Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee

Evaluation of the High Priority Schools Initiatives

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North Carolina
Department of Public Instruction

First Annual Evaluation
of the
High Priority Schools Initiatives
2001-2002 and 2002-2003

September 2003

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Metis Associates' First Annual Evaluation Report of the High Priority Schools Initiative
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Aiming to provide the state's highest priority elementary schools with immediate assistance, in 2001 the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation that appropriated supplementary funds for the state's lowest performing elementary schools. The set of high priority schools targeted for this assistance were those in which over 80% of students qualified for free- or reduced-price lunches, and no more than 55% of the students performed at or above grade level during the 1999-2000 school year. Across the state, 36 elementary schools were identified as High Priority (HP) schools. The HP schools legislation specified that funds be used to:

- Reduce class size in kindergarten to grade three so that there is a 15:1 student-teacher ratio;
- Pay teachers in 2001-2002 (Year 1) who elect to extend their contract by five days for staff development and to extend all teacher contracts at these schools in 2002-2003 (Year 2) by 10 days including five additional days of instruction; and
- Provide one additional instructional support position at each priority school

This same legislation also authorized the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to contract with an outside organization to evaluate the High Priority Schools Initiative. After issuing a request for proposals (RFP), Metis Associates, Inc. was selected in December 2002 to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the HP initiatives on improving student achievement. This summarizes the results included in Metis' full Evaluation Report.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HIGH-PRIORITY INITIATIVES

The following listing identifies the key aspects of the implementation of the HP Initiative:

Class Size Reductions in Grades K-3 were accomplished through a variety of [1]

- Scheduling Changes (e.g., Team Teaching)
- Strategies used to create additional classroom space (e.g., Use of mobile units/portable classrooms)

Teacher Contract Extension for Professional Development resulted in

- Lessons that incorporate the NC Standard Course of Study
- Small group instruction
- Classroom management techniques
- Cooperative learning
- Technology as a learning tool
- Differentiated instruction
- Individualized instruction

[1] In Year 1, 18 schools requested and were granted a waiver. In Year 2, one school requested and was granted a waiver.

Extended School Year for Students

- Of those schools that implemented the extended school year initiative, about half added the days during the school year on weekends or school breaks and half providing additional instructional days to extend the school year.
- Regardless of how it was being implemented, the content was described mostly as an extension of the regular school year instruction.

Additional Instructional Support Positions

- K-3 classroom teacher
- Curriculum specialist
- Literacy or reading specialist
- Student support staff
- Resource teacher
- Staff developer

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Impact of the HP Initiatives on Student Achievement

- By the end of Year 2, all 35 HP schools were successful in realizing ABCs growth expectations.
- The HP schools showed significantly greater numbers of students than the comparison schools that attained consistent mastery of grade level content (at or above Level III) in both reading and math from baseline to Year 2.
- Students who remained in HP schools over several years realized statistically significant mean gains in reading and math.

Effectiveness of the Individual HP Initiatives on Student Achievement

- Across grades, students at the HP non-waiver and waiver schools significantly outperformed their peers at the comparison schools in reading in spring 2003
- In spring 2003, students' average math performance at the HP non-waiver schools was similar to that of students at the comparison schools.

Key Stakeholders' Perceptions of Achievement Gains or Other Outcomes

- Changes attributed to the **reduced class size initiative:**
  - Increased use of small group instruction
  - Increased time spent on instruction
  - Greater incidence of individualized student instruction
  - Improved student achievement
  - Improved classroom discipline
  - Improved teacher scheduling

- With respect to **contract extension professional development,** staff believed their teaching skills have improved the most as to:
  - using technology to support learning

- Strategies with manipulatives
- Small group instruction
- Lessons based on the Standard Course of Study

- Staff reported far less improvement in
  - Teaching ELL students and students with disabilities
  - Strategies for increasing parental involvement
- The **extended school year for students** is contributing to low morale among teachers and students and is not believed to be achieving its intended benefits for students.
- District-level respondents believed that it was too early to determine the impact of the HP initiatives on student academic performance.
  - District-level respondents also mentioned two primary negative effects of the initiative - increased pressure on HP-designated schools and the stigma or embarrassment that exists for schools with the HP designation.

USE OF ALLOCATED FUNDS AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES BY THE HP SCHOOLS

- Preliminary findings of an analysis of financial data show a significant correlation between the increase in dollars and the increase in test scores.
- There was a great deal of variation in how HP funds were allocated to support HP initiatives among different districts.
- It was found that HP schools and districts were using different types of funding, aside from HP funds, to support HP initiatives.
- Because dollars were not fully allocated to all the schools in the HP Initiative until the second year, it is difficult to draw conclusions in the first year of the initiative.

The Impact of the HP Initiatives on Other Outcomes

- Instructional Changes
  - Most of the HP districts had implemented reduced class size efforts aside from those efforts associated with the HP Schools Initiative.
  - A number of additional school-wide initiatives have been implemented in an effort to improve the academic performance of students at HP schools.
- Staffing Patterns
  - Clearly, the most significant impact the HP Initiative has had on staffing patterns at the 35 schools is related to the loss of the teaching assistant positions.
- Parent Involvement
  - While the initial intent of the HP legislation was to increase parental involvement through the added instructional support position, this aspect was clearly not realized at the school level.
  - None of the schools used the HP allocation to support a staff person whose main responsibilities were to conduct parent outreach and education (such as a parent advocate or parent coordinator), though several schools hired student support staff such as guidance counselors or social workers.
- Implementation Issues/Challenges
  - Some district-level staff as well as staff at the HP schools believed that sufficient resources were not provided by the state to support the HP initiative.
  - Many cited a number of unexpected costs that districts and/or schools had incurred because of the HP Schools Initiative.

- It was also learned that HP schools are having difficulty recruiting and maintaining experienced and qualified teachers.
- In addition, some district respondents expressed dissatisfaction with DPI in terms of its communication to the district regarding the HP Initiative.
- At the school level, confusion existed at many schools regarding what HP funds were available to them to assist with implementation of the four legislative initiatives.

- There is a need for **increased communication** between DPI, the participating school districts, and the HP schools regarding the expectations and requirements of the HP Schools Initiative. We note that, as of August of 2003, DPI has already started to convene regular meetings with HP staff regarding these expectations and requirements.
- It is suggested that some **flexibility with implementation** be established. There are particular issues that should be addressed for HP schools where the average class size was at or below the 1:15 student to teacher ratio before the HP Schools Initiative began. In these schools, since the additional teacher allocations were not needed/warranted, the difficulties associated with the loss of the teaching assistants were more pronounced.
- Stakeholders at the district and school level reported unanticipated financial burdens (e.g., ancillary costs such additional instructional supplies, portable classrooms, custodial services for additional days), shortages of experienced teachers, scarcity of facilities/space, and loss of teaching assistants.
- There is some concern from both district- and school-level staff about the stigma associated with being an HP school and that none of the schools received recognition for improvements made since the HP designation in 1999-2000. At the same time, stakeholders were apprehensive that state funding for reduced class size and professional development, in particular, would not be continued if an HP school showed improvements in student achievement. Perhaps the state could develop a strategy for **rewarding HP schools** that achieve marked improvements, while continuing to provide the HP funding and support.
- Recognizing that reduced class size may not boost achievement unless teachers are appropriately trained, the North Carolina legislation required that HP schools provide five days of staff development. To strengthen this initiative, the state should **provide research-based suggestions or guidance** to the districts and the HP schools regarding the **scope and content for this professional development**.
- The intent of the HP legislation was to **improve parental involvement** through funding a parent coordinator or parent advocate-type position at each HP school. However, the evaluation showed that the legislation did not explicitly state how these positions were to be used, and that districts and HP schools were not aware of the objective to provide the additional instructional support staff position. The state should fully inform the districts and the HP schools about this provision, so that they view the additional position as a viable mechanism that could facilitate positive effects on parent involvement.
- While the current evaluation study began to explore the combinations of variables (i.e., conditions) that were associated with academic achievement within the HP schools, the results were relatively inconclusive. It is simply too early in the life of the initiative to expect unambiguous findings. As the initiative moves through its subsequent phases of implementation, longitudinal data should be maintained on the cohorts of students who are touched by the initiative, and that **additional statistical techniques** should be used to help define best practice.

Metis Associates' Evaluation of the High Priority Schools Initiative, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI)

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

I. INTRODUCTION

Aiming to provide the state's highest priority elementary schools with immediate assistance, in 2001 the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation that appropriated supplementary funds for the state's lowest performing elementary schools. Approximately $10.8 million for the 2001-2002 fiscal year and $12.2 million for the 2002-2003 fiscal year were to be used to provide these schools with tools needed to substantially improve student achievement, creating the High Priority Schools Initiative. The set of high priority schools targeted for this assistance were defined as those in which over 80% of students qualified for free- or reduced-price lunches, and no more than 55% of the students performed at or above grade level during the 1999-2000 school year. Across the state, 36 elementary schools were identified as High Priority (HP) schools.

The HP schools legislation specified that funds be used to:

- Reduce class size in kindergarten to grade three so that there is a 15:1 student-teacher ratio
- Pay teachers in 2001-2002 (Year 1) who elect to extend their contract by five days for staff development and to extend all teacher contracts at these schools in 2002-2003 (Year 2) by 10 days including five additional days of instruction
- Provide one additional instructional support position at each priority school

Importantly, the legislation did not allow funds for teacher assistants to be allotted to these schools. Rather, the school districts' teacher assistant allotments were to be reduced based on average daily membership (ADM) for each of the HP schools. In place of the teacher assistant allotments, additional teaching positions were to be allocated to each HP school so that all classrooms at the targeted grade levels reached an allotment ratio of 1:15.

Given the late approval of the legislation in 2001-2002, a waiver clause was included that allowed districts to "opt-out" of implementing the HP initiatives for Year 1. Among the 36 HP schools, 17 applied to NCDPI for a waiver. With all waivers being approved by NCDPI, those schools' allotments were reversed–withdrawing the additional teaching position allotments and reinstating the teaching assistant position allotments. In Year 2, despite not being afforded waiver status again, one elementary school opted not to accept the HP resources and did not implement any of the HP initiatives. Thus, the total pool of HP schools was reduced to 35 elementary schools, representing 15 school districts across the state.

This same legislation also authorized the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) to contract with an outside organization to evaluate the High Priority Schools Initiative. NCDPI issued a request for proposals (RFP) in December 2001 soliciting proposals from contractors who were interested in performing the work. A proposal team within NCDPI, together with State Board of Education staff with particular experience with low-performing schools and/or educational policy evaluation and research, were responsible for evaluating proposals submitted by interested contractors. In December 2002, Metis Associates,

Inc. was selected to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the HP initiatives on improving student achievement. More specifically, the evaluation sought to study the implementation and effectiveness of the preceding legislative initiatives. In accordance with the legislation, the major areas of focus for the evaluation were as follows:

1. The overall impact of the HP initiatives on student achievement.

2. The effectiveness of each individual HP initiative on student achievement.

3. The changes that occurred in HP schools with respect to staffing patterns, instructional methods, staff development, and parental involvement as a result of implementing the HP initiatives.

4. An accounting of how funds and personnel resources made available to the HP schools were utilized and the impact of varying patterns of utilization on changes in student achievement.

5. Recommendations for the continuance and improvement of these initiatives.

II. Report Structure

This report is organized into eight sections. Section III presents an overview of the body of literature on reduced class size implementation, noting several areas that were relevant to this evaluation. Section IV provides a brief summary of the evaluation design that was used, including the different data collection methods. Next, Section V summarizes the level of implementation of the HP initiatives and discusses implementation challenges, and Section VI presents findings organized by the evaluation areas mentioned above. Finally, Sections VII and VIII offer conclusions of the various evaluation results and recommendations, respectively.

III. Context – What the Research Says

Due to a variety of methodological and conceptual flaws, early research on reduced class size (RCS) offered little information about its challenges and benefits (Achilles, 1997). This changed, however, with a landmark evaluation conducted in the 1980s on Tennessee's reduced class size initiative (Murphy & Rosenberg, 1998). Known as the STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio) study, this research yielded valuable information about the impacts of reduced class size and spawned other large-scale, rigorous evaluations of reduced class size initiatives, as well as a number of smaller studies (e.g., Achilles; Cromwell, 1998; Harvey, 1993; Malloy & Gillman, 1989; Nye, 1995; Word, Johnston, Bain, Fulton, Boyd-Zaharias, Lintz, Achilles, Folger, & Breda, 1990). Since the STAR evaluation, a growing body of literature is emerging on the effects of RCS on a variety of education-related outcomes, including impacts on both students and teachers. The findings of research to date are discussed in the "Outcomes Associated with Reduced Class Size" section below.

Undeniably, a number of challenges are associated with implementing RCS initiatives. For example, research and experience suggest that schools embracing RCS often face difficulties associated with a shortage of qualified teachers. In fact, under-qualified teachers without proper teaching credentials and/or limited teaching experience must often be hired to meet staffing needs. As a result, time, money, and other resources must be dedicated to

ensuring that staff are provided with the training and support necessary to deliver high quality classroom instruction (Achilles, 1997; Cromwell, 1998).

Yet another challenge associated with RCS is the need to find appropriate classroom space without displacing other valuable educational programs (Achilles, 1997). Often, schools acquire needed space through the addition of portables—mobile units that may be used to house classrooms outside the main school facility. In addition to portables, schools have been found to employ a variety of other means of acquiring space, including reconfiguring existing classroom space, re-opening vacant school buildings, and seeking funds to support the construction of new space. Importantly, when securing additional classroom space is not possible, some districts have been found to use creative scheduling or team-teaching strategies in an attempt to reap the benefits of reduced class size without having to increase the number of classrooms (McRobbie, 1996; Joint Legislative Audit Committee, 1999; O'Connell & Smith, 2000).

While the obstacles of RCS presented above are significant, educators and policy-makers assert that the biggest challenge associated with RCS may be the cost. In order to implement RCS within a school setting, funds are typically needed for additional teachers and classroom space. There may be other costs as well, such as those associated with the purchase of the instructional and classroom materials needed to equip new classrooms and with providing professional development to increased numbers of faculty (Achilles, 1997). RCS costs are often at the heart of debate over these initiatives.

