possible.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the study's overall findings. Conclusions and limitations are outlined, followed by recommendations for future research and implications.

Summary of the Findings

The *A+ Plan for Education* holds Florida's public schools and educators accountable for the performance of the students they are entrusted to educate. The Plan calls for increased accountability through school grades (ratings from an A to an F) based on the annual measurement of students' learning on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). In particular, third graders must earn a Level 2 or above (on a scale of one to five) on the FCAT Reading in order to be promoted to the fourth grade. Although previous studies examined classroom teachers' perspectives regarding Florida's accountability system, researchers failed to elicit Title I teachers' responses regarding the specific ways by which they believe they are capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance. Hence, the purpose of this mixed methods study was to investigate third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' context and capability beliefs regarding external and personal factors that may have contributed to their ability to comply with high-stakes accountability policy in Florida's Title I elementary schools.

Sixty-eight respondents from a purposeful sample of 184 teachers in Broward County and Palm Beach County, Florida, participated in this study. Principles of Ford's (1992) Motivational Systems Theory (MST) were used to guide the study. A

triangulation design was employed, whereby an on-line survey was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. The advantage of using this design was that it combined the strengths of both forms of research: quantitative methods sought out generalizable data on teachers' beliefs, whereas qualitative methods elicited teachers' perceptions of accountability that otherwise could not have been expressed quantitatively (Berg, 2007).

Sixty-six usable surveys were analyzed, whereby two research hypotheses were tested in relation to the survey's quantitative data. In addition, one research question was used to guide the analysis of the survey's qualitative data, while one research question was used to determine the extent to which the qualitative data corroborated and expanded on the quantitative data. Results of each research hypothesis and question are summarized below.

Context Beliefs

Third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have an undergraduate degree will possess more positive context beliefs regarding access to professional development that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who have a graduate degree. Survey items #2, 6A, and 6B corresponded with this hypothesis. This hypothesis was not supported. There was a non-significant difference in the context beliefs scores between teachers with an undergraduate degree compared to teachers with a graduate degree. There was also a non-significant difference in the percentages of teachers exhibiting negative, neutral-variable, and positive context beliefs.

Capability Beliefs

Experienced third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with five or more years of teaching experience will possess stronger capability beliefs regarding planning, instruction, and assessment practices that may contribute to their ability to comply with state-mandated, high-stakes accountability policy in Title I elementary schools than novice third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers with fewer than five years of teaching experience. Survey items #1, 10A, 10B, and 10C corresponded with this hypothesis. This hypothesis was not supported. There was a non-significant difference in the capability beliefs scores between experienced teachers and novice teachers. There was also a non-significant difference in the percentages of teachers exhibiting moderate-variable and strong context beliefs.

High-Stakes Accountability

What are third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' perceptions regarding the means by which they believe they are capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance in Title I elementary schools? Survey item #5A corresponded with this question. Qualitative coding procedures and a search for themes within teachers' open-ended survey responses resulted in the identification of three themes (contingency-based accountability, accountability for student growth, and instructional accountability), with the majority of respondents citing an overall need for teacher accountability.

Mixed Methods Research

To what extent do the open-ended themes from third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' qualitative survey data corroborate and expand upon

their quantitative Likert scale survey results? Themes derived from teachers' open-ended responses to survey items #5A, 8, and 9 did not corroborate the quantitative Likert scale data from survey items #6A-7 and #10A-C. However, qualitative data provided additional insights into respondents' context and capability beliefs not reflected in their quantitative survey data.

Discussion of the Findings

Classroom Assessment

Open-ended responses suggested that the majority of Title I, third grade teachers surveyed in Broward and Palm Beach County mostly relied on paper-and-pencil testing (including chapter tests, benchmark assessments, and teacher-made tests) to assess third grade students' knowledge of the Florida Reading and Mathematics Standards. Teachers' responses regarding the effectiveness of these forms of classroom assessment were generally positive, indicating that each type served a particular purpose in providing pertinent feedback regarding students' learning prior to taking the FCAT. Nevertheless, assessment is intended to consist of a variety of tasks that provide students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of content. As defined in Chapter I, assessment is an instrument, a process, or a method used to gather information relevant to the purpose of documenting students' strengths and weaknesses, evaluating students' progress, or planning instruction (Cizek, 1997). Most teachers' responses suggested that they were not utilizing a range of assessments to diagnose their third grade students' strengths and difficulties; subsequently, the teachers were obtaining a limited sampling of their students' reading and mathematics performance.

Context Beliefs

According to the quantitative data, the majority of third grade teachers surveyed (regardless of educational degree held) possessed positive context beliefs regarding the availability of professional development and adequacy of instructional resources in Broward and Palm Beach County's Title I elementary schools. These findings were similar to those generated by previous research documenting the availability of professional development and instructional resources in contexts of state-mandated accountability (Taylor et al., 2002). Application of Ford's (1992) theory to the quantitative data alone suggests that the majority of teachers surveyed believe that their Title I elementary schools are responsive environments that contain the necessary material and informational resources (cited in this study's survey) that are needed to effectively provide students with instruction to achieve the Florida Reading and Mathematics Standards.

Closer examination of the data simultaneously indicated that nearly 30% of respondents either disagreed or were not certain regarding the availability of professional development focusing on the use of appropriate instructional strategies for low-achieving third grade students, limited English proficient (LEP) students, students with disabilities, or gifted and talented students. These findings raise questions regarding third grade teachers' access to professional development that can help them receive the knowledge, skills, and methods necessary to work with various student populations in Title I elementary schools. Further, approximately 45% of respondents either disagreed or were not certain regarding the availability of professional development that focuses on the purpose of the FCAT. This percentage is somewhat alarming, since one of the primary

purposes of the FCAT is to assess third grade students' achievement of higher-order thinking skills represented in Florida's curriculum framework.

Nevertheless, teachers' overall acknowledgement of the availability of professional development within their schools and districts implies that they are being provided with learning opportunities that can help them meet the *A+ Plan's* policy measures. Further, teachers' Likert scale responses suggest that professional development in southeastern Florida's school districts is coherent in that it is aligned with the state's curriculum framework as well as with the goals of the FCAT. These findings are reassuring, since research conducted nearly one decade ago indicated that Florida's teachers did not believe they had been provided with the professional development necessary to teach the state's standards-based curriculum (Inman, 2001). Since coherent professional development is associated with positive changes in teachers' instructional practices (Firestone et al., 2005; Garet et al., 2001), the quantitative findings indicate that teachers have ample opportunities to learn how to improve third grade students' learning outcomes and provide effective instruction of the Standards assessed on the FCAT.

Similarly, results from the quantitative items to which teachers responded also suggest that they consider their school environments to be trustworthy or cooperative in providing them with adequate instructional resources that are cited in the Florida Reading and Mathematics Standards. These findings are contrary to previous research documenting teachers' concerns about a lack of curriculum materials needed to prepare elementary students for high-stakes assessment in urban school districts (Clarke et al., 2003). The presence of various books, visual aids, manipulatives, and measuring tools in southeastern Florida's Title I elementary schools as established by this study's survey

data indicates that third grade teachers have access to an additional form of instructional support within their school contexts (Firestone et al., 2001). As such, teachers can provide their students access to material resources intended for instructional use as cited in the Standards prior to being held accountable for students' FCAT performance.

Although quantitative survey data initially indicated that the majority of teachers surveyed possessed positive context beliefs, qualitative data simultaneously suggested contrasting findings. Teachers' needs for additional supplemental materials and technology equipment, as well as professional development with a focus on instructional support and curriculum-related skill enhancement, suggests that their Title I school sites do not contain all the instructional and informational resources that the teachers believe are needed to teach students the third grade Standards. Since MST (1992) dictates that a responsive environment which facilitates progress towards one's goals is a prerequisite for effective functioning, the open-ended responses imply that teachers' perceived lack of informational and material resources serve as inhibiting factors that can thwart their achievement and deter them from implementing effective instruction of the Standards.