Outcomes Associated with Reduced Class Size

As previously noted, some of the most conclusive findings on reduced class size have come from several large-scale studies. Tennessee's Project STAR, perhaps, has offered the most comprehensive information of any study to date. This research had a number of advantages over past research, including large study size (79 schools with 7,000 students followed for 4 years); random assignment to conditions; and an in-school design (all participating schools implemented at least one of the three types of classrooms studied in the research, in order to counter the effects of variations resulting from differences among schools). Undeniably, findings from the STAR study favored reduced class size, uncovering numerous benefits associated with this initiative. Furthermore, the positive effects were found to hold for white and minority students, as well as students from inner city, urban, suburban, and rural schools (Cromwell, 1998). Importantly, the original STAR study spawned two other major studies of the reduced class size initiative in Tennessee schools: the Lasting Benefits Study, which followed students over time to ascertain the extent and duration of outcomes, and Project Challenge, a study of the application of reduced class size in the state's poorest counties. As with the original STAR study, both of these evaluations highlighted the benefits of RCS (Achilles, 1997).

Another large-scale study of reduced class size that yielded important information about RCS initiatives was Indiana's PRIME TIME evaluation. Results of this investigation revealed positive outcomes in such areas as time on task, student behavior, teacher satisfaction, and individualized instruction. Interestingly, however, results regarding impact on students' academic achievement were mixed. Methodological issues associated with the research limit the interpretations that may be drawn (Center for School Assessment, 1986; Malloy & Gilman, 1989; McGiverin, Gilman, & Tillitski, 1989; Muller, Chase, & Walden, 1988).

Overall, research to date indicates that reduced class size may offer a number of benefits for students, particularly when children are placed in smaller classrooms beginning at school entry (Achilles, 1997). These include higher test scores, greater levels of student participation, decreased grade retention, and improved student behavior. Furthermore, research suggests that reduced class size may lead to increased engagement in school among affected students. This in turn has been linked to improved academic performance and reduced risk of non-compliant behaviors (e.g., tardiness, absenteeism, lack of attention within the classroom) (Finn, 1989; Finn, 1993; Finn & Rock, 1997; Maier, Molnar, Percy, Smith, & Zahorik, 1997; Steele, 1992). Importantly, research suggests that these effects may be maintained over time, rather than evaporating once children are no longer in a reduced class setting (Achilles, 1997; Achilles, Kiser-Kling, Owen, & Aust, 1994). Furthermore, while RCS has been shown to benefit all children, gains appear to be greatest for minority students and students of low socio-economic status (Achilles, 1997).

In addition to its noted impact on students, reduced class size also has been found to have positive effects on teaching. Specifically, teachers in small classes have been shown to demonstrate more effective teaching strategies, improved communication with parents, improved ability to monitor student behavior, increased ability to gauge children's grasp of course content, greater use of enrichment activities and supplementary materials, and increased morale (Achilles, 1997). Research also indicates that smaller classes allow instructors to devote more time to individualized instruction and identify students at risk of learning problems who may be in need of additional supports (Achilles; Achilles et al., 1994; Bain, Achilles, Zaharias, & Mckenna, 1992; Bourke, 1986; Elvertson & Folger, 1989; Harvey, 1993; Kiser-Kling, 1995).

Importantly, research and experience strongly suggest that the use of teaching aides to lower staff-student ratios may not yield the same benefits as reduced class size. Experts argue that when children are attended to by teaching assistants or aides, they lose the benefit of a teacher's professional knowledge and experience. Rather than engaging children in meaningful learning, classroom assistants may simply involve children in rote activities intended to fill time. As such, the use of aides in lieu of smaller classes may not be a desirable option (Achilles, 1997).

Reduced Class Size and Professional Development

An important consideration in reduced class size initiatives is access to high quality instruction. As previously noted, as RCS increases the demand for teachers, schools are less likely to have a staff of fully credentialed, well trained, highly experienced teachers. For example, research on the introduction of RCS in California revealed that the number of under-qualified teachers employed by schools increased significantly following the implementation of a RCS initiative (Bohrnstedt & Stecher, 1999). Similarly, another recent study found that more than 1 million of California's 5.7 million students are enrolled in schools staffed by an unacceptable number of poorly qualified teachers, suggesting that any positive effects that might have resulted from reduced class size may have been negated (Shields, Esch, Humphrey, Young, Gaston, & Hunt, 1999).

Related to that which is described above, schools implementing reduced class size initiatives are also faced with the challenge of helping teachers learn to use reduced class size effectively (Achilles, 1997). In fact, research suggests that many teachers often fail to change their teaching strategies when placed in smaller classrooms (Shapson, Wright, Easton, & Fitzgerald, 1980). For instance, a study of reduced class size in California revealed that

teaching strategies, student grouping practices, and content coverage did not change in any substantial way after the institution of RCS (Bohrnstedt & Stecher, 1999).

While research to date offers no definitive conclusions as to what teaching strategies are most effective in a reduced class size setting, experts assert that in order to support RCS initiatives, professional development should be school-based, ongoing, and designed to facilitate an atmosphere in which teachers work together to uncover the most promising strategies for working with children in a reduced class size setting. Also suggested is the use of mentoring or "master teachers" as a tool for developing the skills of less experienced instructors, a method which may be particularly salient for schools forced to hire less qualified teachers in order to meet the demands of RCS (Bohrnstedt & Stecher, 1999; McRobbie, 1996; O'Connell & Smith, 2000).

In conclusion, experts have offered a number of suggestions for maximizing the benefits of reduced class size initiatives. For instance, experts assert that districts may benefit from taking advantage of waivers that allow for increased flexibility in the use of financial resources. Rather than simply employing funds to add classroom space and hire additional teachers, schools may choose to use funds to support such efforts as increased professional development opportunities or the hiring of master teachers. Alternatively, schools may opt to implement creative scheduling strategies, such as staggering the daily arrivals and departures of students to ensure all children spend at least part of the day in a reduced class size setting (Egelson, Hartman, & Achilles, 1996; O'Connell & Smith, 2000). Finally, in an effort to maximize benefits, districts may opt to target resources toward those students who have the most to gain from RCS initiatives, such as minority and low-income students (O'Connell & Smith, 2000). As the effects of such efforts are evaluated, educators will have additional guidance regarding the efforts that yield the greatest benefits for the least amount of cost.

IV. Evaluation Design

The overall approach to the evaluation was participatory in nature. The Metis evaluation team and the DPI Evaluation Committee, which included the following core group of members: Brad McMillen, Senior Evaluation Consultant, Division of Accountability Service; Elsie Leak, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and School Reform Services; Marvin Pittman, Director of School Improvement; Jackie Colbert, Assistant Director of School Improvement; and Charlotte Hughes, Section Chief for Effective Practices, held regularly scheduled progress meetings over the course of the evaluation.

Through the progress meetings, the Metis evaluation team engaged the DPI Committee in discussions about selecting case study schools, refining survey instruments and interview protocols, and assisting with the comparison group design. The meetings also served as a means for sharing formative evaluation information with DPI, such as preliminary findings, challenges encountered in data collection, and impressions from the field. In addition, the evaluation team submitted periodic status reports to DPI, describing challenges and successes with data collection activities underway and providing written summaries of preliminary findings.

Data Collection

The evaluation team used the following methods to collect data relevant to the research questions:

Review of Extant Data: The evaluation team reviewed different documents from the HP schools, such as School Improvement Plans and school calendars, and collected various testing and student information files and financial spreadsheets from DPI. School Improvement Plan summaries were created to begin to learn about implementation of the HP initiatives at the various schools. Electronic files were constructed that contained test results and other student outcomes for the 35 HP schools for three years: 2000-2001 (baseline), 2001-2002 (Year 1), and 2002-2003 (Year 2).

Case Study Visits: In order to gain a richer and more in-depth understanding of both the processes and outcomes of the legislative initiatives being implemented, the summative evaluation activities were supplemented with case studies of a sample of eight HP schools. The case study sites were selected to represent a cross-section of the 35 schools, taking into account variables such as size of the school, geographic location, poverty level, percentage of limited English proficient students, waiver status, presence of state voluntary technical assistance teams, and indicators of school achievement (ABCs results[2]). Members of the evaluation team spent approximately two days at each case study school. On-site activities included observations of staff development (if possible) and target classrooms, interviews with the principals, and focus groups with school staff and parents.

Individual Interviews with District-Level Stakeholders: Beginning in February 2003, the evaluation team began conducting individual interviews with District Finance Officers (DFOs) in school districts with HP schools. These interviews continued through May 2003 until the DFOs at all 15 participating school districts were interviewed. The evaluation team used a semi-structured set of questions, and the interviews averaged one hour in length.

In addition, telephone interviews were conducted with district-level administrators who had oversight for the HP Schools Initiative in 14[3] of the 15 participating districts. This included Directors of Instruction, Directors of Curriculum or Instructional Support, Directors of Elementary Education, Assistant Superintendents, Deputy Superintendents, and Directors of School Improvement. All of the interviews were conducted using a structured protocol to guide the discussion, and were about 45 minutes in length.

Surveys of School Administrators, Staff, and Parents: The evaluation team asked principals at each HP school to complete an Administrator Survey and to assist in disseminating an HP School Staff Survey to all instructional staff at their schools. Administrator Surveys were returned from all 35 participating school principals. Additionally, assistant principals from 15 schools also returned an Administrator Survey, bringing the total number of completed Administrator Surveys to 50. Approximately 972 staff members from the 35 HP schools returned a completed survey to Metis. The number of Staff Surveys returned from each school ranged from nine to 73, with an average of 28 per school.

Principals from each HP school were also asked for student addresses, so that a Parent Survey including a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope could be mailed to parents or

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[2] In the ABCs Model, a school's growth and performance are summarized using growth and performance composite scores. The growth measure summarizes a school's growth over all grade levels and subjects included in the accountability model. The performance composite summarizes the percent of tests' passed (i.e., at or above Achievement Level III - consistent mastery of subject/course content matter) in subjects taught at a school and included in the accountability model. These composites are used to determine which North Carolina schools may need special assistance.

[3] The outstanding Director of Instruction interview has been scheduled for late September 2003.

guardians of each student. Three schools opted to distribute the Parent Survey themselves because of concerns about student/parent confidentiality. The remaining 32 schools submitted mailing lists of families enrolled in grades K-3. The evaluation team selected a random sample of 10% of the students on the mailing list to be surveyed. For schools where there were substantial numbers of Spanish-speaking families, Spanish language versions of the Parent Survey were included in the mailing. Of the 4,209 surveys that were mailed and successfully delivered, 633 surveys (15%) were returned (either by mail or directly from a participating school), representing all 35 HP schools. The number of completed Parent Surveys from the individual schools ranged from five to 60, with a mean of 18 per school.

Table 4.1 – Sample Size and Response Rates for School Surveys

	Target Population	Achieved Sample	Response Rate
Administrators	35	50	100.0%[4]
Teachers	1,340	972	72.5%
Parents	4,209	633	15.0%

Comparison Group Design

When it is not possible to assign schools randomly to control and treatment conditions, similarly situated comparison groups are used to approximate the impacts that are attributable to the intervention (i.e., treatment). For example, a comparison group might be constituted of like schools from the same or comparable districts. The schools in the comparison group are then measured with the same instruments that are used for the treatment group. Since all qualified high priority schools benefited from the HP Schools Initiative (i.e., there was no random selection or assignment), Metis used a comparison group evaluation design for the quantitative component of the study (i.e., analysis of student achievement data). Since comparison schools were similar at baseline to the treatment schools on key variables, all things being equal, any subsequent detected difference between would more likely be attributable to the intervention (i.e., the HP Schools Initiative).

Working with DPI, the evaluation team developed a process to select a comparison group of schools. Since the HP schools were selected based on 1999-2000 data, Metis applied the HP selection criteria to 2000-2001 data and generated a list of elementary schools that had over 80% of their students eligible for free or reduced price lunch and ABCs performance composites at or below 55%. In other words, this list represents schools that would have been identified as HP had the 2000-2001 data been available when DPI originally determined the list of HP schools. There were 34 schools on the list. Of those 34 schools, 17 were HP schools that were already involved in the evaluation. Of the remaining 17 schools, nine were selected as the set of comparison schools for the study; eight could not be comparison schools because they were alternative schools. The schools and their districts are listed in Table 4.2.

[4] In some cases, we received Administrator Surveys from both Principals and Assistant Principals.

Table 4.2 – Selected Comparison Schools

District	School
Durham Public Schools	C.C. Spaulding Elementary (PK-5) Y. E. Smith Elementary (PK-5)
Guilford County Schools	Foust Elementary (PK-5) Oak Hill Elementary (PK-5)
Hoke County Schools	West Hoke Elementary (K-5)
Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	Swift Creek Elementary (PK-5)
Pitt County Schools	Belvoir Elementary (PK-5)
Washington County Schools	Pines Elementary (PK-5)
Weldon City Schools	Weldon Elementary (PK-5)

In the following table we present key student-level characteristics of the comparison schools and the HP schools for three years: 2000-2001 (baseline), 2001-2002 (Year 1), and 2002-2003 (Year 2). Looking at the baseline year, it can be seen that the HP schools have a greater concentration of African American and low-income students than do the comparison schools. Comparison schools closely reflect the proportion of special education, limited English proficient, and gifted students in the HP schools.

Table 4.3 – Key Characteristics of HP Schools and Comparison Schools Grades 3-5 Combined

Demographics	2000-2001		2001-2002		2002-2003	
	HP Schools	Comparison Schools	HP Schools	Comparison Schools	HP Schools	Comparison Schools
Number of Students	6,647	2,012	6,566	1,796	6,193	1,746
% Black	83.9	78.6	82.1	80.3	80.9	75.5
% Hispanic	6.7	4.8	8.8	4.5	10.1	6.5
% White, Asian & American Indian	9.3	16.6	9.1	15.2	9.0	18.0
% Limited English Proficient	3.7	2.4	4.1	2.2	5.1	4.1
% Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	86.2	79.9	87.0	81.1	83.2	73.8
% Eligible for Title I	95.4	79.8	97.5	100.0	99.8	85.9
% Special Education	16.1	16.3	15.8	18.4	16.7	17.8
% Gifted	4.1	4.1	4.6	4.8	4.8	4.5

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HIGH PRIORITY INITIATIVES

This section presents information on the extent of implementation of the HP initiatives across the 35 schools for both Years 1 and 2. It is important to note that in Year 1, HP schools did not receive notifications or allocations of funding until January 2002; this means that implementation in Year 1 may not represent a full year of intervention for all HP schools. Where appropriate, findings from the case study schools are highlighted in boxed text.

Reduced Class Size

> All eight case study schools were implementing the class size reduction initiative; schools reported being allotted anywhere from one to 11 additional teachers through the HP Initiative. To create space for the additional teachers, the case study schools reconfigured specialty rooms (e.g., art and music rooms) (four schools), set up portable classrooms (three schools), established shared classrooms (two schools), established multi-grade classes (one school), and converted closet space (one school). In addition, one school used the additional teacher as a "floating" resource teacher who rotates among classrooms conducting daily 30 to 40 lessons on reading and math skills.