Since teachers' open-ended responses consisted of limited text, insufficient information was obtained to determine whether teachers' comments regarding the need for additional informational and material resources were indicative of neutral-variable or negative context beliefs. Such a limitation supports Creswell and Plano Clark's (2007) point that although the validating quantitative model's open-ended survey data can provide interesting quotes that validate and expand on the quantitative findings, the open-ended survey responses may not result in a rigorous dataset. In turn, the use of interviews is necessary for further clarification of the qualitative survey data.

Overall, contradictory quantitative and qualitative data sets can be attributed to the survey instrument itself. Inclusion of the word "additional" in the context beliefs open-ended item resulted in the quantitative and qualitative survey items not addressing the same concepts; consequently, merging of the two datasets was limited. Although more priority is given to the quantitative data, teachers' open-ended responses provided valuable insights into additional aspects of their context beliefs not elicited by the quantitative Likert scale items.

Whereas the quantitative data confirmed that most Title I teachers surveyed have access to instructional resources aligned with the Standards, qualitative data further indicated that teachers believed access to these particular resources alone was not sufficient for implementing instruction. For instance, technology is not an instructional resource cited in the Standards that are assessed on the FCAT Reading and Mathematics tests, yet teachers indicated that technology served as a means of providing students with remediation and practice of the Standards in preparation for the FCAT. Also, the quantitative data indicated that professional development related to planning and instruction aligned with the SSS was available, yet teachers' requests for additional professional development suggested that various instructional topics related to teachers' instruction and curriculum-related skill enhancement were not being addressed by school or district-provided professional development.

One respondent's comment regarding the ineffectiveness of district-provided professional development supported Ford's (1992) assertion that in order for an environment to be considered responsive, it has to be congruent with the person's cognitive capabilities and provide information in a clear and consistent way. The

respondent's comment elucidated the need for future research to delve deeper by examining multiple elements of responsive environments in the study of teachers' context beliefs. This includes not only eliciting teachers' perceptions of whether the presence of professional development opportunities exists, but also examining their perceptions regarding the quality of those learning opportunities. In turn, such multi-faceted examinations can provide richer descriptions of teachers' beliefs that can better inform the design of professional development programs that are aligned with the Title I, third grade teachers' learning needs.

Since context beliefs involve evaluations of whether one has a responsive environment that contains the functional elements needed to facilitate goal attainment, interpretation of this study's quantitative and qualitative findings combined suggests that the Title I, third grade teachers surveyed do not possess positive context beliefs. The teachers clearly believe that that their school sites are not equipped with all the functional elements needed to implement reading and mathematics instruction. Since theory dictates that the absence of a responsive environment can limit one's competence and achievement, teachers' perceptions of the likelihood of providing students with effective instruction of the Standards in the absence of such resources may be limited. In turn, these beliefs are likely to impact teachers' instructional performance in providing students with the content and knowledge necessary to prepare students for the FCAT.

Capability Beliefs

Although previous research has shown that an increase in years of experience is associated with higher levels of efficacy (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2002; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007), the majority of novice and experienced teachers

in this study possessed strong capability beliefs regarding their own instructional abilities to plan and provide instruction in reading and mathematics, interpret FCAT data, and utilize various instructional resources aligned with the Standards. These quantitative results suggest that Title I, third grade teachers surveyed in southeastern Florida believe they are capable of successfully implementing instruction of the Reading and Mathematics SSS assessed on the FCAT. Interpretation of the quantitative data alone implies that the respondents believe they are competent individuals that have the skills needed to function effectively in contexts of high-stakes accountability in Title I schools.

However, qualitative data simultaneously provided additional insights into Title I teachers' capability beliefs not elicited by the quantitative items. Since inclusion of the word "special" in the qualitative item addressed a different concept than did the quantitative items, opportunities to merge the two different datasets were limited. Nevertheless, qualitative responses further expanded on teachers' quantitative data by suggesting that teachers were confident in their personal abilities needed to effectively plan, instruct, and utilize resources and assessment data. They also believed in their own abilities to implement a variety of instructional and assessment approaches, were confident about their knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and felt confident in their ability to be supportive of third grade students.

Theoretically, the combination of the quantitative and qualitative data combined suggests that Title I teachers possess positive capability beliefs (regarding an array of relevant skills) that can contribute to their instruction of the Standards assessed on the third grade FCAT. The majority of third grade teachers surveyed were highly motivated, persistent individuals who considered themselves as a source of strength in effectively

teaching the Standards, whereby these beliefs were accompanied by a sense of adequacy. These positive beliefs can contribute to teachers' effective person-in-context functioning, and, in turn, achievement of Florida's accountability policy measures.

A smaller proportion of third grade teachers surveyed possessed the personal motivation and persistence to achieve accountability policy goals, yet simultaneously anticipated the likelihood that their school environments may not have been responsive in facilitating goal-attainment efforts. In contrast, few teachers possessed perceptions of uncertainty regarding their instructional abilities that can hinder goal attainment. While none of the teachers surveyed possess weak capability beliefs, these results were expected, since teachers who may not have felt confident in their own instructional abilities or in school site and district support would more than likely not have bothered to respond to this study's survey.

The beliefs exhibited by the respondents should not be considered as stable or consistent since context and capability beliefs represent current thoughts that can vary across situations and change over time (Ford, 1992). However, MST fails to explain what happens to one's beliefs when repeated negative experiences are encountered within an unresponsive environment. Questions remain as to whether the teachers' neutral-variable context beliefs will give rise to negative beliefs if left unattended. Additionally, since teachers' educational background and instructional experience were not found to have an influence on context or capability beliefs, further research is needed to determine specific variables that contribute to significant differences in these beliefs.

Teachers' Responses to Accountability

Qualitative survey item #5A was a critical item in the present study because it addressed the one question that previous researchers had yet to ask elementary teachers in Florida's Title I elementary schools. Remarkably, almost all participants who responded to this item acknowledged that some form of teacher accountability was necessary. This finding suggests that teachers' perceptions of accountability in Florida have not changed much since Jones and Egley (2004) conducted similar survey research in 2002. Title I teachers' responses to the present study's survey item #5A also support their strong capability beliefs as indicated by the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from survey item #9. In both instances, teachers expressed the belief that they were personally capable of being held accountable for their third grade students' knowledge of Standards assessed on the FCAT.

However, the open-ended data from survey item #5A also suggest that Title I teachers perceive their ability to be held accountable for third grade students' FCAT performance as dependent upon various contextual (versus personal) factors. Whereas previous research indicated students' socioeconomic status was an accountability-related concern shared by Florida's elementary teachers (Jones & Egley, 2004), teachers in this study emphasized accountability for others (including students, parents, and previous teachers), factors beyond their control (such as students' learning ability and home environments), and students' academic level as potential obstacles that they believed prevented them from making progress towards achieving accountability policy measures. The data coincide with the themes derived from the context beliefs open-ended survey item in that teachers continued to cite elements within their school contexts that served as

potential obstacles that they believed prevented them from making progress toward achieving accountability policy measures. Ultimately, these findings confirm the mismatch that exists between Title I teachers' context and capability beliefs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to investigate the responses of third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to high-stakes accountability policy in Florida's Title I elementary schools. Although the researcher exercised caution in drawing conclusions due to the use of a relatively small, non-random sample, a conclusion can be drawn that the third grade teachers surveyed perceived the self as a source of strength and Title I school contexts as a source of hindrance in implementing instruction of the Reading and Mathematics Standards and, ultimately, being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance. Teachers' highest educational degree or years of full-time teaching experience were not indicative of the strength of these beliefs.

Application of MST (Ford, 1992) to these findings indicates that although teachers possessed the perceived ability to function effectively in contexts of high-stakes accountability, their lack of confidence in their Title I school contexts to facilitate goal attainment deterred them from effectively carrying out instruction of the third grade Standards, and, subsequently, achievement of Florida's *A*+ policy measures. Alignment of this study's Likert scale and open-ended survey items is necessary, so that future research can use qualitative survey data from related open-ended responses to substantiate the quantitative survey data and gain broader understanding of teachers'

context and capability beliefs. Additional research is also needed to determine which variables influence teachers' beliefs.