In Year 1, 18 of the 35 HP schools implemented the class size reduction initiative; as noted earlier, the remaining 17 schools requested and were granted waivers for this initiative in Year 1. By Year 2, all 35 schools had begun to reduce class size in kindergarten through grade three.

Importantly, when surveyed, nearly 85% of the teachers in grades K-3 reported that the number of students in their classes had decreased because of the HP Initiative. On average, teachers reported having 14 students in their classes. Interestingly, more than half of the staff at upper grade levels (54%) also indicated a decrease in class size. The average size for classes at the upper grades was also 14 students per class.

On average, administrators reported hiring three new teachers because of HP funding. While it seems that most of these teachers had state certification, the average number with prior teaching experience at the elementary school level was only 2.5 per school.

More than half of the K-3 classroom teachers (55%) and their administrators (66%) indicated that scheduling changes were needed to support reduced class size. The types of scheduling changes varied, including team teaching (34.6%), parallel or block scheduling (29.8%), multi-age grouping (14.0%) part-time assistant or other staff support (2.7%), pull-out instruction (1.4%), and other student grouping strategies (1.6%).

Both principals and district-level staff reported different strategies used to accommodate the increased need for classroom space at the HP schools. These included:

- ✓ Use of mobile units/portable classrooms
- ✓ Expanded into unused rooms
- ✓ Converted non-traditional teaching space such as music rooms, art rooms, media center rooms, and office space
- ✓ Used room dividers

- ✓ Divided classroom space (without dividers)
- ✓ Created multi-age classrooms
- ✓ Moved classrooms to another building
- ✓ Implemented team teaching

However, the majority of responding staff (83.0%) reported that no changes were made to their own classroom space to allow for the additional classes. Of those that reported that changes did occur, only 13% characterized that change as having a negative effect on classroom instruction. Most (61.3%) viewed the change as positive.

Extended Teacher Contracts for Professional Development

Four of the eight case study schools implemented the voluntary five-day extension for professional development (PD) in the 2001-2002 school year. The content for each school focused mainly on planning for the upcoming school year.

The mandatory 5-day extension for PD was implemented or being planned for the 2002-2003 school year in six of the eight case study schools. Topics covered included literacy strategies (four schools), school improvement goals (two schools), a review of achievement data (two schools), math strategies (two schools), team building, discipline strategies, ESL/second language learners, conflict resolution, character education, classroom management, special education, technology, equity/diversity, managing/using student achievement data, and the Success for All model.

When the contract extension PD is being offered also varied by school: after school workshops (one school), full days of training held at the end of the school year (two schools) or during the summer (two schools), and a mix of both full days of training held at the beginning and at the end of the school year (one school).

In Year 1 (2001-2002), 19 (54.3%) of the 35 HP schools implemented the voluntary teacher contract extension for professional development. Of the 19, four were waiver schools and 15 were non-waiver. By Year 2, all but six of the HP schools extended teacher contracts for the mandatory five days of professional development. Among these 29, ten received a Year 1 waiver and 19 were non-waiver schools.

Estimates of within school participation in professional development were obtained from several items on the Administrator Survey. HP school administrators were asked who was involved in determining the curriculum the contract extension professional development. Interestingly, as shown in the following table, their responses varied for 2001-2002 and 2002-2003. For example, teachers appeared to be more involved in the planning process in Year 1 than in Year 2. These differences may be due to the late notification of HP funding in Year 1.

Table 5.1 – Administrator Survey
Person(s) Who Determined Content for Contract Extension Professional Development

	2001-2002 (Voluntary) N=22	2002-2003 (Mandatory) N=39
Experts selected by the district	13.6%	25.6%
All pedagogical staff at this school	31.8%	43.6%
District personnel	45.5%	38.5%
Non-pedagogical school staff	9.1%	5.1%
Experts selected by the school staff	22.7%	20.5%
Affected teachers and other pedagogical staff at this school	50.0%	30.8%
Principal	9.1%	12.8%
School Improvement Team	4.5%	10.3%
Curriculum Specialists	--	7.7%
State Personnel	4.5%	2.6%

As shown in Table 5.2, a wide array of topics was covered in the contract extension professional development. According to staff and administrators, the major content areas covered most often among the HP schools during the professional development in Year 1 (voluntary) and Year 2 (mandatory) included:

- Lessons that incorporate the NC Standard Course of Study
- Small group instruction
- Classroom management techniques
- Cooperative learning
- Technology as a learning tool
- Differentiated instruction
- Individualized instruction

Table 5.2 – Content of Contract Extension Professional Development

	HP School Staff		Administrators	
	2001-2002 Voluntary	2002-2003 Mandatory	2001-2002 Voluntary	2002-2003 Mandatory
Individualized instruction	46.2%	50.1%	57.7%	51.2%
Small group instruction	57.4%	63.6%	65.4%	63.4%
Cooperative learning	51.0%	56.0%	38.5%	56.1%
Differentiated instruction	48.5%	52.8%	NA	NA
Theme-based instruction	35.1%	39.5%	34.6%	29.3%
Language learning approaches	32.9%	40.3%	46.2%	43.9%
Learning centers	42.9%	45.2%	38.5%	43.9%
Manipulatives	47.9%	47.4%	61.5%	58.5%
Inquiry-based instruction	28.1%	35.2%	34.6%	29.3%
Project-based instruction	23.4%	32.5%	23.1%	19.5%
Technology as a learning tool	49.0%	56.4%	57.7%	61.0%
Alternative assessment approaches	29.2%	43.1%	NA	NA
Classroom management techniques	56.3%	62.8%	NA	NA

	HP School Staff		Administrators	
	2001-2002 Voluntary	2002-2003 Mandatory	2001-2002 Voluntary	2002-2003 Mandatory
Strategies for increasing parental involvement	38.7%	42.5%	34.6%	34.6%
Lessons that incorporate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study	55.4%	65.2%	61.5%	29.3%
Specific strategies for teaching students with disabilities	29.0%	30.9%	38.5%	70.7%
Specific strategies for teaching English language learners	18.4%	24.9%	15.4%	31.7%

Regarding follow up to the professional development, approximately two-thirds noted that opportunities were offered to them, mostly in the form of follow-up discussions held during regular teacher meetings (72.6%), workshops (68.3%), and teacher reflection meetings (65.8%). Interestingly, a greater proportion of administrators believed teachers were offered follow-up (66.7% vs. 84.2%, respectively).

Extended School Year for Students

Six of the eight case study schools have extended the school year by five additional days for students. The schools elected to implement this component in different ways, including during teacher work days (two schools), adding five days to the beginning (one school) or the end (one school) of the 2002-2003 school year, establishing an after school program that extends the regular school day (one school), and supporting the school's existing four-week summer school program (one school).

Both case study schools that extended the school year during teacher workdays reported that student attendance was quite low on those days, and that incentives such as McDonald's coupons and pizza parties were being offered to encourage students to come to school on "HP days."

In Year 1, only seven (one waiver and six non-waiver) HP schools implemented an extended school year program for students. In Year 2, this number increased to 26 schools having extended teacher contracts for additional instructional time. Of the 26, nine were Year 1 waiver schools and 17 were non-waiver.

Of those schools that have been implementing an extended school year initiative, the design for this component varied, with some adding the additional days during the school year on weekends or school breaks (52.1%), some providing additional instructional days to extend the school year (50.9%), or some combination of both (42.7%). Other staff reported this initiative was implemented through after school programs (2.3%). The majority of school administrators reported the extended school year was being implemented only for HP schools in their district (82.9%) rather than district-wide (11.5%).

Most respondents, regardless of how the extended school year initiative was being implemented, described the content as an extension of the regular school year instruction (86.9% staff; 88.2% administrators). Other staff described the content as primarily enrichment activities that are not part of the regular school day curriculum (37.3% staff; 26.5% administrators) or as remediation (1.0% staff; 8.9% administrators).

Added Instructional Support Position

> Within the case study schools, HP funding was reportedly used to support the following additional instructional support staff: curriculum coordinator (two schools), lead teacher (one school), literacy specialist (one school), and guidance counselor (one school). Three case study schools reported no knowledge of the HP Initiative's additional instructional support position.

In Year 1, eight (or 22.9%) of the 35 HP schools reported receiving an additional instructional support position through HP funds. Among the eight schools, none had received a waiver. In Year 2, 29 (or 82.9%) of the HP schools had added some type of instructional support position through HP funding. Of the 29, nine were Year 1 waiver schools and 20 were non-waiver.

District-level informants described the process for determining the type of instructional staff position to be allocated to the schools through HP funds. Those respondents able to address this issue reported several different processes, including considering school staffing guidelines recommended by the state (1 district) and identifying greatest areas of need within the schools (6 districts). In addition, one respondent noted that his/her district believed that the allocations had to be used for a particular type of staff and another district indicated that they felt the need for administrative instructional leader but were turned down by DPI in their request to hire a vice principal, which resulted in the hire of a guidance counselor instead.

Principals reported various ways in which the additional instructional support positions were used. These included:

- K-3 classroom teacher (fifteen schools)
- Curriculum specialist (eight schools)
- Literacy or reading specialist (four schools)
- Student support staff such as guidance counselor or social worker (three schools)
- Resource teacher (two schools)
- Staff developer (one school)

VI. FINDINGS

- **What is the overall impact of the HP initiatives on student achievement?**

In order to examine the extent to which academic gains have been made by students at the HP schools, several analyses were conducted with results from the annual *End-of-Grade (EOG) Tests.* The EOGs are North Carolina-developed tests that measure student achievement of curricula objectives in reading comprehension and mathematics in grades three through eight. As described in a 1999 *Assessment Brief* published by DPI, the primary purposes of the EOG tests are to provide accurate assessment of:

- Individual student skills and knowledge as specified in North Carolina's *Standard Course of Study*

- Growth and performance of groups of students for the state's ABCs Accountability Program[5]

DPI notes that the "value of the test lies primarily in the fact that the scores provide a common standard that is not influenced by local differences in achievement and expectations." As such, EOG test scores are used to measure gains (or losses) in student performance over time to determine the extent to which educational improvements, such as the HP Schools Initiative, are working.

Two types of EOG scores were used in the analyses. Achievement Levels (or cut scores) are pre-determined performance standards that allow comparisons of student and group performance to standards based on what is expected in each subject at each grade level. Determined by relating the judgments of thousands of North Carolina teachers, four achievement levels are reported for each subject area. The four levels are as follows:

- **Level I** - Students performing at this level do not have sufficient mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area to be successful at the next grade level.
- **Level II** - Students performing at this level demonstrate inconsistent mastery of knowledge and skills in this subject area and are minimally prepared to be successful at the next grade level.
- **Level III** - Students performing at this level consistently demonstrate mastery of grade level subject matter and skills and are well prepared for the next grade level.
- **Level IV** - Students performing at this level consistently perform in a superior manner clearly beyond that required to be proficient at grade level work.

The other type of EOG score measure used in this study is the percentile, which allows for a comparison between students' performance on the EOG test and the North Carolina students who took the test in the "norming year." The percentile indicates what percentage of students' scores in the norming sample for a given grade fell below a certain point. For example, the 25th percentile is the score below which 25 percent of the norm group scored. Since percentiles have unequal intervals and do not lend themselves to being manipulated mathematically, percentile scores have been converted to Normal Curve Equivalents (NCEs), an equal-interval scale that can be treated arithmetically and used to describe averages or measures of growth.

Cross-Sectional Analyses

Table 6.1 presents the number of HP and comparison schools that achieved expected growth targets in spring 2001 (baseline), spring 2002 (Year 1) and spring 2003 (Year 2).

Table 6.1 – ABCs Growth Targets
Number and Percent of HP and Comparison Schools Achieving Expected Growth Targets

	Spring 2001 (baseline)	Spring 2002 (Year 1)	Spring 2003 (Year 2)
HP Schools (N=35)	14 40.0%	22 62.9%	35 100.0%
Comparison Schools (N=9)	0 0.0%	2 22.2%	8 88.9%

[5] The ABCs of Public Education is North Carolina's comprehensive plan to improve public schools. ABCs is based on three goals: strong accountability, an emphasis on the basics and high educational standards, and on providing schools with local control. Each school is held accountable for the progress of its students.

The results shown in Table 6.1 are:

- In the baseline year (spring 2001), proportionately greater numbers of HP schools achieved the expected growth target than the comparison schools – 14 or 40.0% of HP schools and none or 0% of the comparison schools.

- From baseline (spring 2001) to Year 1 (spring 2002), the number of HP and comparison schools achieving the expected growth target increased by approximately 22 percentage points for both groups. For example, 14 or 40.0% of the HP schools met the growth target in the baseline year, compared to 22 HP schools or 62.9% in Year 1.

- By the end of Year 2 (spring 2003), all 35 (or 100%) of the HP schools achieved their expected growth targets. This represents a 37.1 percentage point increase from Year 1. The comparison schools also fared well in Year 2, with all but one or 88.9% achieving the growth target – a 66.7 percentage point increase.

Tables 6.2a and 6.2b show the number and percent of HP and comparison group students scoring within each achievement level on EOG reading and mathematics for spring 2001 (baseline), spring 2002 (Year 1) and spring 2003 (Year 2).

Table 6.2a – EOG Reading Spring 2001, 2002, and 2003 – Grades 3-5 Combined
Number and Percent Scoring at Each Performance Level

Achievement Level	Spring 2001 (baseline)		Spring 2002 (Year 1)		Spring 2003 (Year 2)	
	HP Schools	Comparison	HP Schools	Comparison	HP Schools	Comparison
Level I	863 14.1%	226 12.1%	592 9.9%	188 11.5%	388 6.7%	171 10.4%
Level II	2,083 33.9%	640 34.3%	1,948 32.5%	488 29.8%	1,411 24.4%	412 24.9%
Level III	2,530 41.2%	780 41.8%	2,702 45.1%	741 45.2%	2,976 51.4%	794 48.1%
Level IV	666 10.8%	222 11.9%	753 12.6%	221 13.5%	1,017 17.6%	275 16.6%

The data in Table 6.2a show that:

- At baseline (spring 2001) the reading performance for students attending HP schools was slightly lower than the performance at the comparison schools – 52% of HP student and 53.7% of comparison school students scored at or above Level III.