Implications

This study provided preliminary insights into Title I, third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers' context and capability beliefs regarding external and personal factors that may potentially contribute to their ability to achieve Florida's *A+ Plan's* policy measures. Qualitative survey data suggest that Title I elementary school environments may benefit from the provision of additional instructional resources and professional development topics in order to further develop into "optimally responsive" environments (Ford, 1992, p. 74). Teachers' evaluations regarding the need for additional supplemental reading resources, mathematics resources, and technology equipment, as well as additional professional development that focused on instructional support and curriculum-related skill enhancement, warrant serious consideration, since teachers' beliefs regarding their own ability to adhere to the accountability policy are dependent upon their perceptions of favorable environmental factors.

More research is needed to identify those variables that may contribute to significant differences in teachers' beliefs. Such variables might include the grades schools receive as a result of test scores, as well as students' or teachers' ethnicity. The variables may then be used to identify which sub-populations (if any) possess negative context beliefs or weak capability beliefs. This is essential, since the success of a state's accountability system depends largely on teachers' effectiveness (Garet, et al., 2001; Smith & Desimone, 2003; Smith & Rowley, 2005), and effective functioning hinges upon the strength of one's context and capability beliefs combined (Ford, 1992).

Third grade teachers' open-ended context beliefs responses can inform the professional development process as implemented by school site and district authorities in southeastern Florida. The multitude of survey responses requesting professional development on specific reading and mathematics instructional strategies justifies that professional development must be responsive to teachers' needs in order to contribute to their instructional improvement. Since professional development is more meaningful when teachers can exercise ownership of its content and process (King & Newmann, 2000), Title I, third grade elementary teachers must take the initiative to inform school site leaders regarding specific professional learning needs that they perceive will help them better teach the third grade Standards. Likewise, school leaders can encourage teachers to assume responsibility for professional growth by actively listening to teachers' requests and by seeking out the resources necessary to provide teachers with such instruction.

Furthermore, curriculum specialists assigned to Title I elementary school sites must work closely with third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers and engage in ongoing discussions regarding teachers' professional development needs. Subsequently, district staff may be able to better provide teachers with the instructional support that teachers perceive as necessary to teach the Standards. Ultimately, teachers' requests for professional development must be taken seriously at both the school site and district levels, since providing teachers with content knowledge and skills is an essential mechanism for improving third grade students' academic achievement.

The majority of Title I teachers' survey responses that emphasized the use of paper-and-pencil testing to assess third grade students' knowledge of Florida's Reading

and Mathematics Standards suggests that these teachers may benefit from the use of alternative forms of assessment, such as performance-based assessments (i.e., demonstrations, projects), observations (including anecdotal records of student participation and involvement), and communication-based assessments (i.e., conferencing and reflective journaling). Increased use of alternative assessments (in addition to paper-and-pencil testing) would place more of an emphasis on process (versus product) as students learn the Standards through real-world tasks, and are provided with multiple opportunities to revise their own thinking and see their own progress. Likewise, teachers may obtain a wider range of information regarding students' strengths and difficulties, and, subsequently, modify instruction so that all students can increase their learning.

This study's initial efforts to use MST (Ford, 1992) as a basis for understanding teachers' responses to high-stakes accountability served as a foundation for continued use of the theory. Continued study of Title I teachers' context and capability beliefs is essential, since these beliefs motivate people to create opportunities and acquire skills needed for goal attainment that they may not already possess. Gaining further understandings of teachers' beliefs in contexts of accountability can inform the provision of professional development topics and instructional resources that teachers perceive as necessary to teach the Standards. Future research should expand upon these findings by using MST to explore additional factors that may contribute to teachers' ability to achieve accountability policy goals, including the role that personal goals and emotions play alongside their beliefs.

This study's preliminary data are intended to provide policymakers with evidence of third grade teachers' perceptions regarding their ability to adhere to state

accountability policy measures in Title I-funded schools. The trend in teachers' open-ended responses acknowledging an overall need for accountability implied that the majority of teachers surveyed believed in their own instructional abilities as educators to effectively teach students the Reading and Mathematics SSS assessed on the FCAT. However, teachers' specific suggestions regarding the need for accountability in terms of contingencies, student growth, and curriculum and instruction deserve further attention, since teachers have firsthand experience in how the *A+ Plan* is currently being implemented and know best the students that they are entrusted to educate.

Whereas previous research conducted in Florida elucidated elementary teachers' disagreement regarding various aspects of the state's accountability policy (Inman, 2001; Pedulla et al., 2003; Shaver et al., 2007) and the means by which they were professionally held accountable (Jones & Egley, 2004), this study's data provided an alternative focus on accountability. Policymakers are now equipped with preliminary input that can be used to reexamine the specific means by which the *A+ Plan* holds third grade teachers professionally accountable for their students. The data emphasized the need for dialogue between policymakers and teachers, since teachers have the most sustained contact with third grade students and have a direct impact on their learning. The data also suggest that Title I, third grade teachers have the ability to be included as stakeholders that have a voice in improving the Plan so that they can assume greater responsibility for the policy.

Ultimately, this study's results are intended to contribute to the foundation of a new literature base focusing on high-stakes accountability in Florida's Title I elementary schools. Future research may seek to build upon this study's results since accountability

in Title I elementary schools has yet to be systematically studied. Additional mixed methods investigations combining the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods may continue to provide broader understandings of teachers' evaluations of external and personal factors that may contribute to their ability to achieve accountability policy goals. In turn, subsequent research may continue to identify those factors that contribute to teachers' instructional effectiveness in Title I elementary school contexts, and, in turn, fulfillment of the *A+ Plan's* fundamental premise that every child can learn and no child is left behind.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study contributes preliminary findings to a new literature base on high-stakes accountability in Florida's Title I, third grade classrooms, several limitations must be taken into consideration. First, despite multiple modes of follow-up contacts, a *Request to Conduct Survey Research* form was not received from all Title I elementary principals in Broward and Palm Beach County whose schools were not prohibited from participating in research studies. In turn, this eliminated the chances of those third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers who taught at the non-responding schools of being included in this study's sample. Further, of those principals who did return a form, only a small percentage granted their teachers permission to participate in the present study, thereby limiting the number of teachers eligible to participate.

In addition, the unanticipated restriction on the number of Title I elementary schools deemed eligible to participate in research studies by Palm Beach County's Department of Research and Evaluation also limited the total number of potential participants from that county. Thus, survey responses obtained from participants who

taught in Palm Beach County cannot be considered representative of the remainder of Title I, third grade teachers within the county.

Moreover, despite various approaches taken by the researcher to possibly increase the survey's response rate, a low rate of returns was achieved. Of the 184 teachers that were assumed to have been forwarded a cover letter by their school's designated contact person, only 37% responded to this study's survey. The study's sample was not representative of Title I, third grade teachers in southeastern Florida.

Further, although this study's survey possessed relatively high internal consistency, several limitations were found to exist within the survey itself. Information gleaned from Likert scale questions only reflected general aspects of teachers' context and capability beliefs. Also, corroboration of teachers' open-ended survey responses with corresponding Likert scale items was limited upon merging the data.

Finally, the limited time frame available to conduct survey research with Title I, third grade teachers in southeastern Florida during the 2008-2009 school year may also be considered a limitation to this study. Restrictions on conducting research at the start and end of the school year, as well as during a designated FCAT testing blackout period, prevented the addition of other research components to be included in this study's methodology that may have allowed for additional follow-up of teachers' survey responses.