- From baseline (spring 2001) to Year 1 (spring 2002), the percent of HP and comparison school students scoring at or above Level III in reading increased by approximately 5 percentage points for both groups. For example, 52.0% of HP students scored in Levels III and IV in spring 2001 compared to 57.7% in spring 2002, representing a 5.5 percentage point change. Similarly, 53.7% of comparison school students scored at Level III or higher in spring 2001 compared to 58.7% in spring 2002; a 5.0 percentage point difference.

- Interestingly, this pattern did not hold true when looking at spring 2002 (Year 1) to spring 2003 (Year 2). HP students showed a larger percentage point gain in the number of students scoring in Levels III and IV than their peers in the comparison schools (11.3 vs. 6.0 percentage points, respectively). For example, at the HP schools, the percentage of students scoring at or above Level III increased from 57.7% in spring 2002 to 69.0% in spring 2003, an11.3 percentage point difference. At the comparison schools, this same percentage increased from 58.7% in spring 2002 to 64.7% in spring 2003; a 6.0 percentage point change.

- Therefore, from baseline (spring 2001) to the close of Year 2 (spring 2003), students at the HP schools moved from 52% to 69% at or above Level III (+17 percentage points), while students at the comparison schools advanced from 53.7% to 64.7% at or above Level III (+11 percentage points). This difference is statistically significant (Chi-Square, p<.001 – exact significance, one-sided).

Table 6.2b – EOG Mathematics Spring 2001, 2002, and 2003 – Grades 3-5 Combined
Number and Percent Scoring at Each Performance Level

Achievement Level	Spring 2001 (baseline)		Spring 2002 (Year 1)		Spring 2003 (Year 2)	
	HP Schools	Comparison	HP Schools	Comparison	HP Schools	Comparison
Level I	498 8.1%	127 6.8%	349 5.8%	119 7.1%	112 1.9%	52 3.1%
Level II	1,977 32.0%	645 34.4%	1,704 28.1%	457 27.4%	851 14.6%	272 16.4%
Level III	2,823 45.7%	853 45.4%	2,950 48.7%	811 48.7%	3,137 53.7%	882 53.1%
Level IV	874 14.2%	252 13.4%	1,057 17.4%	280 16.8%	1,744 29.8%	455 27.4%

The data in Table 6.2b show the following results for mathematics:

- At baseline (spring 2001) the mathematics performance for students attending HP schools was again slightly higher than the performance at the comparison schools – 59.9% of HP students and 58.8% of comparison school students scored at or above Level III.

- From baseline (spring 2001) to Year 1 (spring 2002), the percent of HP and comparison school students scoring at or above Level III in mathematics increased by approximately 6 percentage points for both groups. For example, 59.9% of HP students scored in Levels III and IV in spring 2001 compared to 66.1% in spring 2002, representing a 6.2 percentage point change. Similarly, 58.8% of comparison school students scored at Level III or higher in spring 2001 compared to 65.5% in spring 2002; a 6.7 percentage point difference.

- When looking at spring 2002 (Year 1) to spring 2003 (Year 2), HP students showed a larger percentage point gain in the number of students scoring in Levels III and IV than their peers in the comparison schools (17.4 vs. 15.0 percentage points, respectively). At the HP schools, the percentage of students scoring at or above Level III increased from 66.1% in spring 2002 to 83.5% in spring 2003, a17.4 percentage point difference. At the comparison schools, this same percentage

increased from 65.5% in spring 2002 to 80.5% in spring 2003; a 15.0 percentage point change.

- From baseline (spring 2001) to the close of Year 2 (spring 2003), students at HP school moved from 59.9% to 83.5% at or above Level III (+23.6 percentage points), while students at the comparison schools advanced from 58.8% to 80.5% at or above Level III (+21.7 percentage points). This difference is statistically significant (Chi-Square, $p<.05$ – exact significance, one-sided).

In summary, findings from the cross-sectional analyses showed that, by the end of Year 2, all 35 HP schools were successful in realizing growth expectations as derived from North Carolina's *ABCs of Public Education* school-based accountability program. In addition to growth outcomes, when compared to the set of similarly-situated comparison schools, the HP schools showed significantly greater numbers of students who attained consistent mastery of grade level content (at or above Level III) in both reading and math from baseline to Year 2.

Longitudinal Analyses

In longitudinal analysis, the performance of student groups can be monitored over sequential test administrations based on mean pre-post score differences. Longitudinal analyses were conducted because they often provide the clearest picture of the relationship between instructional programs and student outcomes. Mean NCE score differences from two years of EOG test administrations (2001-2002 and 2002-2003) were subjected to statistical analysis.

When examining the results of the longitudinal EOG analyses, only differences in mean NCE scores that prove to be statistically significant should be considered as gains or declines. Smaller and/or non-significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores are considered to reflect no change.[6] When interpreting gains, it should be noted that scores such as NCEs measure a student's performance relative to other students at the same grade level.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is a tool used to assess the statistical significance of mean differences among groups with an adjustment made for initial differences on one or more variables (covariates). In order to conduct longitudinal (same student) analyses that test student mean NCE differences on the EOG from spring 2002 to spring 2003 for HP schools vs. the comparison schools, a series of ANCOVA analyses were conducted.

The purpose of this type of analysis was to remove the effects of the covariates (e.g., 2001 reading scores, parent education level, and gender) that could affect the relationship of the treatment variables (e.g., HP vs. comparison schools) to the outcome variables (e.g., mean NCE scores on the EOG). The covariates that were included in the ANCOVA analysis are as follows:

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[6] While any change in an *individual* student's score is meaningful, mean differences that are not statistically significant reflect data where the number of students is too small, the mean difference is too small, and/or variations in students' scores are too large to make general statements about the group. Further, when examining the meaningfulness of gains in mean NCEs, a general rule of thumb is that approximately 7 NCEs constitutes a "meaningful" difference (Ideabook: The Joint Dissemination Review Panel, U.S. Office of Education and the National Institute of Education, 1977).

- Spring 2001 Reading (defined as mean NCE for the EOG reading test in spring 2001)
- Parent Education Level (defined as 1=High School Diploma or Less and 2=Higher than High School Education)
- Gender (defined as 1=Male and 2=Female)

It is important to note that longitudinal analyses are only conducted for students with valid test results for each of a cohort's test administrations. Therefore, for a student to be included in the longitudinal analyses, a spring/fall[7] 2001, spring 2002, and spring 2003 score is required. Since student mobility and other factors can negatively effect matching of student scores over three test administrations, the N's in the following analyses are somewhat smaller than those in the cross-sectional analyses.

The results of the ANCOVA analyses for reading and math are presented in the following table.

Table 6.3 – Mixed-Model Analysis of Covariance
Spring 2002 to Spring 2003 EOG Reading

Reading	Test Administration (Pre Mean NCE)	Test Administration (Post Mean NCE)	Mean NCE Difference	Effects	F Value	Sig.
High Priority (N=1,098)	Spring 02 (40.43)	Spring 03 (47.12)	6.69	Reading Diff.	56.91*	.000
				Reading Diff. By Group	0.19	.665
				Covariates		
Comparison (N=210)	Spring 02 (42.64)	Spring 03 (49.42)	6.78	01 Mean NCE	24.94*	.000
				Parent Education Level	0.01	.916
				Gender	0.02	.902
Math						
High Priority (N=1,119)	Spring 02 (39.96)	Spring 03 (46.07)	6.11	Math Diff.	41.94*	.000
				Math Diff. By Group	1.58	.210
				Covariates		
Comparison (N=213)	Spring 02 (39.00)	Spring 03 (43.97)	4.97	01 Mean NCE	4.21*	.040
				Parent Education Level	0.13	.716
				Gender	11.36*	.001

The data in Table 6.3 show that:

- After controlling for initial reading differences, both the HP schools and the comparison schools achieved a statistically significant gain in average reading performance from spring 2002 to spring 2003. Since the gains for both groups were approximately seven NCEs, they are large enough to be considered educationally meaningful.
- The interaction effect for the two groups (HP and comparison), however, did not prove to be statistically significant. In other words, there is no statistical difference in mean gains between students in the HP schools and students in the comparison schools.
- For math, after adjusting for initial differences in ability and gender, both the HP and comparison schools showed gains in average mathematics performance from spring 2002 to spring 2003 that proved to be statistically significant. Though the mean gain for the HP schools was larger than for the comparison schools (6.11 vs. 4.97 NCEs, respectively), neither was large enough to be considered educationally meaningful.

[7] For grade 3, a fall pretest is administered.

In conclusion, the longitudinal results show that students who remain in the HP schools over time (i.e., from baseline through Year 2) are achieving statistically significant mean gains in reading and math performance. However, in contrast to the cross-sectional findings where the HP schools fared significantly better than the comparison schools, the longitudinal analysis showed that students at the HP schools achieved gains that were similar to their peers at the comparison schools.

- **What is the effectiveness of each individual HP initiative on student achievement?**

Theoretically, the combination of the four HP initiatives implemented together should make the greatest impact on student academic performance. At this point in time, we are limited in our ability to draw reliable conclusions about the effectiveness of each individual HP initiative or to detect which specific initiative or combination of initiatives is positively affecting student achievement. As program implementation stabilizes over time, we anticipate being able to better examine the unique and combined contributions of each individual HP initiative on student performance.

However, at this juncture, in order to determine what differences in student achievement (if any) exist between HP schools that have more fully implemented each of the HP initiatives and HP schools that have not yet done so, a series of comparative analyses of EOG scores were conducted for spring 2003. More specifically, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine if the mean scores for different groups of students were statistically different from one another.

As discussed earlier, 17 schools were granted waivers in Year 1, meaning reduced class size was not implemented in those schools for that school year. Therefore, one would expect that non-waiver schools would have better student outcomes by spring 2003 than both the waiver and comparison group schools. In fact, findings from the November 2002 Interim Report prepared by DPI showed positive preliminary results. On average, a greater proportion of 3rd graders at non-waiver schools scored at or above Level III on the EOG reading and math in spring 2002 than did their 3rd grade peers at the waiver schools.

This analysis is presented in Table 6.4 which shows, for all grades combined, the number of students within each group with spring 2003 EOG scores (N), means in NCEs, mean NCE differences, and the significance level and associated F-value. The tables also show an asterisk (*) if the difference between the groups' means resulted in a significant F-value at or below the .05 level of probability.

Table 6.4 – Spring 2003 EOG Reading and Math Analyses
HP Waiver vs. HP Non-Waiver vs. Comparison Group Schools
Grades 3-5 Combined[8]

	Test Administration		Mean NCE Difference	Significance	F Value
	Group (Mean NCE)	Group (Mean NCE)			
Reading	HP Non-Waiver (44.44)	HP Waiver (44.52)	-0.08	.985	5.99
		Comparison (42.83)	1.61*	.009	
	HP Waiver (44.52)	Comparison (42.83)	1.69*	.007	
Math	HP Non-Waiver (46.15)	HP Waiver (47.51)	-1.35*	.009	6.71
		Comparison (45.76)	0.39	.729	
	HP Waiver (47.51)	Comparison (45.76)	1.74*	.005	

The data in Table 6.4 show that, across grades, students at the HP non-waiver schools significantly outperformed their peers at the comparison schools in reading in spring 2003. The same was true for HP waiver schools. Average reading performance for students at the HP waiver schools was significantly greater than was for students at the comparison schools. The small mean difference between HP non-waiver and HP waiver schools in reading in spring 2003 was not statistically significant.

As also seen in Table 6.4, the results for math were somewhat different. In spring 2003, students' average math performance at the HP non-waiver schools was similar to that of students at the comparison schools, with the small mean difference between these groups (less than one NCE) not having statistical significance. Finally, students at the HP waiver schools significantly outperformed their peers in math at both the HP non-waiver schools and at the comparison schools in spring 2003.

Also mentioned earlier was the fact that the HP schools implemented the four initiatives beginning at different points in time over Years 1 and 2, resulting in varying levels of intensity of intervention. To begin to examine the impact the level of implementation had on student achievement outcomes within the HP schools, a rating was assigned to each HP school based on what was learned through the qualitative data collection (e.g., surveys and interviews) about the status of implementation of the four initiatives in each school. From these ratings, school-level implementation was coded as low, medium or high. The results of this analysis are presented Table 6.5.

Table 6.5 – Spring 2003 EOG Reading and Math Analyses
Low vs. Medium vs. High Implementation HP Schools
Grades 3-5 Combined

	Test Administration		Mean NCE Difference	Significance	F Value
	Group (Mean NCE)	Group (Mean NCE)			
Reading	High HP (45.20)	Low HP (45.67)	-0.47	.782	8.55
		Medium HP (43.55)	1.65*	.003	
	Medium HP (43.55)	Low HP (45.67)	-2.13*	.005	
Math	High HP (47.04)	Low HP (47.62)	-0.58	.675	3.47
		Medium HP (46.14)	0.89	.163	
	Medium HP (46.14)	Low HP (47.62)	-1.48	.067	

[8] It should be noted that these EOG analyses were also conducted by grade level, particularly to determine what effect waiver status might have on grade 3. Since no fundamental differences were evident for grade 3 or other individual grades (4 and 5), the data were presented for all grades combined.

The data in Table 6.5 show mixed results for reading. Across grades, students at the HP schools with high implementation significantly outperformed their peers at the HP schools with medium implementation in reading in spring 2003. For mathematics, none of the comparisons shown in Table 6.5 are statistically significant.

In addition, multiple regression can be a useful tool when there is an interest in accounting for the variation in an outcome (i.e., dependent variable) based on combinations of different factors and conditions (i.e., independent variables). Multiple regression analysis can establish that a set of independent variables explains a proportion of the variation in a dependent variable at a significant level (significance test of R^2) and can establish the relative predictive importance of the individual independent variables (comparing beta weights). This type of analysis was used to partially address the evaluation questions about the different HP initiatives and other factors or combination of factors (such as student demographics, parents' education level, poverty level, etc.) that may have positively affected student achievement in the HP schools.