Recommendations for Further Research

In order to gain further understandings of third grade teachers' responses to high-stakes accountability policy in Florida's Title I elementary schools, future studies may utilize additional approaches not used in this study to increase the number of teachers

sampled. First, future research may consider the use of incentives as a means of generating a higher return rate of *Request to Conduct Survey Research* forms from principals. Also, in order to secure a higher rate of principals who actually allow their teachers permission to participate, future research may consider providing principals with a hard copy of the on-line survey in their packets so that they may be better informed to make a decision regarding their teachers' participation. Further, researchers may also consider conducting future studies across a larger sample of school districts. Subsequently, this may increase the extent to which participants' data are representative of the sample, thereby allowing researchers to generalize their quantitative results to the target population with greater confidence.

In addition, future studies may consider providing participants multiple options for completing the survey instrument. Whereas some teachers may feel comfortable using a computer and prefer Web-based surveys, others may have less-developed computer skills and a preference for paper-and-pencil surveys that can be completed and returned by mail. Hence, this mixed-mode of operation may better address respondents' differential expertise in computer usage, thereby possibly increasing the rate of participants' responses.

In order to gain deeper understandings of Title I, third grade teachers' context and capability beliefs, future research may consider revising this study's survey items. One option may be to develop additional Likert scale items that delve deeper into teachers' beliefs, including items that ask about the quality and usefulness of professional development topics and instructional resources provided by Title I schools and school districts. Similarly, another option may be to conduct open-ended interviews with Title I,

third grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to ascertain information about their context and capability beliefs and, in turn, identify salient closed-ended items to be included in the survey.

While the current study clearly provides evidence of third grade teachers' perceptions regarding accountability for students' knowledge of the Reading and Mathematics SSS assessed on the FCAT, future research should include attempts to generate additional Likert scale items that focus on teacher accountability in Florida. Revision of the context and capability beliefs open-ended items' wording is also necessary so that these items are directly aligned with corresponding Likert scale items. Subsequent merging of quantitative and qualitative data from the open-ended and closed-ended items in accordance with the validating quantitative data model may provide a richer understanding of teachers' overall perceptions regarding accountability.

Finally, mixed methods researchers may consider the use of focus group interviews in order to further validate participants' survey responses and gain a more in-depth understanding of teachers' beliefs. Such interviews may provide further clarification of teachers' responses and possibly provide additional information not included in the open- or closed-ended items.

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Appendix A – Permissions to Conduct Research

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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research with Human Subjects
Protocol Review

Date:	July 24, 2008
Protocol Number:	080516
Title:	Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in title 1 Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study
Approval Date:	7/24/2008
Name:	Natasha Vernaza
Address:	Miami Lakes ,FL 33014
Sponsor:	Dr. Victoria Giordano
School:	EDU

Dear Ms. Vernaza:

On behalf of the Barry University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have verified that the specific changes requested by the IRB have been made. Therefore, I have granted final approval for this study as exempt from further review. Enclosed is the Consent Cover letter with the IRB stamp. Please use this letter when collecting your data.

As principal investigator of this protocol, it is your responsibility to make sure that this study is conducted as approved by the IRB. Any modifications to the protocol or consent form, initiated by you or by the sponsor, will require prior approval, which you may request by completing a protocol modification form.

It is a condition of this approval that you report promptly to the IRB any serious, unanticipated adverse events experienced by participants in the course of this research, whether or not they are directly related to the study protocol. These adverse events include, but may not be limited to, any experience that is fatal or immediately life-threatening, is permanently disabling, requires (or prolongs) inpatient hospitalization, or is a congenital anomaly cancer or overdose.

The approval granted expires on October 1, 2009. Should you wish to maintain this protocol in an active status beyond that date, you will need to provide the IRB with and IRB Application for Continuing Review (Progress Report) summarizing study results to date.

If you have questions about these procedures, or need any additional assistance from the IRB, please call the IRB point of contact, Mrs. Barbara Cook at (305)899-3020 or send an e-mail to dparkhurst@mail.barry.edu . Finally, please review your professional liability insurance to make sure your coverage includes the activities in this study.

Sincerely,

Doreen C. Parkhurst, M.D., FACEP
Chair Institutional Review Board
Assistant Dean, SGMS &
Program Director, PA Program
Barry University
Box SGMS
11300 NE 2nd Avenue
Miami Shores, FL 33161

Enc: Cover Letter

cc: Dr. Victoria Giordano

Note: The investigator will be solely responsible and strictly accountable for any deviation from or failure to follow the research protocol as approved and will hold Barry University harmless from all claims against it arising from said deviation or failure.

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
RESEARCH SERVICES

600 SOUTHEAST THIRD AVENUE • FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33301 3125 • TEL 754-321-2500 • FAX 754-321-2722

DR. RUSSELL CLEMENT
Director
russell.clement@browardschools.com

September 17, 2008

Ms. Natasha Vernaza

Miami Lakes, FL 33014

Dear Ms. Vernaza:

Thank you for submitting your proposal, ***Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study,*** for consideration by the Broward County Public Schools (BCPS). Staff has reviewed your research proposal and approval has been granted.

This approval means that we have found your proposed research methods to be compatible with a public school setting and your research questions of interest to the school District. Your approval to conduct research will expire on ***Thursday, October 1, 2009.*** If you are unable to complete your research by the date indicated, you must contact the Research Services Department in writing and request an extension.

Implementing your research, however, is a decision to be reached by the affected District offices and/or schools on a strictly voluntary basis. To assist District offices and/or schools in their decision, please outline the operational steps to be performed by staff at their offices and/or schools. You must also share this **District Security Approval Letter** signed by the Director of Research Services, and provide a copy of the attached **Principal Security Approval Memorandum,** which has been initialed by the Area Superintendent and the Director of Research Services. District offices and/or schools have been instructed not to cooperate unless you provide both pieces of **Security Approval Documentation.**

Based on the research methods described, campus visitation will be required. Note that any member of your research team who is not a current BCPS employee and who will have direct contact with students must comply with the District's Security Clearance procedures. To initiate the Security Clearance process, each researcher and/or team member has to register for fingerprinting services online at http://broward.sofn.net. You have got to have an email address or the email address of the human resource contact person at your company in order to complete the registration process. Call the District's Security Clearance Department at 754-321-1213 if you have any questions. **Each researcher and/or team member must** bring with them the contents of this Security Approval Packet, a Photo ID, such as a valid State Driver's License, or U.S. Passport, etc. Please see the attached detailed information regarding the relocation of the off-site fingerprinting facility, directions, hours of operation, and new methods of payment. If you did not receive a Security Clearance Form in this Security Approval Packet, **please contact Ms. Beth Tillman at 754-321-2511, or e-mail via CAB to** beth.tillman@browardschools.com

This Security Approval Packet contains the following:

- District Security Approval Letter – Letter signed by the Research Services Director.
- Principal Security Approval Memorandum – Memorandum initialed by the Area Superintendent and Research Services Director.
- Security Clearance Form – Each researcher and/or team member who is not a current BCPS employee must fax the completed form to Research Services at 754-321-2722, or e-mail via CAB to beth.tillman@browardschools.com to be signed by the Director of Research Services and returned to you via fax or e-mail as part of your Security Approval Packet.
- PrideRock Holding Company Fingerprint Information

Please be aware that the badge(s) assigned to you and/or your research team members for this current research project is the property of The School Board of Broward County, Florida, and as such, must be returned upon completion of this research proposal. Again, if you are unable to complete your research by the date indicated, you must contact the Research Services Department in writing and request an extension. The anticipated date for submitting an electronic copy of your research findings is ***Tuesday, February 2, 2010***. If additional assistance is needed from our staff, **please contact me at 754-321-2500.**

Sincerely,

Russell Clement

Russell Clement, Ph.D., Director
Research Services

RWC/GKS:bt
Attachments

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
RESEARCH SERVICES

RUSSELL CLEMENT, Ph.D., DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Telephone: 754-321-2500 Facsimile: 754-321-2722

Approval Expires Thursday, October 1, 2009

September 17, 2008

TO: Principals

FROM: Russell Clement, Ph.D., Director
Research Services

VIA: Leontine J. Butler, Ed.D.
North Central Area Superintendent

SUBJECT **PRINCIPAL SECURITY APPROVAL MEMORANDUM FOR RESEARCH PROPOSAL – TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO HIGH-STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY IN TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY**

Staff has reviewed the research request ***Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study,*** and security approval has been granted for the researcher and/or research group to contact you requesting participation. The recently completed review of the proposed research involved school and/or District based staff, and a review of the proposed research methods. These steps were taken to determine if the proposed methods demonstrated reasonable promise of generating data/analyses that will accurately answer the main research questions of interest.