With students' NCE reading scores on the spring 2003 EOG serving as the dependent variable, the different factors of the HP schools (independent variables) that were included in the regression analysis are as follows:

- Waiver Status (defined as 1=HP Waiver and 2=Non-Waiver)
- Average Class Size (2003)
- Level of HP Implementation (defined as 1=Low, 2=Medium, and 3=High)
- Professional Development Score (based on two items from the Staff Survey and extent of implementation of the five-day contract extension for professional development)
- Number of HP Teachers Hired (defined from Administrator Survey item)
- Percent Licensed - Newly Hired HP Teachers (defined from two items from the Administrator Survey)
- Percent Experienced - Newly Hired HP Teachers (defined from two items from the Administrator Survey)
- Parent Educational Level (defined as 1=Did Not Finish High School [HS] or HS Graduate and 2=Post HS Education)
- Teacher Compensation (defined as school-level average teacher salary)
- Student Demographics including:
  - Race (defined as 1=Black, 2=Hispanic, and 3=Other [White, Asian, and American Indian])
  - Gender (defined as 1=Male and 2=Female)
  - LEP Status (defined as 1=LEP and 2=Non-LEP)
  - Low-Income (defined as 1=Eligible and 0=Not Eligible for free or reduced lunch)
  - Title I Eligibility (defined as 1=Eligible and 0=Not Eligible)
  - Special Education Status (defined as 1=Special Education and 0=General Education)
  - Gifted (defined as 1=Gifted and 0= Not Gifted)

Initial stepwise multiple regression analyses were run for grades three through five. In the table below, we summarize the resulting amount of variation that is explained by the independent variables (i.e., the R-squared value) and we present the set of variables that appear to contribute significantly and substantially to that variation. The table also includes the

resulting regression equation that may be used to predict reading scores. (Complete output from this analysis is included in the Appendix to this report.)

Table 6.6 – Results of Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis
Spring 2003 EOG Reading, Grades 3-5 Combined

Independent Variables	Multiple R Squared	Regression Equation
• Gifted Education Status • Parent Education Level • LEP Status • Race • Gender • Poverty Level	22.94%	Reading NCE (predicted) = 18.71 Gifted – 12.85 Special Ed + 3.40 Parent Ed + 10.84 LEP Status + 2.93 Race + 2.26 Gender – 3.56 Poverty Level + minimal other contributions + constant

Given the relatively low R-squared value reported above (i.e., a "perfect" model would account for 100% of the variation in reading scores), we caution strongly against over-interpreting these initial results. It is hoped that future studies will contain comprehensive data to enable researchers to explain a greater proportion of the variation in academic achievement. Nonetheless, it is tempting to note that the initial result is somewhat intuitive, and consistent with other preliminary findings presented in this report and in the literature.

As seen in Table 6.6, the equation for grades three through five suggests that a number of variables are significantly associated with increases in reading achievement. These include:

- The presence academically gifted students;
- Higher levels of parent education;
- Lower concentrations of LEP students;
- Higher percentages of non-minority students;
- Higher proportions of girls; and
- Less poverty.

While a number of programmatic variables (e.g., level of HP implementation, class size, training and experience of HP teachers) were also included in the analysis, none yet contributed substantially to changes in achievement. It is anticipated that future longitudinal studies will have greater likelihood of showing programmatic influences on academic growth.

- **Do key stakeholders attribute any observed achievement gains or other outcomes to any of the HP Initiatives?**

As mentioned earlier, at this juncture of implementation the uneven levels of implementation do not allow for reliable attributions of achievement gains or other outcomes to any particular HP initiative. Rather, in this section, we present information collected from key stakeholders at both the school and district levels about their views concerning the HP initiatives. Organized by stakeholder group, respondents' opinions regarding student academic achievement and other outcomes of the initiatives, such as changes in teacher practices, classroom organization and management, and school climate are discussed. In addition, to provide a context for the perspectives of each stakeholder group, each sub-section begins with descriptive background information for the group.

Administrators, Teachers, and Other School Staff

Of the 972 respondents to the Staff Survey, almost 63% were classroom teachers (46.3% taught grades kindergarten through three and 16.3% taught grades four through six) or resource teachers (ESL, special education, speech) (12.9%). Others were teaching assistants (8.2%); specialty teachers (art, music, physical education) (6.7%); pre-kindergarten teachers (2.7%); school-based literacy or curriculum coordinators (2.0%); school support staff (guidance counselor, psychologist, social worker) (1.7%); and library/media coordinators (1.6%). While almost half of the staff were new to the school (less than three years) (48.9%), more than half reported having seven or more years of experience teaching in the state of North Carolina.

More than half of the staff held a Bachelor's degree (64.5%), while Master's degrees were held by 27.0% and Doctoral degrees had been earned by 1.3% of the respondents. Fewer reported having a high school diploma (3.7%) or Associate's degree (3.1%) as their highest educational achievement. As one might expect, a much greater proportion of administrators held a Master's degree (69.4%) or higher (30.6%). The majority of staff reported being fully licensed or accredited for their current jobs (84.0%). This did not vary significantly for grade K-3 teachers (89%) when compared to the remaining respondents (80%).

When asked about the different types of student populations whom they taught, not surprisingly the majority of staff (84.3%) worked with general education children. However, almost 64% also worked with some type of special needs children, and more than one third (35.4%) taught students who are English language learners. Interestingly, those teaching in kindergarten through grade three were much less likely to be working with special needs students than were other respondents (50% for K-3 and 74% for others).

Both staff and administrators were asked what **changes** they have **observed with respect to teaching and learning** because of the reduced class size initiative. As shown in the following table, the changes cited most often in both groups were:

- Increased use of small group instruction (60%-staff; 83.7%-administrators)
- Increased time spent on instruction (58%-staff; 67.3%-administrators)
- Greater incidence of individualized student instruction (53%-staff; 63.3%-administrators)

Importantly, the data in Table 6.7 also show that both staff and school administrators believed that the reduced class size initiative has thus far done little to increase parental involvement in the classroom.

Table 6.7 – Staff and Administrator Surveys
Changes in Classroom Practice

Practice	Staff				Administrator (N=24)
	N	No change	Modest change	Substantial change	
• Increased use of small group instruction	719	9.9%	29.9%	60.2%	83.7%
• Increased use of project-based instruction	568	26.6%	44.5%	28.9%	14.3%
• Increased time spent on instruction	706	14.6%	27.6%	57.8%	67.3%
• Reduced time spent on classroom management	688	26.2%	39.0%	34.9%	44.9%
• Fewer discipline-related problems	715	29.1%	39.0%	31.9%	59.2%
• Positive changes in level of student effort and initiative	690	15.4%	39.7%	44.9%	59.2%
• Greater incidence of individualized student instruction	722	10.0%	37.0%	53.0%	63.3%
• Increased parental involvement in the classroom	691	58.9%	31.3%	9.8%	16.3%
• Increased use of alternative student assessment methods	654	20.8%	48.2%	31.0%	28.6%

Moreover, almost 81% of responding staff offered many examples of positive changes (such as increased use of small group and individual instruction, improved student achievement, improved classroom discipline, and improved teacher scheduling) that have taken place at their school because of the HP reduced class size initiative. Some examples of their comments are as follows:

- *"With the needs and lack of experience of our students, teachers have been able to get to know the student and their needs more completely. We've been able to 'zero in' on individual needs and address those needs more frequently and for longer periods of time."*
- *"The reduced class size has a huge, positive impact on student learning."*
- *"The implementation of decreased class size has increased more instructional coverage, fewer discipline problems, more group instruction, and higher achievement rates."*
- *"I am a much better teacher this year than last year. My skills, especially in small group instruction, have increased dramatically."*
- *"I have more time to give all of my students individual attention on a daily basis. My instruction has become better because of the lower class size–more time to go over information."*
- *"One of the most positive changes was reduced class size. Small group instruction has greatly affected the students' performance and increased classroom management. The students retain more information and progress at a faster pace."*

Several survey items asked about staffs' **opinions of the five-day contract extension professional development.** Specifically, teachers who participated in the professional development (in either Year 1 or Year 2) were asked how well the training prepared them to implement the HP initiatives. For example, just more than half of all staff reported the contract extension professional development "adequately or fully" prepared them to implement reduced class size. Another question asked staff how well the contract extension professional development addressed topic areas or skills specific to working with fewer students. Data from these items are presented below.

Table 6.8 – Staff and Administrator Surveys
Professional Development Topic Areas Covered "Not at All or Partially" or "Adequately or Fully"

Content Area	Staff			Administrators		
	N	Not at All/ Partially	Adequately/ Fully	N	Not at All/ Partially	Adequately/ Fully
•North Carolina's Standard Course of Study, including strategies for classroom practice	631	39.7%	60.3%	42	19.0%	78.5%
•Strategies for working with diverse student populations (e.g., students with disabilities, English language learners)	621	57.9%	42.2%	43	41.8%	55.8%
•Strategies for promoting active learning	631	32.9%	67.8%	41	19.5%	78.0%
•Strategies for implementing small group instruction	630	37.3%	62.7%	N A	NA	NA
•Specific needs of participating teachers	622	47.9%	52.1%	38	31.6%	65.5%
•Specific needs of students in your school	630	42.3%	57.8%	40	22.5%	75.0%
•Strategies for implementing research-based or "best practice" instructional methods	622	39.1%	60.9%	42	28.5%	69.1%
• Implementation of the HP extended school year initiative	541	40.1%	59.9%	42	32.4%	67.7%
• The school's overall plan for improved student achievement	631	32.6%	67.4%	42	14.3%	83.4%

The data in Table 6.8 show that, within particular topic areas, more than two thirds of respondents believed that the five-day contract extension "adequately or fully" addressed the school's overall plan for academic achievement (67.4%) and strategies for promoting active learning (67.8%). Proportionately fewer (42.2%) believed the professional development regarding the issue of special strategies for working with diverse students such as English language learners or students with special needs was adequately or fully addressed.

The Administrator and Staff Surveys also sought to gauge the extent to which the contract extension professional development helped **teachers improve teaching methods and classroom practices.** Responding teachers were asked to rate their skills in various teaching strategies both before the HP Initiative and at the time of the survey. The table that follows shows the percentages of teachers who rated themselves highly skilled at both points and the corresponding percentage point change.

Table 6.9 – Staff Survey
Changes in Classroom/Teaching Practices

	Before Year 1	During Year 2	Percentage Point Change
• Individualized instruction	43.3%	61.3%	18.0
• Small group instruction	51.1%	70.8%	19.7
• Theme-based instruction	39.1%	52.6%	13.5
• Cooperative learning	43.0%	56.3%	13.3
• Learning centers	38.3%	55.3%	17.0
• Language learning approaches	29.6%	42.9%	13.3
• Strategies for using manipulatives	46.3%	66.9%	20.6
• Inquiry-based instruction	22.1%	37.4%	15.3
• Project-based instruction	20.3%	29.9%	9.6
• Technology as a learning tool	21.9%	44.1%	22.2
• Lessons that incorporate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study	54.6%	74.5%	19.9
• Strategies for increasing parental involvement	23.5%	33.3%	9.8
• Specific strategies for teaching English language learners	17.7%	28.0%	10.3
• Specific strategies for teaching students with disabilities	20.6%	28.5%	7.9

The data in Table 6.9 show that staff believed their teaching skills have improved the most (i.e., over 20 percentage points) with respect to using technology to support learning, strategies with manipulatives, small group instruction, and lessons based on the Standard Course of Study. For example, 51.1% of staff reported being highly skilled before the HP initiatives in using small group instruction, compared to 70.8% in Year 2, representing a 20-percentage point difference. By comparison, teachers show far less improvement in such areas as strategies for teaching ELL students and students with disabilities, as well as strategies for increasing parental involvement.

In addition, less than half of the administrators surveyed described the HP Initiative as "very effective" in improving teacher knowledge and skills in teaching methods appropriate for use with smaller classes (38.1%), using appropriate assessment methods (41.0%), and using classroom management strategies (37.5%).

Finally, both staff and administrators were asked their opinions of the **effectiveness of the HP Schools Initiative** in several different areas. The responses for both groups are presented in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10 – Staff and Administrator Surveys
Effectiveness of Implementation of HP Schools Initiative

	Staff				Administrator			
	N	Not at all	Somewhat effective	Very effective	N	Not at all	Somewhat effective	Very effective
• Reconfiguration/expansion of existing physical space	491	34.0%	38.3%	27.7%	24	41.7%	37.5%	20.8%
• Reducing class size for particular groups of children	709	7.1%	29.6%	63.3%	44	4.5%	27.3%	68.2%
• Obtaining qualified teachers for each newly created class	645	15.5%	35.7%	48.8%	40	32.5%	37.5%	30.0%
• Improving students' academic achievement (grades K-3)	643	7.8%	40.4%	51.8%	43	4.7%	37.2%	58.1%
• Improving students' academic achievement (all grade levels)	660	8.2%	42.9%	48.9%	42	4.8%	47.6%	47.6%
• Increasing parental involvement in the classroom or school	664	35.7%	46.2%	18.1%	37	27.0%	54.1%	18.9%

Data in Table 6.10 generally show a great deal of agreement between responding staff and administrators. Importantly, once again the survey data show that proportionately fewer staff and administrators believe that the HP Initiative has improved parent participation in the classroom or in the school. One area of possible disagreement is about obtaining qualified teachers for each newly created class. Of the staff respondents, 84.5% feel the initiative is somewhat or very effective in this regard, while only 67.5% of the responding administrators would agree.

Moreover, when staff were asked what changes (positive or negative) had occurred at their school because of the HP initiatives, staff appeared to have mixed feelings regarding the effectiveness of the contract extension professional development. Approximately 21% provided comments and examples of how the HP Schools Initiative has increased the amount of staff development offered, improved the skills of participating teachers, and has resulted in more teamwork and collaborative planning among teachers. For example, one teacher commented, "*More staff development has taken place and has been beneficial. Teachers on grade levels are sharing teaching techniques.*" Two others stated, "*The professional development has improved teachers' strategies for teaching students. It also has allowed teachers to use more hands-on or manipulatives in the classroom*" and "*The quality of teachers and their teaching, especially in grades K through two, has greatly improved.*"

In contrast, almost 15% of staff commented about how the additional five days had contributed to low morale among teachers, decreased the amount of planning time available, curtailed sufficient focus on curriculum and instruction, and caused "*complex scheduling.*" For instance, a teacher noted, "I *really did not benefit from coming back five days early. The information presented was repetitive–information I had obtained at other workshops.*" Another stated, "*Teachers have lost needed time for effective planning. Without workdays between grading periods, teachers spend more time on assessments either at home or during instructional time. Adding days does not always seem to be the best way to help students succeed unless adequate time is provided to plan and implement new learning.*" Yet another

commented, "*Designation as a HP school resulting in ten additional days has hurt morale of the staff, and taken away unstructured time. Staff is more negative and less creative.*"

In addition, while less than 2% of staff viewed the extended school year for students as having a positive impact on students and the school as a whole, almost 22% offered comments that showed this initiative is also contributing to low morale among teachers and students and is not achieving its intended benefits for students. Examples of staffs' opinions of the extended school year initiative are as follows:

- "*Eliminate the five extra days for students. These five days do not turn our students into rocket scientists…it is so illogical to think an extra five days makes a difference.*"
- "*Students feel mistreated because they have to attend school while other public schools in the same system do not.*"
- *"There are more unhappy teachers because they know adding these extra days won't make much of a difference [for the students]. All it does is add stress."*
- *"There is low attendance on HP school days." "The five additional days to the school year are negatively affecting our student attendance figures."*
- *"With the additional instructional days, students and teachers reach a saturation point. Students lose focus and teachers' stress levels increase."*
- *"The extended calendar has no real impact on the academic progress of these students– they tend to give up after the EOG exams in terms of wanting to participate in anything. Any extra time at school is babysitting."*
- *"I have not seen academic improvement due to the increased days. If anything, children are more restless and tend to shut down when more time at school is required."*

Parents of HP Students

Of the 633 parents who responded to the Parent Survey, almost four fifths (79.8%) had at least one child enrolled in an HP school in grade kindergarten, one, two, or three. Since it was believed that parents at the HP schools would not be familiar with the different HP initiatives, the survey was designed to capture parents' perceptions of different teaching and classroom practices, and classroom and school climate.

While fewer than half (45.1%) of the parents knew the school had lowered class size in grades K through three, only 20.0% of responding parents indicated that there were too many students in their child's class. More than one third of the responding parents were not aware of the extended school year initiative at their school; this is not surprising since some HP schools have not yet implemented this initiative.

As shown below, findings from the Parent Survey support teachers' and administrators' assertions that additional class time is being spent on small group or individualized instruction and that classroom climate is positive.

Table 6.11 – Parent Survey Results
Selected Items

Item	Percent Agreement
• My child gets individual help from the teacher when needed (N=569)	88.1%
• My child's regular classroom teacher has a good understanding of my child's strong points and difficulties (N=596)	90.4%
• My child's classroom teacher often has the students learning through group activities (N=510)	94.3%
• My child's regular classroom teacher is willing to spend extra time with my child (N=515)	82.9%
• My child is comfortable asking questions in class (N=562)	85.1%
• I am well informed about what is happening in my child's class (N=629)	87.7%

Other notable findings from the Parent Survey include the following:

- The great majority of parents feel welcome when they visit the school (93.7%) and their child's classroom (92.0%).

- While almost 10% were not sure, most parents believed that their child's teacher has high expectations for students in the class (84.4%). Just more than three quarters of the parents (77.3%) believed the same was true for the principal.

- Parents held positive views regarding school climate: over 90% agreed that school staff is generally friendly and helpful; 72.4% usually saw the principal when visiting the school; 82.2% agreed that parents are able to see the principal when needed; and 87.4% received timely information about school activities.

District-Level Administrators

In general, district-level respondents believed that it was too early to determine the impact of the HP initiatives on student academic performance, and that there may be a number of confounding variables that make the determination of effects difficult. They noted that many of the schools simultaneously implemented initiatives that in some way paralleled or complemented the HP Schools Initiative.

Nevertheless, the respondents from 11 of the 15 participating HP districts indicated their belief that the initiatives have had a positive impact on teachers' abilities to implement effective instruction. For example, as stated by one respondent, "*Anytime you decrease class size you increase teacher morale, and when you increase teacher morale you improve the ability to teach during the school day. Not having 27 kids or 29 kids in the primary grades in those classrooms makes a big difference.*" Moreover, respondents from ten districts conveyed the view that students' academic performance had been or would be positively impacted by the HP Initiative, with several districts citing significant improvements in standardized test scores since the initiative began.

Importantly, several other positive effects of the initiative were also named by district-level stakeholders. As shown below, many of these echo findings from HP staff and administrators. These include:

- Increased collaboration among staff
- Improved monitoring of instruction by school principals
- Increased understanding among teachers of their roles and responsibilities
- Increased focus on the state's Standard Course of Study
- Improved attitudes regarding learning among students and the possibility of change
- Provision of state technical assistance teams
- Increased opportunities for professional development

In addition, district-level respondents also mentioned two primary negative effects of the HP Schools Initiative. They talked about increased pressure on HP-designated schools and the stigma or embarrassment that exists for schools with the HP designation.

- **How were allocated funds and personnel resources utilized by the HP schools, and what is the impact of varying patterns of utilization on changes in student achievement?**

This section will begin with a summary of findings from the interviews with the HP District Finance Officers (DFOs), as well as data collected from HP school principals during interviews at the case study schools and from the Administrator Survey. Following this contextual information, analyses of finance- and achievement-related data will be presented that show the extent to which resource utilization may have affected intermediate outcomes and student achievement at the HP schools.

School Budget Administration

DFOs provided varying responses to the question of who was responsible for developing and administering the overall school budget at the school level. Six of the 15 respondents indicated that the principal develops and administers the school budget in collaboration with other school-based stakeholders (e.g., teachers, parents). Three respondents indicated that school budgets were developed primarily based on a school's Average Daily Membership (ADM), with responsibility for budget administration lying with the school principal. Two respondents stated that budgets were developed and administered in a collaborative process between district-level staff and school principals. Another stated that school budgets were developed and administered solely by the school principal, while another reported it done solely by the district. Finally, two respondents indicated that the process was collaborative, with the district developing the budget and the schools taking responsibility for administration.

With one exception, all of the DFOs reported that separate budgets were maintained for grants or other funding sources at the school level in their districts. Of these 14 respondents, most noted that school principals were responsible for administering these funds (11 respondents), while three indicated that responsibility for administering grant funds for the schools rested at the district level.

According to all 15 DFO respondents, principals in their districts were aware of the total school budgets that they had to manage. In fact, two respondents specifically noted that principals were provided with monthly budget status reports, and three others indicated that principals have access to up-to-date budget data.

The DFOs varied in their descriptions of the amount of **flexibility there was in school budgets** within their districts. When asked if funds could be transferred from one purpose to another or if "left-over" categorical money could be turned over to the district for funds for some specific need, DFOs from 12 districts indicated that this was possible within the limitations of the fund source, with local dollars having the greatest degree of flexibility. Of the remaining three respondents, one indicated such actions were permitted only with local funds, another described schools as having total flexibility with funds, and yet another stated that it was not possible (with any type of dollar) to use left-over funds to pay for some other need.

When asked whether principals could keep funds left over at the end of the school year, DFOs from 11 districts noted that this was possible if fund regulations permitted carry-over. However, funds carried over would still have to be used in the manner for which they were intended. Respondents from two districts indicated that surplus monies are placed back into the district "pot," rather than remaining with the schools to which they were allocated, while a DFO from another district reported that fund surpluses could not be kept under any circumstances.

DFOs across all 15 districts believed that principals had a good deal of flexibility in the **use of local school funds**, but respondents from ten of the districts noted that some limitations/provisions did exist. For instance, two respondents indicated that in raising funds, the school must specify what the funds will be used for and ensure that the funds are used for that purpose. Other noted limitations included securing Board of Education approval for the method in which local funds were to be used; applying funds directly to students (e.g., funds could not be used to pay teacher salaries); and ensuring that expenditures are used for education-related purposes only.

DFOs from nine of the 15 districts indicated that principals could exchange one vacant position for another type of position. Among these, respondents noted that such action either required district approval (six districts) or needed to adhere to the regulations of the funds being used (three districts).

Allocation of HP Funding

According to the DFOs interviewed, there was a great deal of variation in how HP funds were allocated to support reduced class size, extended teacher contracts for professional development, extended school year for students, and the hiring of an additional staff position. In the area of reduced class size, for example, information learned from the DFOs included the following:

- HP monies were used to add teachers to all High Priority school classrooms to get them below a predetermined threshold (five districts)
- Additional classroom teachers were added while retaining the teacher assistant positions normally eliminated through the Initiative (five districts)
- District staff made decisions on how to reduce class sizes in each of the HP schools based on specific knowledge about those schools (two districts)
- Decisions on how to allocate funds to reduce class size were made by school principals (two districts)
- Monies for class size reduction were allocated according to Average Daily Membership (ADM) (one district)

DFO respondents varied in their perception as to whether the process used to allocate HP funds differed from the process generally used to allocate state resources within their district. DFOs from approximately half of the districts (seven respondents) noted that there were no real differences in the fund allocation process, while five respondents indicated that the process varied in that the HP Initiative specified how funds were to be spent. Another respondent described the HP allocation process as more collaborative than is generally the case, while another noted that the process differed in that school allocations were usually made according to ADM, with no school(s) singled out for special funds, as occurred with the HP Schools Initiative.

Coordination of HP Resources with Other Funding Sources

According to the DFOs who were interviewed, schools were using different types of funding, aside from the HP funds, to support class size reduction, related professional development, or the extended school year aspects of the HP Initiative. While Title I funds were being used most often to support reduced class size (in nine districts), the DFOs noted various other funding sources, including:

- State At-Risk Student funds (used for extended school year) (two districts)
- Improving Teacher Quality federal funds (used for class size reduction) (two districts)
- Local Critical Needs funds (used for class size reduction) (two districts)
- 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant (used for class size reduction) (one district);
- State Staff Development funds (used for professional development) (one district)
- State Student Accountability funds (used for extended school year) (one district)
- Rural and Low Income School federal funds (used for class size reduction) (one district)
- State Low Wealth funding (used for class size reduction and professional development) (one district)
- Title II funds (used for professional development and class size reduction) (one district)
- Title III funds (used for class size reduction) (one district)
- Title V funds (used for class size reduction) (one district)
- Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Grant (used for all HP-related activities) (one district)

Examination of Finance-Related Data

Although getting the biggest bang for the educational buck is very difficult, one known method in obtaining higher student achievement is through reducing class size and increasing staff development. Through the data collection process, information was learned about how the High Priority (HP) schools were allocating funding to support the implementation of the four legislatively prescribed initiatives, including class size reductions.

Allocation of Resources: The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) examines the Average Daily Membership (ADM) of the school districts and calculates the number of teaching positions that the state will fund at the school district level. DPI then allocates funds to the districts, which allocate the funds to the schools. DPI does not know how much of the HP Initiative dollars were allocated or spent at the school level. The district has autonomy in terms of school allocations; it makes the decisions into which schools these

positions will go. For example, even though a school has declining enrollment, the district does not have to reduce its teaching positions.

Year 1 - 2001-2002 (FY 2002) - The first year, always a start-up year, is the year in which the school districts determine the allocations and educate the leadership in each of their schools about the HP Initiative. In the first year of the Initiative, the state paid for the Initiative by de-funding teacher positions and providing $1.5 million of new funding. In FY 2002, the extra allocations to the districts for HP schools were as follows:

- 86.5 classroom teaching positions were increased by $3.756 million.
- 35 instructional support positions were increased by $1.76 million.
- Teaching assistant dollars were *reduced* by $4.048 million.

These allocations varied by district according to what was needed to reduce class size to a teacher/student ratio of 1:15 and the average salary of the teachers in the district (see Table 6.12). The classroom teacher allotment provided salaries for classroom teachers to reduce the class size to 1:15 in grades K-3. Instructional support funds are used for positions outside the classroom such as counselors, school nurses, psychologists, and other instructional support personnel. One additional instructional support position was provided to each school. Because the legislation allowed school districts to waive participation in the first year, some districts did not receive funds for classroom teachers within the HP Initiative but did receive funds for instructional support. DPI permitted these districts to retain their instructional support positions.

Table 6.12 – High Priority Schools Allocations for 2001-2002

HP Districts	# of HP Schools	HP $ for Classroom Teachers		HP $ for Teacher Assistants		HP $ for Instructional Support
		Positions	Dollars	Dollars	Positions	
Anson	1	0	0	0	1	51,529
Bertie	2	0	0	0	2	96,742
Cumberland	3	9	$384,318	$(451,214)	3	155,958
Durham	4	0	0	0	4	204,652
Edgecombe	1	1.5	64,719	(85,408)	1	49,336
Forsyth	6	18	810,846	(875,839)	6	304,440
Gaston	2	9.5	418,181	(431,071)	2	99,784
Guilford	3	19	833,872	(858,919)	3	150,390
Hertford	1	6.5	265,935	(308,598)	1	49,934
Mecklenburg	3	16.5	692,769	(736,446)	3	147,933
Nash-Rocky	2	6.5	285,272	(300,541)	2	100,824
Northampton	1	0	0	0	1	51,464
Robeson	1	0	0	0	1	49,242
Union	2	0	0	0	2	97,890
Vance	3	0	0	0	3	149,589
Wayne	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total	36	86.5	$3,755,912	($4,048,036)	35	$1,759,707
Average	2.3	5.4	$234,745	$253,002	2.2	$109,982
# of Participating Districts		8				
# of Participating HP Schools		21				

In FY 2002, the classroom teacher allocations were heavily weighted to three districts: Forsyth, Guilford, and Mecklenburg. These districts received more than 62% of the funding

even though they had only 33% of the HP schools. This was corrected in the current year (FY 2003) when these three school districts received 38% of the funding and had 38% of the schools (as can be seen in Table 6.12), when all the districts with HP schools began participation in the Initiative.

The funding for teaching assistants was dramatically reduced in the first year of the Initiative, with losses totaling more than $4 million, almost $300,000 more than the funding for the classroom positions. However, because the state's allocation of $1.76 million in positions for instructional support resulted in the state providing more funding to HP schools than was decreased by reducing the teaching assistant funding, the state in fact did invest new money in HP schools.

Year 2 - 2002-2003 (FY 2003) - Although this report does not specifically address the current year (FY 2003), it is important to note that the allocations in the current year included all districts but Anson County, whereas in the first year of the Initiative, only half of the school districts participated. Unlike the first year of the Initiative, in the current year, the state did not invest new monies into the HP Initiative; instead, DPI allocated the same amount to the districts as it then reduced. As shown in Table 6.13 below, over $7.3 million was reduced from teaching assistant positions in order to fund the classroom teachers and other instructional support positions for that same amount.