Your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. To aid in your decision, the researcher and/or research group have been instructed to share with each selected school and/or District based staff a complete description of research activities, as well as all **Security Approval Documentation.** Based upon this information, each school and/or District based staff would then be asked to make a decision to participate or not and inform the requesting research parties of their decision.

VF/RC/GS:bt

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT
OF PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

ANN KILLETS
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

ARTHUR C. JOHNSON, Ph.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dean C. Stecker
Director of Research & Evaluation
3370 Forest Hill Boulevard, Suite B-228
West Palm Beach, FL 33406-5871
Phone (561) 432-6376 Fax (561) 963-3842

November 6, 2008

Natasha Vernaza

Miami Lakes, FL 33014

Dear Ms. Vernaza:

The Superintendent's Research Review Committee approved your request to conduct research concerning Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary schools: A Mixed Methods Study in the School District of Palm Beach County.

Your study has been approved at the following schools:

Barton Elementary
Boca Raton Elementary
Cholee Lake Elementary
Crosspointe Elementary
Glade View Elementary
Grassy Waters Elementary
Jupiter Elementary
Liberty Park Elementary
Meadow Park Elementary
North Palm Beach Elementary
Northmore Elementary
Pleasant City Elementary
Seminole Trails Elementary
U.B.K./Palmview Elementary
Washington Elementary
Wynnebrook Elementary

Your study was not approved at the Restructuring Schools listed below. Restructuring schools are prohibited from participating in research requests.

Belvedere Elementary
Benoist Farms Elementary
C.O.T./Kirklane Elementary
D.D. Eisenhower Elementary
Diamond View Elementary
Egret Lake Elementary
Forest Hill Elementary
Gove Elementary
Greenacres Elementary
Melaleuca Elementary
Northboro Elementary
Orchard View Elementary
Palmetto Elementary
Starlight Cove Elementary
West Gate Elementary

The purpose of your mixed methods study is to investigate the responses of third grade classroom teachers (of reading and/or mathematics) to Florida's high-stakes accountability policy in Title 1 elementary schools in Palm Beach County. Gaining insight into third-grade teachers' beliefs in relation to Florida's high-stakes accountability policy can be a step towards improving instruction and learning in Palm Beach County Public Schools.

To conduct your study, you will:

- Send a packet to the school principal containing a Request to Conduct Survey Research Form, a memo to the school's contact person, and a self-addressed stamped envelope;
- Ask the Principal to identify a contact person (not in a supervisory role at the school site) who will be able to receive and forward to third grade classroom teachers of reading and/or mathematics a consent cover letter to their school e-mail addresses. Provide the contacts with a memo alerting them to expect an e-mail from the researcher;

- E-mail only the contact person a copy of the consent cover letter, containing directions on how to access the on-line survey through an active link on Survey Monkey. The contact person will forward the letter to the third grade teachers via their school e-mail address;
- Send a reminder e-mail (after two weeks) to the contact person to be forwarded to the third grade teachers in the event they may not have completed the survey;
- Maintain confidentiality by insuring that the contacts Internet Protocal (IP) address cannot be traced and by assigning a unique three-digit identification number to each participant.

As you conduct your research, please use the following guidelines:

- Submit to this office, a signed Affidavit of Good Moral Character for each researcher before they begin. (A blank affidavit form is enclosed.)
- Obtain permission from the principal before beginning.
- In the case of student subjects, obtain written permission from the parent or guardian before proceeding.
- Provide a copy of all completed and signed parental/guardian consent forms to the principal or principal's designee.
- All collection activities involving students must occur in the presence of school staff members.
- If your research requires the use of additional resources in the future, you must first submit a written request to this office and then wait for a response before proceeding.
- One copy of the study results with an executive summary must be submitted to the Department of Research, Evaluation and Accountability no later than one month after completion of the research.
- Your research activities at the school must not occur during the testing window of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The FCAT testing window includes pre-test, administration, and post-test activities from January 28, 2009 through March 26, 2009.

According to our District's procedures, participation is voluntary. Thank you for your interest in our school district.

Sincerely,

Dean C. Stecker, Director
Research and Evaluation

DS:jl

Enclosure

c: Selected Principals

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
RESEARCH SERVICES

600 SOUTHEAST THIRD AVENUE • FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33301 3125 • TEL 754-321-2500 • FAX 754-321-2722

DR. RUSSELL CLEMENT
Director
russell.clementa browardschools.com

November 7, 2008

Ms. Natasha Vernaza

Miami Lakes, FL 33014

Dear Ms. Vernaza:

Thank you for submitting a Change Request for your proposal, ***Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study***. Staff has reviewed your request and approval has been granted.

Your approval to conduct research will expire on ***Friday, October 30, 2009.*** If you are unable to complete your research by the date indicated, you must contact the Research Services Department in writing and request an extension.

You must share this **District Change Request Approval Letter** signed by the Director of Research Services, and the attached **Principal Change Request Approval Memorandum,** which has been initialed by the Area Superintendent and the Director of Research Services to the District offices and/or schools.

The anticipated date for submitting an electronic copy of your research findings is ***Friday, February 26, 2010***. If additional assistance is needed from our staff, **please contact me at 754-321-2500.**

Sincerely,

Russell Clement MRL

Russell Clement, Ph.D., Director
Research Services

RWC/GKS:bt
Attachments

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
RESEARCH SERVICES

RUSSELL CLEMENT, Ph.D., DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Telephone: 754-321-2500 **Facsimile: 754-321-2722**

Change Request Approval Expires Friday, October 30, 2009

November 7, 2008

TO: Principals

FROM: Russell Clement, Ph.D., Director RC (MRL)
Research Services

VIA: Leontine J. Butler, Ed.D.
North Central Area Superintendent

SUBJECT: PRINCIPAL CHANGE REQUEST APPROVAL MEMORANDUM FOR RESEARCH PROPOSAL — TEACHERS' RESPONSES TO HIGH-STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY IN TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

A change request for research project, ***Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study,*** which was previously approved through the District's Research Review process, has been granted.

The researcher or a member of the research team is required to provide to you a copy of all **Change Request Approval Documentation**.

LB/RC/GS:bt

Appendix B – Letter to School Principal

<School Name>
<Principal's Name>
<Address>

October 1, 2008

Dear < Principal's Name>,

Permission has been granted by the Institutional Review Boards of _<Broward or Palm Beach > County Public Schools and Barry University to conduct survey research in your school district. Your third grade teachers' participation is requested in a study entitled, *Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study.* The research is being conducted by Natasha Vernaza, a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Barry University. The aim of the research is to examine the beliefs of third grade classroom teachers (of reading and/or mathematics) regarding factors (including instructional capability, professional development, and instructional resources) that may contribute to their ability to comply with high-stakes accountability policy, as well as the means by which they believe they are capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance. The study's findings may provide insights regarding teachers' high-stakes test preparation and simultaneous facilitation of authentic student learning experiences. The minimum anticipated number of participants is 220 (from an estimated population of approximately 720).

You can assist in facilitating your teachers' participation in this study by doing the following:

- Identify the name of a contact person (not in a supervisory role) at your school site who will be able to receive and forward your third grade classroom teachers of reading and/or mathematics a cover letter (e-mailed by me, Natasha Vernaza) to their school e-mail addresses;
- Complete and return the attached *REQUEST TO CONDUCT SURVEY RESEARCH* form in the addressed stamped envelope no later than *October 15, 2008*;
- Provide your contact person the attached memo, alerting him/her to expect contact from me via e-mail.