Table 6.13 – High Priority Schools Allocations for 2002-2003

HP Districts	# of HP Schools	HP $ for Classroom Teachers		HP $ for Teacher Assistants		HP $ for Instructional Support
		Positions	Dollars	Dollars	Positions	
Anson	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bertie	2	6	$265,956	(347,121)	2	104,768
Cumberland	3	8	349,776	(445,706)	3	154,404
Durham	4	15.5	700,275	(815,195)	4	203,036
Edgecombe	1	1.5	68,444	(92,786)	1	49,789
Forsyth	6	23.5	1,091,693	(875,839)	6	306,468
Gaston	2	8	362,568	(428,309)	2	99,080
Guilford	3	13.5	606,663	(733,178)	3	149,176
Hertford	1	5.5	232,337	(299,899)	1	50,706
Mecklenburg	3	13.5	585,306	(703,354)	3	148,437
Nash-Rocky	2	6	273,936	(329,723)	2	100,936
Northampton	1	3	133,806	(188,887)	1	51,140
Robeson	1	1.5	66,776	(101,899)	1	49,210
Union	2	13.5	591,354	(748,090)	2	98,004
Vance	3	9	397,233	(502,869)	3	149,793
Wayne	1	5.5	245,724	(328,066)	1	50,254
Total	36	133.5	$5,971,847	($7,379,004)	35	$1,765,791
Average	2.3	8.3	$373,240	$461,188	2.2	$110,362
# of Participating Districts		15				
# of Participating HP Schools		35				

Expenditures[9]

Although DPI has made the number and amount of total expenditures by school available, it does not provide data on the expenditures for the instructional support positions, teaching positions, and teaching assistant positions at the school level that are related *to the Initiative.* This is because the districts, not the state, determine the amounts to be spent at each school for the Initiative, and thus DPI has no way currently to track HP Initiative resources at the school level.

Overall, from FY 2000 to FY 2002, in all HP schools, expenditures per student increased by 14.3%, as compared to an increase of 6.6% across the state. HP schools increased their state spending faster than the rest of the state. State expenditures per pupil increased by 3.4% from FY 2000 to FY 2002 while HP expenditures per student increased by 11.8%. Federal expenditures per student increased dramatically across the state: 19.9% for the entire state and 40.2% for HP schools. Local expenditures per student averaged an 11.6% increase across the state, while in HP schools local expenditures per student increased an average of 9.9%.

Teaching Assistants Positions

HP schools were instructed to exchange their teaching assistant positions for the additional teaching positions needed to reduce class size in grades K-3. As a result, as displayed in Table 6.14, fewer positions and state dollars were available for teaching assistants. In FY 2002, DPI reduced the allocation for teaching assistants to districts with HP schools by $4.05 million while allocating more to classroom teachers and instructional support. Districts made up the difference in the loss of teaching assistant positions using other state, local and federal dollars. The number of state teaching assistant positions declined by 52.6.

Table 6.14 – Teaching Assistants Position Changes from FY 2001 to FY 2002
Within Eight Districts Receiving HP Allocations in FY 2001

	Fiscal Year 2001 – FTEs			Fiscal Year 2002 – FTEs		
HP School	State	Federal	Local	State	Federal	Local
Lillian Black	9.2	4.0	0.0	8.1	2.8	0.0
Pauline Jones	10.9	3.7	1.0	9.6	2.1	3.0
Teresa C Berrien	9.7	2.3	0.0	9.3	1.5	0.0
Roberson	4.1	1.0	0.0	1.9	2.0	0.0
Ashley	9.8	1.0	3.0	7.9	2.5	2.5
Cook	7.0	0.0	3.0	6.8	0.0	1.9
Forest Park	10.9	4.0	1.0	9.8	4.0	1.0
Kimberley Park	7.9	0.0	3.0	6.8	0.0	1.0
North Hills	17.0	0.0	1.0	12.0	0.0	4.0
Petree	14.8	0.0	3.0	13.0	0.0	6.0
Rhyne	17.5	9.0	4.0	13.5	2.0	5.6
Woodhill	15.7	4.6	0.9	16.9	2.0	2.2
Fairview	14.7	3.4	1.0	5.8	3.4	0.9
W M Hampton	12.0	1.0	5.1	2.6	2.0	0.7
Clara J Peck	12.6	1.0	1.6	5.5	1.0	3.3

[9] Only those HP schools within the eight Districts that actually received allocations are discussed in this section.

HP School	Fiscal Year 2001 – FTEs			Fiscal Year 2002 – FTEs		
	State	Federal	Local	State	Federal	Local
Riverview	22.2	5.0	1.0	17.0	3.9	1.9
Shamrock Gardens	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Thomasboro	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Westerly Hills	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
James C Braswell	12.5	4.0	0.5	11.0	3.0	4.0
O R Pope	22.6	5.9	3.0	21.0	7.0	3.6
Totals	231.0	49.8	32.0	178.4	39.0	41.6
Difference				-52.6	-10.8	9.6

The amounts spent on teaching assistants using state dollars declined dramatically (over $1.3 million) but not as dramatically as the allocations. Given that the allocations for teaching assistants were reduced by $4.05 million, it is expected that there would be a reduction of that amount in expenditures, but as shown in Table 6.15, that is not the case. Some of these funds were made up by a greater investment in other state, local and federal funds, with a $440,000 increase in local funding and a $40,000 increase in federal dollars for teaching assistants. Clearly, too, these schools used other state funds to make up the loss in the HP allocations. Because some of the state dollars were replaced with local money, the actual expenditures for teaching assistants declined by $885,000 rather than the $1.3 million from the year before.

Table 6.15 – Teaching Assistants Expenditure Changes from FY2001 to FY2002
Within Eight Districts Receiving HP Allocations in FY 2001

HP School	Fiscal Year 2001 $ Expenditures			Fiscal Year 2002 $ Expenditures		
	State	Federal	Local	State	Federal	Local
Lillian Black	$152,213	$73,446	$42	$144,657	$45,510	0
Pauline Jones	213,634	47,608	17,079	150,266	55,186	$52,295
Teresa C Berrien	156,500	42,628	496	165,697	32,218	1,694
Roberson	101,432	17,676	0	58,088	30,517	921
Ashley	158,169	21,513	48,343	95,909	50,404	118,731
Cook	123,592	0	46,969	74,624	0	113,686
Forest Park	199,110	89,624	19,036	183,881	92,497	25,967
Kimberley Park	138,850	0	60,648	66,153	2,717	77,465
North Hills	312,960	0	34,884	128,020	0	202,794
Petree	249,213	0	56,082	215,991	0	90,947
Rhyne	350,280	114,031	58,064	226,807	84,050	88,488
Woodhill	356,718	52,249	28,352	287,139	85,568	25,284
Fairview	298,043	57,051	35,502	133,731	58,462	25,189
W M Hampton	233,836	25,345	92,309	76,288	31,212	28,401
Clara J Peck	252,490	9,605	36,415	131,926	16,348	57,184
Riverview	467,600	89,604	16,347	346,533	101,965	52,923
Shamrock Gardens	434,754	0	5,113	350,435	0	5,724
Thomasboro	204,491	0	0	196,862	740	0
Westerly Hills	215,714	0	14	235,675	0	0

	Fiscal Year 2001			Fiscal Year 2002		
	$ Expenditures			$ Expenditures		
HP School	State	Federal	Local	State	Federal	Local
James C Braswell	123,359	34,772	8,617	124,935	32,856	36,002
O R Pope	264,644	85,827	22,373	246,289	80,992	24,664
Totals	$ 5,007,603	$ 760,978	$ 586,682	$ 3,639,906	$ 801,240	$ 1,028,357
Difference between FY2002 and FY2001				$ (1,367,697)	$ 40,262	$ 441,675
Total Difference						($885,760)

Declining Enrollment and Teaching Positions

The 35 HP schools experienced a 7.4% loss in student enrollment over the three-year period from FY 2000 to FY 2002. This is in contrast to a 2.8% average increase in enrollment across the state and an increase of 0.1% for grades K through five across the state. As enrollment declines, teaching positions are reduced, with the decision to reduce teaching positions being made at the school district level. Over the three-year period, the HP schools experienced a small loss in positions due to declining enrollment in FY 2001, as compared to FY 2000. However, comparing the next two years — FY 2002 (the first year of the Initiative) with FY 2001 — this loss is reversed with the use of local and federal dollars. Those schools in the participating districts experienced a slight drop in number of state positions of 4.2, but local and federal positions increased by 33 for a gain of 29 positions. Table 6.16 displays these changes for the schools in the eight districts receiving HP allocations in FY 2001.

Table 6.16 – Declining Enrollment and Instructional Teaching Positions From FY 2001 to FY 2002
Within Eight Districts Receiving HP Allocations in FY 2001

	Fiscal Year 2001 – FTEs			Fiscal Year 2002 – FTEs		
HP School	State	Federal	Local	State	Federal	Local
Lillian Black	11.19	1.54	1.00	13.00	1.02	1.00
Pauline Jones	11.20	1.81	0.00	11.67	1.92	1.00
Teresa C Berrien	11.86	0.92	1.00	10.67	1.42	1.00
Roberson	5.23	0.00	0.50	7.00	0.00	1.50
Ashley	22.00	5.63	2.00	24.94	5.83	2.00
Cook	13.43	5.03	1.00	11.52	7.47	2.00
Forest Park	29.50	6.00	2.00	32.36	5.05	1.00
Kimberley Park	17.97	4.90	0.00	13.00	4.50	1.00
North Hills	27.20	9.93	4.00	25.01	6.03	3.00
Petree	19.20	9.00	4.00	16.70	10.00	4.00
Rhyne	21.56	0.00	2.00	23.46	3.36	5.00
Woodhill	16.66	0.00	1.98	18.95	0.00	5.00
Fairview	25.51	4.00	0.00	26.87	5.00	0.00
W M Hampton	23.80	2.80	0.00	17.07	15.91	0.00
Clara J Peck	22.66	1.60	0.00	23.50	4.04	0.00
Riverview	28.51	1.00	0.00	26.33	1.00	2.00
Shamrock Gardens	30.00	3.00	0.00	26.00	6.84	0.00
Thomasboro	25.00	2.68	0.00	26.00	2.00	0.00

HP School	Fiscal Year 2001 – FTEs			Fiscal Year 2002 – FTEs		
	State	Federal	Local	State	Federal	Local
Westerly Hills	22.99	7.00	0.00	27.81	4.12	0.00
James C Braswell	10.82	0.00	0.00	7.68	0.94	0.00
O R Pope	13.40	0.00	0.00	15.96	3.59	0.00
Totals	409.68	66.84	19.48	405.48	90.02	29.50
Difference between FY2002 and FY2001				-4.20	10.03	23.18
Total Difference						29.00

The disruption caused by declining enrollment is a serious issue for HP schools — teaching positions cannot be allocated if the students are not there. While state funds are being withdrawn because of declining enrollment, state funds are being allocated because of HP status. However, because of declining enrollment, the schools do not experience a measurable increase in classroom teacher positions. Of the 21 schools within the eight districts participating in the first year of the HP initiative, classroom teaching positions declined by 4.2 state-funded positions. This situation should be closely tracked in the following years to determine whether the policies surrounding allocations should be re-examined.

Expenditures for Five Staff Development Days and Five Additional Instructional Days

DPI did not track HP Initiative expenditures for the five staff development and additional instructional days in FY 2002. However, DPI has determined that beginning in FY 2003, it can capture Initiative expenditures for these days in the HP schools, since it is a guaranteed allotment; that is, the school districts have been instructed to spend this allotment and DPI will ensure its payment. In the past, some districts did not increase the number of instructional days demanded by the Initiative; rather, the schools extended the school day.

All Staff Development and Workshop Expenditures

As shown in Table 6.17, expenditures increased for all types of professional development in schools within the eight school districts that received allocations in the first year of the Initiative. The increases were largest in the use of federal dollars; the state funds increased slightly, as did local expenditures.

Table 6.17 – All Staff Development and Workshop Expenditures in HP Schools
Within Eight Districts Receiving HP Allocations in FY 2000, 2001, and 2002

Schools	State Expenditures			Federal Expenditures			Local Expenditures		
	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
Lillian Black	6,792	1,192	3,055	50,055	64,278	60,060	178	118	457
Pauline Jones	19,233	1,552	2,190	72,173	56,129	42,901	143	1,661	937
Teresa C Berrien	2,303	1,580	1,058	12,846	6,283	8,845	828	1,672	337
Roberson	1,585	6,459	8,256	964	1,717	6,164	10,806	10,681	4,630
Ashley	2,348	1,046	53	53	4,801	43,192	45,111	15,229	104,600
Cook	0	0	0	0	14,746	0	11,288	48,359	31,674
Forest Park	625	0	0	0	4,000	0	17,745	14,932	14,022
Kimberley Park	1,456	0	0	0	0	4,329	11,726	10,046	9,948
North Hills	1,456	0	0	0	0	0	29,517	15,154	12,366

	State Expenditures			Federal Expenditures			Local Expenditures		
Schools	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002	2000	2001	2002
Petree	0	0	0	0	12,000	0	61,634	37,264	33,644
Rhyne	1,009	596	4,378	3,958	2,112	105,038	815	4,146	260
Woodhill	35,227	3,104	4,973	1,132	4,501	73,417	447	0	206
Fairview	13,936	7,196	3,017	4,753	2,429	8,932	2,123	2,044	2,524
W M Hampton	3,556	3,051	7,416	3,703	6,819	36,653	3,294	0	2,229
Clara J Peck	14,090	3,918	2,813	1,210	2,584	513	3,307	0	0
Riverview	29,440	55,642	47,498	2,696	23,552	48,002	118	1,237	1,224
Shamrock Gardens	8,184	1,641	2,108	5,016	2,313	775	811	12,000	1,993
Thomasboro	0	0	0	0	1,019	0	3,610	2,000	1,951
Westerly Hills	89	0	2,938	0	0	150	0	13,976	0
James C Braswell	2,420	1,198	1,234	28,880	2,931	19,771	0	0	0
O R Pope	5,258	10,049	13,740	8,273	18,031	28,742	0	0	566
Totals	$ 149,008	$ 98,224	$104,728	$195,713	$230,244	$487,484	$203,500	$190,520	$223,569
Differences between FY 2002 & 2001			$6,504			$257,240			$33,049

Relationships among the Data

Preliminary findings about the relationships among the variables show a significant correlation between the increase in dollars and the increase in test scores. This is to be expected. There is also a small negative relationship between school enrollment and the increase in test scores. The link between school size and student achievement has been proven in a variety of research, the most persuasive of which comes from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), which has an excellent record of accomplishment with minority students. The average academic achievement for all students in DoD schools is among the highest in the nation. Although many variables are responsible for this high achievement, a significant one is that the DoD system has small enrollments compared to the nation's public schools.

Because dollars were not fully allocated to all the schools in the HP Initiative until the second year, it is difficult to draw conclusions in the first year of the Initiative. In fact, it is best to draw conclusions after full implementation over a period of years. However, at this point we can state that some relationships exist among the variables, particularly financial resources, and school size.

Regression analysis shows that the two main factors that affect student achievement are total school enrollment and dollars per student. As enrollment increases by one student, the expected performance on the standardized test declines by about .11 to .18 points (p=.01). An examination of the graph shows that this effect is not uniform. Instead, high enrollment schools consistently exhibit low average standardized test scores, but low enrollment schools exhibit high variation, from scores just as low as high enrollment schools to scores roughly double that of the high enrollment schools.