Once the researcher receives the completed *REQUEST TO CONDUCT SURVEY RESEARCH* form indicating your permission, she will e-mail the contact person a copy of a cover letter to be forwarded to your third grade teachers' school e-mail addresses. The teachers will be asked to access the on-line survey through an active link (contained in the cover letter) and complete the survey (approximately 15 minutes in length) no later than *November 21, 2008.*

Your consent to allow your teachers to participate in this research study is strictly voluntary. Should you decline to allow your teachers to participate, there will be no adverse effects to your administrative position or your school. Should your teachers

decline to participate, there will be no adverse effects to their instructional positions. There are no known risks to you, your school, or your teachers in allowing them to participate in this study. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, your school, or your teachers, their participation may contribute to the field of education and the literature focusing on the impact of high-stakes accountability policy on elementary teachers in Title I schools.

As research participants, information your teachers provide will be kept anonymous; no names or other identifiers will be collected on their surveys. The teachers' Internet protocol (IP) addresses cannot be tracked. The researcher will print out the teachers' survey responses in order to obtain hard copies for data analysis procedures. The data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years and then destroyed thereafter. Survey data contained within the Internet survey database will be saved on storage media; data contained within the Internet database will then be deleted immediately thereafter. Data saved on the storage media will be retained for a minimum of five years and then deleted.

Data will be reported in the researcher's doctoral dissertation (available through Barry University's Main Campus library and *Dissertation Abstracts*). A final report of the findings will also be provided (as required by the district's School Board) to <Broward County Public Schools or Palm Beach County Public Schools> IRB. Please be assured that you, your school site, and your teachers will not be identified when results are reported in order to maintain confidentiality.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your teachers' participation in the study, you may contact me, Natasha Vernaza, at [phone number] or [e-mail address], my supervisor, Dr. Victoria Giordano, at (305) 899-3613, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Natasha A. Vernaza, Ed.S.

Appendix C – Request to Conduct Survey Research

Request to Conduct Survey Research

_____Elementary School
<Principal's Name>
<Address>

Please check one:

____ YES, I allow my 3rd grade classroom teachers of reading and/or mathematics to participate in a survey research study entitled, *Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study.*

____ NO, I do not want my school's third grade teachers to be involved in this research study.

If you checked YES above,
please provide the following information:

- Name of Contact Person (not in a supervisory role): _____
- Contact Person's e-mail address: _____
- Please indicate the exact number of third grade classroom teachers of *reading and/ or mathematics* at your school:

  _____teachers

- Please provide your signature as proof of permission granted by this school's principal allowing third grade classroom teachers of reading and/ or mathematics to participate in completing an on-line survey:

  _____ _____
  (Printed Name) (Signature)

Please return this form in the addressed, stamped return envelope no later than October 15, 2008 to:

Accountability Survey
c/o Natasha Vernaza
[address]

Appendix D – Memo to Contact Person

<School Name>
<Address>

October 1, 2008

Dear Contact Person:

Permission has been granted by the Institutional Review Boards of _<Broward or Palm Beach > County Public Schools and Barry University to conduct survey research in your school district. The participation of your school's third grade classroom teachers (of reading and/or mathematics) has been approved by your principal in a study entitled, *Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study.* The research is being conducted by Natasha Vernaza, a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Barry University.

Your principal has identified you as a contact person who will be able to:

- receive a cover letter e-mailed to you by the researcher, Natasha Vernaza;
- forward the cover letter to all third grade classroom teachers' (of reading and/ or mathematics) school e-mail addresses.

Please expect contact from me via e-mail within the next several days so that I may provide you with the letter to be forwarded to the teachers' school e-mail addresses. If you have any questions or concerns before then, you may contact me, Natasha Vernaza, at [phone number] or [e-mail address], my supervisor, Dr. Victoria Giordano, at (305) 899-3613, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Natasha A. Vernaza, Ed.S.

Appendix E – E-Mail to Administrators

Dear <Principal's Name> and <Assistant Principal's Name>,

Recently, a request form seeking your permission to allow your 3rd grade reading and mathematics classroom teachers to participate in a survey research study entitled *Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study* (SBBC IRB file #528) was mailed to your school.

If you have already completed and returned the "Request to Conduct Survey Research" form, please accept my sincere thanks. If not, a copy of the form has been provided for you in an attachment to this e-mail.

I am especially grateful for your assistance. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at [e-mail address] or [phone number].

Sincerely,
Natasha A. Vernaza, Ed.S.
Curriculum & Instruction Doctoral Candidate
Barry University

Appendix F – Teacher Survey

THIRD GRADE TEACHER SURVEY

Dear Research Participant:

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study. The research is being conducted by Natasha Vernaza, a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Barry University. The aim of the research is to examine the beliefs of third grade classroom teachers (of reading and/or mathematics) regarding factors (including instructional capability, professional development, and instructional resources) that may contribute to their ability to comply with high-stakes accountability policy, as well as the means by which they believe they are capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance. In accordance with this aim, an on-line survey will be used. The anticipated minimum number of participants is 220 (from an estimated population of approximately 720).

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following:
• click on the following active link- Take Me to the Survey -to complete the survey on-line (approximately 15 minutes) no later than November 21, 2008;
• once you complete the survey, your responses will automatically be submitted to the researcher electronically.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary. Should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects to your instructional position. There are no known risks to you as a result of your involvement in this study. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, your participation may contribute to the field of education and contribute to the literature focusing on the impact of high-stakes accountability policy on elementary teachers in Title I schools.

As a research participant, information you provide will be kept anonymous; no names or other identifiers will be collected on the surveys. Your Internet protocol (IP) address cannot be tracked. The researcher will print out your survey responses in order to obtain hard copies for data analysis procedures. The data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years and then destroyed thereafter. Survey data contained within the Internet survey database will be saved on storage media; data contained within the Internet database will then be deleted immediately thereafter. Data saved on the storage media will be retained for a minimum of five years and then deleted.

Data will be reported in the researcher's doctoral dissertation (available through Barry University's Main Campus library and Dissertation Abstracts). A final report of the findings will also be provided (as required by the district's School Board) to [Broward County Public Schools or Palm Beach County Public Schools] IRB. Please be assured that you, your principal, and your school site will not be identified when results are reported in order to maintain confidentiality. By completing and submitting the on-line survey, you have shown your agreement to participate in the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you may contact me, Natasha Vernaza, at (305) 588-4220 or nvmlks@msn.com, my supervisor, Dr. Victoria Giordano, at (305) 899-3613, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,
Natasha A. Vernaza, Ed.S.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of the nature and purposes of this survey research by Natasha Vernaza, that I have read and understand the information presented in the cover letter above, and that I have received a copy of the cover letter (via e-mail) for my records.

Please indicate your consent to participate in this survey research study.

◯ Yes, I give my voluntary consent to participate in this survey research study.

◯ No, I do not give my voluntary consent to participate in this survey research study.

High-Stakes Accountability in Florida

In 1999, Florida Legislature enacted legislation known as the *A+ Plan for Education*. The Plan holds schools and teachers accountable for the performance of the students they educate. Schools receive grades (from A to F) and rewards or sanctions based on students' overall FCAT achievement and how well the lowest performing students learn. Schools and teachers are expected to ensure that all children gain at least a year's worth of learning for each year in school.

The following survey is intended to elicit 3rd grade teachers' beliefs regarding factors that may contribute to their ability to meet the *A+ Plan's* expectations. The items focus on accountability, professional development, resources, teacher beliefs, and professional background.

If you decide to complete this survey, please note that your Internet protocol (IP) address cannot be tracked.

DIRECTIONS

This survey consists of rating scale items, multiple choice items, & fill-in responses.

You may use the scroll button (along the right hand side of your computer screen) to move up and down the survey.

Once you have completed the survey, a confirmation message will appear letting you know that your responses have been submitted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1) Including this academic school year (2008-2009), how many academic school years
have you taught on a *full-time** basis? (**full-time* = an entire school day, five days a week)
(TYPE YOUR RESPONSE IN THE BOX BELOW.)

2) What is the highest degree you hold in education? (MARK ONE CHOICE.)

- ◯ Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Graduate degree
- ◯ None of the above

THIRD GRADE TEACHER SURVEY

3) In which school district do you teach? (TYPE YOUR RESPONSE IN THE BOX BELOW.)

ACCOUNTABILITY

For the following items, TYPE YOUR RESPONSE in the boxes provided.

(If you need to delete text, place your cursor at the end of the text you want to remove,
then use the 'BACKSPACE' key.)
(If you need to add text to your response, place your cursor in the appropriate location,
then type in the desired text.)

4A) What types of classroom assessment are you currently using to assess your students' knowledge of
3rd grade Reading and Mathematics Sunshine State Standards?

4B) To what extent are these forms of classroom assessment effective in providing you with feedback regarding your students' learning?

5A) In your opinion, in what way(s) should third grade teachers be held accountable for their students' knowledge of
Reading and Mathematics Sunshine State Standards assessed on the FCAT?

5B) According to your answer above (#5a), have you seen or heard about these ways actually working in
other schools/ districts/ states? If so, please explain.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Planning & Instruction

THIRD GRADE TEACHER SURVEY

For the following items, move your cursor over the desired answer choice, then left-click your mouse to select your answer.
(If you need to change an answer, left-click on your original response, then select a new answer.)

6A) To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about professional development courses available to you? (MARK ONE CHOICE IN EACH ROW.)

My school and/or district provides professional development courses that can help me learn about...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) How to align 3rd grade reading lesson plans with Florida's Sunshine State Standards (SSS) for Reading	○	○	○	○	○
b) How to align 3rd grade mathematics lesson plans with Florida's SSS for Mathematics	○	○	○	○	○
c) How to teach reading using Florida's SSS for 3rd grade Reading	○	○	○	○	○
d) How to teach mathematics using Florida's SSS for 3rd grade Mathematics	○	○	○	○	○
e) How to utilize appropriate instructional strategies for low-achieving 3rd grade students (i.e., retained students)	○	○	○	○	○
f) How to utilize appropriate instructional strategies for 3rd grade English Language Learners (i.e., Limited English Proficient students)	○	○	○	○	○
g) How to utilize appropriate instructional strategies for 3rd grade students with disabilities (i.e., students with IEPs)	○	○	○	○	○
h) How to utilize appropriate instructional strategies for 3rd grade students identified as gifted/talented	○	○	○	○	○

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Assessment

6B) My school and/or district provides professional development courses that can help me learn about...
(MARK ONE CHOICE IN EACH ROW.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) The purpose of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
b) The format of FCAT questions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
c) The content of skills assessed by the FCAT for 3rd grade students	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
d) How to interpret reports of 3rd grade students' FCAT results	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
e) How to use reports of 3rd grade students' FCAT results to improve classroom instruction	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

RESOURCES

7) To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about
the *adequacy** of instructional resources available to you at your school?
(**adequacy*= sufficient; satisfactory) (MARK ONE CHOICE IN EACH ROW.)

My school provides me with access to...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) Adequate reading textbooks/ basals	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
b) Adequate supplemental trade books/ children's literature	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
c) Adequate reference books (e.g., dictionaries, thesauruses)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
d) Adequate visual aids (e.g., charts, graphs, maps)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
e) Adequate manipulatives/ Hands-on materials	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
f) Adequate measuring tools (e.g., clocks, thermometers, rulers)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

CONTEXT BELIEFS

8) What additional instructional resources and/or professional development topics do you believe would help you to better teach your students the 3rd grade Reading and Mathematics Sunshine State Standards?

CAPABILITY BELIEFS

9) In your opinion, what special abilities do you believe you bring to the classroom when teaching your students the 3rd grade Reading and/or Mathematics Sunshine State Standards?

TEACHER BELIEFS: Planning & Instruction

10A) Please indicate your degree of confidence in your personal ability to carry out each of the following tasks.
(MARK ONE CHOICE IN EACH ROW.)

	Strong Ability	Moderate Ability	Minimal Ability	Not Certain
a) Align 3rd grade reading lesson plans with Florida's Sunshine State Standards (SSS) for Reading	○	○	○	○
b) Align 3rd grade mathematics lesson plans with Florida's SSS for Mathematics	○	○	○	○
c) Teach reading using Florida's SSS for 3rd grade Reading	○	○	○	○
d) Teach mathematics using Florida's SSS for 3rd grade Mathematics	○	○	○	○
e) Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for low-achieving 3rd grade students (i.e., retained students)	○	○	○	○
f) Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for 3rd grade English Language Learners (i.e., Limited English Proficient students)	○	○	○	○
g) Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for 3rd grade students with disabilities (i.e., students with IEPs)	○	○	○	○
h) Utilize appropriate instructional strategies for	○	○	○	○

3rd grade students identified as gifted/talented

TEACHER BELIEFS: Resources & Instruction

10B) Please indicate your degree of confidence in your personal ability to utilize each of the following resources in your instruction of 3rd grade Reading & Mathematics Sunshine State Standards. (MARK ONE CHOICE IN EACH ROW.)

	Strong Ability	Moderate Ability	Minimal Ability	Not Certain
a) Reading textbooks/ basals	◯	◯	◯	◯
b) Supplemental trade books/ children's literature	◯	◯	◯	◯
c) Reference books (e.g., dictionaries, thesauruses)	◯	◯	◯	◯
d) Visual aids (e.g., charts, graphs, maps)	◯	◯	◯	◯
e) Manipulatives/ Hands-on materials	◯	◯	◯	◯
f) Measuring tools (e.g., clocks, thermometers, rulers)	◯	◯	◯	◯

TEACHER BELIEFS: Assessment

10C) Please indicate your degree of confidence in your personal ability to carry out each of the following tasks. (MARK ONE CHOICE IN EACH ROW.)

	Strong Ability	Moderate Ability	Minimal Ability	Not Certain
a) Interpret reports of 3rd grade students' FCAT results	◯	◯	◯	◯
b) Use reports of 3rd grade students' FCAT results to improve classroom instruction	◯	◯	◯	◯

Click the 'Done' button below to exit this survey.

Appendix G – Permissions to Adapt Survey Items

Natasha Vernaza

From: "stecher" <stecher@rand.org>
To: "Natasha Vernaza" <nvmlks@msn.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2008 2:27 PM
Subject: Re: Accountability- Three States Study

Natasha,

You are free to use the items as long as you give proper credit. We did not conduct specific reliability or validity studies. We conducted pilot tests of the surveys, including cognitive testing, and revised accordingly.

Regards,

Brian Stecher

Brian Stecher, Senior Social Scientist
RAND Corporation
1776 Main Street P.O. Box 2138
Santa Monica CA 90407-2138
310-393-0411 (phone)
310-393-4818 (facs)

Natasha Vernaza

From: <parke@duq.edu>
To: <nvmlks@msn.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2008 10:40 AM
Subject: MSPAP

Natasha,

I talked with my colleagues. You have our permission to modify the items from the MSPAP familiarity dimension for your study on the Florida assessment.

Good luck with your dissertation,
Dr. Parke

Carol S. Parke, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Duquesne University
412D Canevin Hall
Pittsburgh, PA 15282
412-396-6101

Appendix H – Cover Letter to Participants

Approved by IRB
Date: JUL 2 4 2008
Signature

Cover Letter to Participants

Dear Research Participant:

Your participation in a research project is requested. The title of the study is *Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study*. The research is being conducted by Natasha Vernaza, a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Barry University. The aim of the research is to examine the beliefs of third grade classroom teachers (of reading and/or mathematics) regarding factors (including instructional capability, professional development, and instructional resources) that may contribute to their ability to comply with high-stakes accountability policy, as well as the means by which they believe they are capable of being held accountable for students' high-stakes test performance. In accordance with this aim, an on-line survey will be used. The anticipated minimum number of participants is 220 (from an estimated population of approximately 720).

If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to do the following:

- click on the following active link- *Take Me to the Survey* -to complete the survey on-line (approximately 15 minutes) no later than ***November 21, 2008***;
- once you complete the survey, your responses will automatically be submitted to the researcher electronically.

Your consent to be a research participant is strictly voluntary. Should you decline to participate or should you choose to drop out at any time during the study, there will be no adverse effects to your instructional position. There are no known risks to you as a result of your involvement in this study. Although there may be no direct benefit to you, your participation may contribute to the field of education and contribute to the literature focusing on the impact of high-stakes accountability policy on elementary teachers in Title I schools.

As a research participant, information you provide will be kept anonymous; no names or other identifiers will be collected on the surveys. Your Internet protocol (IP) address cannot be tracked. The researcher will print out your survey responses in order to obtain hard copies for data analysis procedures. The data will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years and then destroyed thereafter. Survey data contained within the Internet survey database will be saved on storage media; data contained within the Internet database will then be deleted immediately thereafter. Data saved on the storage media will be retained for a minimum of five years and then deleted.

Data will be reported in the researcher's doctoral dissertation (available through Barry University's Main Campus library and *Dissertation Abstracts*). A final report of the findings will also be provided (as required by the district's School Board) to < Broward County Public Schools or Palm Beach County Public Schools> IRB. Please be assured that you, your principal, and your school site will not be identified when results are reported in order to maintain confidentiality. By completing and submitting the on-line survey, you have shown your agreement to participate in the study.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study or your participation in the study, you

may contact me, Natasha Vernaza, at (305) 588-4220 or nvmlks@msn.com, my supervisor, Dr. Victoria Giordano, at (305) 899-3613, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Natasha Vernaza, Ed.S.

Appendix I - E-Mail to Contact Person

Dear <Contact Person's Name>,

As indicated in the memo you recently received from your principal, permission has been granted by the Institutional Review Boards of _<Broward or Palm Beach > County Public Schools and Barry University to conduct survey research in your school district. Permission for participation of your school's third grade classroom teachers (of reading and/or mathematics) has been secured from your school's principal in a study entitled, *Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study.* The research is being conducted by Natasha Vernaza, a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Barry University.

Below you will a find a copy of a cover letter.

Please forward the letter below to the school e-mail addresses of:
all 3rd grade classroom teachers of reading and/ or mathematics at your school site.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me, Natasha Vernaza, at [phone number] or [e-mail address], my supervisor, Dr. Victoria Giordano, at (305) 899-3613, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

Thank you for your assistance.

Natasha A. Vernaza, Ed.S.

Appendix J – Follow-Up E-Mail to Contact Person

Dear <Contact Person's Name>,

As indicated in the memo you recently received from your principal, permission has been granted by the Institutional Review Boards of < Broward or Palm Beach > County Public Schools and Barry University to conduct survey research in your school district. Permission for participation of your school's third grade classroom teachers (of reading and/or mathematics) has been secured from your school's principal in a study entitled, *Teachers' Responses to High-Stakes Accountability in Title I Elementary Schools: A Mixed Methods Study.* The research is being conducted by Natasha Vernaza, a doctoral student in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at Barry University.

Below you will a find a copy of a cover letter.

Please forward the letter below to the school e-mail addresses of:
all 3rd grade classroom teachers of reading and/ or mathematics at your school site.

**This letter serves as a reminder for those teachers who may not have had a chance to complete the survey.

If you have any questions or concerns, you may contact me, Natasha Vernaza, at [phone number] or [e-mail address], my supervisor, Dr. Victoria Giordano, at (305) 899-3613, or the Institutional Review Board point of contact, Ms. Barbara Cook, at (305) 899-3020.

Thanks again for your assistance.

Natasha A. Vernaza, Ed.S.

Appendix K – Sample Page from Quantitative Data Codebook

QUAN Codes

Variable Name	*Label & Codes*
ID	Participant Identification Number *enter the number assigned to each survey*
FULTIME (1) *open-ended*	Yrs. teaching on a full-time basis 1= *Novice= 0-4 yrs.* 2= *Experienced= 5 + yrs.*
DEGREE (2)	Highest degree in education Bachelor's = 1 Graduate = 2
DISTRIC (3) *open-ended*	School district Broward County=1 Palm Beach County= 2
ALIGN_R (6A- a)	PD- Align rdg plans w/ FL SSS Rdg Strongly Agree= 5 Agree= 4 Not Certain= 3 Disagree= 2 Strongly Disagree=1
ALIGN_M (6A- b)	PD- Align math plans w/ FL SSS Math Strongly Agree= 5 Agree= 4 Not Certain= 3 Disagree= 2 Strongly Disagree=1
TEACH_R (6A- c)	PD- Teach rdg using FL SSS Rdg Strongly Agree= 5 Agree= 4 Not Certain= 3 Disagree= 2 Strongly Disagree=1

Appendix L – Sample Page from Qualitative Data Codebook

Survey Item #5A

CATEGORY:	*CODE:*
TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY	TA
TA: ASSESSMENT	TA-ASSES
TA: CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION	TA-CI
TA: DOCUMENTATION	TA-DOC
TA: EXTENT	TA-EXT
TA: GAINS/ PROGRESS	TA-GA
TA: GRADES	TA-GR
TA: GROUP PROGRESS	TA-GP
TA: GROWTH	TA-GRO
TA: SCORES	TA-SCO
TA: TIME	TA-TIME
OTHER ACCOUNTABILITY	OA
OA: ALL ACCOUNTABILITY	OA-ALL
OA: PARENT ACCOUNTABILITY	OA-PAR
OA: STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY	OA-STU
OA: PREVIOUS	OA-PRE
OA: ZERO ACCOUNTABILITY	OA-ZERO
CONTINGENCY-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY	CB
CB: ASSESS	CB-ASES
CB: PARENT	CB-PAR
CB: PASS [TEST]	CB-PASS
CB: STUDENT FACTOR	CB-STU
CB: STUDENT LEVEL	CB-LEV
CB- STUDENT PLACEMENT	CB-PLA
CB: TEACHER FACTOR	CB-TCHR

Appendix M – Sample Page from Qualitative Definitions

Survey Item #5A

CATEGORY:
TEACHER ACCOUNTABILITY

(Respondent cites means by which only third grade teachers should be held accountable for students' knowledge of Reading and Mathematics SSS assessed on the FCAT)

LABEL/CODE	*OPERATIONAL DEFINITION*
TA: ASSESSMENT TA-ASSES	Refers to teacher accountability for students' learning through assessments other than FCAT
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION TA-CI	Refers to teacher accountability for instruction of third grade curriculum
DOCUMENTATION TA-DOC	Refers to teacher accountability for documentation of preparing students for testing
EXTENT TA-EXT	Specifies the degree/extent to which teachers should be held accountable
GAINS/ PROGRESS TA-GA	Refers to teacher accountability for each student's gains, increase in scores, or progress
GRADES TA-GR	Refers to teacher accountability for report card grades
GROUP PROGRESS TA-GP	Refers to teacher accountability for whole group (class) versus individual student progress
GROWTH TA-GRO	Specifies amount of student growth teachers should be held accountable for
INSTRUCTION TA-INS	Refers to teacher accountability for instruction
SCORES TA-SCO	Refers to teacher accountability for students' test scores/ results/ score averages/percentages
TIME TA-TIME	Indicates teachers' accountability for students' knowledge should be determined according to the timeframe upon which the teacher provided the child with instruction

VITA

NATASHA A. VERNAZA

EDUCATION

1997	B.S., Florida International University Miami, Florida Major: Elementary Education
2000	M.S., Barry University Miami Shores, Florida Major: Reading
2004	Ed.S., Barry University Miami Shores, Florida Major: Reading

PUBLICATIONS

Vernaza, N. A. (2007). Making sense of phonics: The hows and whys (book review). *Childhood Education, 83*(4), 249.

PRESENTATIONS

Vernaza, N. A., Farrell, J. B., Perkins, S. S., Ricketts-Duncan, J. L., & Kimbar, D. J. (2008, March). *Transcending boundaries and borders: Constructing living theory through multidimensional inquiry.* American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York.