As expenditure per student increases $10, test scores increase approximately .14 points. This result is not visible when the analysis includes a variable controlling for the fiscal year, because the expenditures are highly correlated with fiscal years. However, when the fiscal year is excluded from the regression, this effect can be observed, although the model confidence is somewhat low (p =.1). Other data available for analysis do not show strong

correlations with the dependent variable. It should be noted that since this analysis was controlled for the fixed effects of the 35 schools, variation among these schools is not evaluated.

However, the model is incomplete. More variables, such as teacher experience and teacher certification, need to be added. In addition, it is difficult to measure the quality of school leadership, which is one of the most important variables that influence a school's success. In subsequent years, and with longer programmatic experience, efforts should be made to expand the parameters of these multivariate analyses.

- **What impact did the HP initiative have on other outcomes such as instructional methods, staffing patterns, parental involvement, and professional development?**

In this section, we discuss the impacts of the HP Schools Initiative on outcomes beyond student achievement and teacher preparation, and issues and challenges that have resulted from the Initiative at the school and district levels. The different perspectives of key stakeholder groups, including district-level administrators, HP school staff, and administrators, are presented.

Instructional Changes

According to the DFOs interviewed, 13 of the HP districts had implemented reduced class size efforts aside from those efforts associated with the High Priority Schools Initiative. Such efforts were paid for through a variety of means. Within these 13 districts, respondents noted that reduced class size was implemented in varying numbers of schools and grade levels:

- District-wide (four districts)
- Schools deemed most at-risk (four districts - approximately 27 schools in one district, approximately 40 schools in the another district, and two schools in the third district)
- Five elementary schools in addition to the High Priority Schools (one district)
- At 26 schools in grades K-2 (one district)
- All kindergarten and first grade classrooms (one district)
- Select Schools where student to teacher ratios were highest (one district)

As one might expect, the extent of class size reductions (i.e., number of students reduced per class) varied greatly within these districts. Most respondents either indicated reductions differed by grade and/or school (five districts) or they were not aware of the extent of class size reductions (six districts). Among respondents who were able to provide information, they noted targeted classes had been reduced to a 17:1 student to teacher ratio (one district), and by two to three students per class in non-High Priority schools and by six students in HP schools (one district).

Principals at the HP schools reported that a number of additional school-wide initiatives have been implemented in an effort to improve the academic performance of students. These included specific instructional approaches (95.7% or 31 schools), strategies to increase parental involvement (91.5% or 30 schools), other teacher development programs (59.6% or 18 schools), school-based health or mental health services (27.7% or seven schools), and various federally funded grant programs (Reading Excellent Act initiatives, Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program, Magnet Schools Assistance Program) (10.6% or six schools).

Staffing Patterns

Clearly, the most significant impact the HP Initiative has had on staffing patterns at the 35 schools is related to the loss of the teaching assistant positions. Of the 14 district representatives interviewed, four indicated that they were able to maintain all teaching assistant positions through use of local (three districts) and Title 1 (one district) funds. In addition, six districts were able to keep some but not all of their teaching assistants. In these districts, this was accomplished using local funds (four districts), Title I funds (one district), and by reassigning teaching assistants from non-High Priority schools (one district).

When asked whether the benefits of class size reduction outweighed the loss of teaching assistant allocations, district-level stakeholders conveyed mixed sentiments. For example, respondents from six districts conveyed the belief that it is preferable to have smaller class size over teaching assistance, but only if the quality of the teachers staffing those smaller classes is high. Three other respondents, on the other hand, strongly believed that classrooms in the elementary grades need teaching assistants to function well and that their benefit outweighs that of smaller classes. Importantly, as noted by respondents, this issue may not be able to be sufficiently addressed for several more years into this initiative, until teachers and administrators can observe how classrooms function under each condition and assess the impact each condition has on student performance.

When administrators were asked about challenges or obstacles to implementing the HP initiatives, the reduction in teacher assistant positions in the K-3 classrooms was most frequently described as a "significant problem" by more than half of the respondents (55%). Other data from the Administrator Surveys showed that principals and other school administrators also had mixed feelings regarding whether or not the benefits of class size reduction outweighed the loss of the assistants. Nearly one third agreed; one third did not agree; and another third were not sure or thought it was too soon to tell.

However, approximately 20% of the teachers surveyed clearly viewed the loss of the teaching assistants as a negative change and a detriment to the classroom. Some examples of their comments are as follows:

- *"In our school, the numbers being lower was not enough to effectively make up for the absence of a teaching assistant. Our children need a lot of one-on-one attention and they suffered from not having a teaching assistant."*

- *"Because of the lower class size, we didn't have full-time assistants. This makes things very hard at times for K-1…These children need both a reduced class size and full time assistants."*

- *"Teacher assistants are needed to participate with children, especially during assessment time and also for classroom management to work in small groups."*

- *"Class size reduction has been very positive; however, reducing the assistants' time from full-time to less than part-time in kindergarten has had a negative impact on instruction and learning."*

Parent Involvement

While the initial intent of the HP legislation was to focus on increasing parental involvement through the added instructional support position, this aspect was clearly not realized at the school level. As described earlier in the report, none of the schools used the HP allocation to support a staff person whose main responsibilities were to conduct parent outreach and education (such as a parent advocate or parent coordinator), though several schools hired student support staff such as guidance counselors or social workers. As a result, according to HP school staff and administrators, it appears that the HP Schools Initiative did not have much of an impact on improving parent involvement at the HP schools. For example, more than half of the teachers surveyed (58.9%) indicated that the Initiative had no effect on increasing parent involvement, and only 16.9% of the administrators believed the HP Initiative had any impact on parent involvement. This is not surprising given the fact that only one third of the HP school staff rated themselves "highly skilled" in implementing effective parent involvement strategies.

A review of comments offered by both teachers and principals at the HP schools shows that there is a belief that greater parent support is needed to *"reinforce learning at school"* and that parents should start being held accountable for the academic success of their children. For example, one HP administrator stated, *"The present program has been very beneficial to the staff and students at our school. However, parent involvement has continued to be a major concern. Accountability standards for parents should be stricter in an effort to promote student success."*

Professional Development

With one exception, all of the DFOs reported that their districts had a budget or set of funds specifically earmarked for professional development. When asked to describe the extent to which their districts used their professional development funds to support or enhance the legislatively prescribed professional development required of the HP Schools, district-level respondents indicated the following:

- District professional development funds were used to provide professional development for all district schools, regardless of High Priority status (nine districts);
- Money was set aside specifically to support HP professional development efforts (one district); and
- District allocated additional professional development funds to the highest need schools, which included the High Priority Schools (one district).

Importantly, other district-level interview respondents named several ways in which their districts provided extra support for the implementation of the five professional development days. They included:

- In-house training/technical assistance (eight districts)
- Supplementary funding (five districts)
- Outside training/ technical assistance (three districts)
- Technology (one district)
- Supplies (one district)

Impacts on School or District Policy

Among the 14 district representatives interviewed, only four were able to provide examples of policy changes that, in their opinion, occurred because of the HP Schools initiative. These included:

- Eliminating the existence of multiple school calendars within the district (traditional calendar, year-round calendar, HP calendar) to implement a "hybrid" that would allow for consistent scheduling among all schools
- Shifting schools from a traditional school calendar to a year-round calendar to accommodate the additional days of professional development and student instruction
- Implementing a "lead teacher" model at all high risk schools to facilitate the recruitment and utilization of experienced teachers
- Implementing new reading initiatives at all district schools, stimulated by disappointment at having schools labeled as "low performing" through the HP initiative
- Stimulating efforts to save a school that had been slated to close, due to renewed hope as generated through the HP initiative
- Staffing HP schools with additional teacher assistants by taking them from non-High Priority schools

Implementation Issues/Challenges

Adequacy of HP Resources: Only six of the 14 district-level informants believed that sufficient resources were provided by the state to support the HP initiative. The other eight respondents reported several key areas in which resources were lacking: professional development (five districts), reduced class size (four districts), and instructional materials, books, and other needed materials (one district). Importantly, district representatives from a couple of districts also mentioned that funds for particular HP initiatives were not made available until the start of the 2002-2003 school year or not received at all.

In contrast, all of the DFOs commented that additional state resources were needed to adequately support the implementation of the HP Schools Initiative. Specifically, respondents noted that monies were needed to:

- Fund secondary activities associated with the initiative, such as constructing additional classroom space and recruiting efforts (six districts)
- Restore the teacher assistant positions (four districts)
- Hire additional classroom teachers (three districts)

Staff at the HP schools generally agreed with the DFOs. The most frequently cited suggestions for improving the implementation of the HP Schools Initiative among staff were to re-instate the teaching assistant positions (23.4%), provide incentives or some other type of assistance in recruiting and retaining certified and experienced teachers (16.1%), and provide assistance with classroom space and the supplies and resources need to set up the additional classrooms (13.2%).

According to the DFOs, at least six districts had not provided the HP schools with any extra funding to support their efforts to implement reduced class size or extended school year programming. Other District Finance Officers interviewed indicated the following unmet needs:

- Additional teaching assistants (two districts)
- Supplementary funds to cover costs associated with HP staff development (two districts)
- Funds (county and state) to pay for the extra classrooms needed due to smaller class size and transportation needed due to the extended school year (one district)

Unexpected Costs: The majority of the district representatives interviewed indicated that their districts had incurred some sort of unexpected costs because of the HP Schools Initiative. These included:

- Setting up additional classrooms (e.g., purchasing mobile units, transforming space into classrooms, equipping spaces) – related to reduced class size (five districts)
- Paying teachers for the extension of their contracts – related to five additional days for staff development and extended school year (three districts)
- Paying professional development consultants – related to five additional days for staff development (two districts)
- Instructional materials – related to extended school year and reduced class size (two districts)
- Hiring of additional teachers – related to reduced class size (two districts)
- Retention of TAs/ primary reading teachers – related to reduced class size (two districts)
- Supplementary services (e.g., transportation, food services, utilities, custodial services) – related to extended school year (one district)

Teacher Recruitment and Retention: It was learned from the case study schools that recruiting teachers with experience at the lower elementary school grades to the HP schools was problematic. In fact, it was suggested by staff at several case study schools that teacher retention, particularly among more experienced teachers, is problematic at the HP schools because of the "ten additional days they are required to work."

A review of teachers' comments from the Staff Survey clearly supported this finding; approximately 17% of responding teachers described difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. They attributed these problems to the stigma attached to working at an HP school as well as the additional work time required. Some examples are as follows:

- *"The overall effect of the initiative has been very positive. The extra days, however, have made it difficult to attract experienced teachers to our school."*
- *"Can't get teachers to come to HP schools; when they come they don't stay."*
- *"The extra days and space constraints make it difficult to find and retain qualified teachers."*
- *"There has been so much confusion regarding the initiative that there has been a negative impact on staff morale. We have very good teachers who are an asset to the school who are seeking transfers to non-high priority schools."*

In addition, among the representatives interviewed from 14 districts with HP schools, almost all indicated that finding qualified, licensed teachers to staff positions in their HP schools had been a significant problem. However, as noted by several respondents, this is a problem experienced by districts across the state, regardless of High Priority status.

Poor Communication: Overwhelmingly, district respondents expressed dissatisfaction with DPI in terms of its communication to the district regarding the HP Initiative. The primary complaints voiced by respondents included the following:

- Information was not communicated to the appropriate people within districts (ten respondents).
- It has been difficult to get questions answered or obtain needed information about the HP Initiative from DPI (eight respondents).
- Contacts from DPI were too infrequent (five respondents).
- Information about the Initiative should have been shared earlier (four respondents).
- Districts require greater technical assistance from DPI than has been provided (four respondents).

In terms of DPI's communication directly with the HP schools, only three respondents indicated feeling that the level of communication was sufficient; others mostly noted that DPI had shared little information directly with the schools and that this had negatively affected the schools' abilities to carry out the initiative.

Given the limited communication between DPI and the schools regarding the HP initiative, it is not surprising that the district representatives interviewed indicated making various efforts to ensure the HP schools were as well-informed as possible. Overall, interview respondents indicated that their districts worked closely with their HP schools to ensure that staff and administrators understood the requirements and purposes of the initiative, and sought to address schools' concerns and questions as they arose. One respondent, however, indicated that he/she knew of no efforts on the part of the district to keep HP schools informed of available funds.

At the school level, confusion arose at some of the case study schools regarding what HP funds were available to them to assist with implementation of the four legislative initiatives. For example, at two schools, teachers are not being paid for attending the five-day contract extension professional development. In another example, despite having worked with a DPI assistance team for two years, a case study school reported that no one from the state or from the county's District Office had communicated the full scope of the HP Initiatives.

Other Issues

At the end of the interview, district respondents were given the opportunity to raise any other issues they believed could inform the evaluation. Among the issues mentioned by respondents were:

- There is a need to increase flexibility regarding how the four HP initiatives must be implemented. For example, problems existed at smaller schools, where there is only one class per grade or where the student-teacher ratio was low before the HP Initiative (eleven respondents).
- There is a need to revise the list of schools designated as HP based on school improvement outcomes (six respondents).
- There is a lack of planning for how the work of the High Priority Schools Initiative will be sustained after funding expires (three respondents).
- Schools that have insufficient space to establish additional classrooms need assistance from the state (two respondents).

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to examine the extent to which the legislatively prescribed initiatives, primarily reduced class size, extended school year, and extended teacher contracts for professional development, helped to improve North Carolina's lowest performing elementary schools. Despite the implementation lag that occurred in Year 1, by Year 2 all participating HP schools had begun to implement the reduced class size initiative and all but six of the HP schools provided the five days of professional development. In general, efforts among the HP schools to implement the five additional days for students and the added instructional support position varied.

Taken together, the qualitative and quantitative data show that students across the 35 HP schools are beginning to reap the benefits of smaller class size. Most teachers report spending more time working with students individually and in small groups and agree that smaller classes have created improvements in classroom climate (i.e., fewer discipline problems). Moreover, at both the district and school levels, stakeholders report that, while it is still early in implementation, students' academic skills are improving.

Reports of achievement gains were supported by the quantitative analyses. For example, findings reported earlier reveal that:

- From baseline to the close of Year 2, students at the HP schools showed a significantly larger percentage point gain in the number of students passing the EOG in reading and math than did students at the comparison schools.

- Students attending the HP schools made achievement gains in reading and math (from Year 1 to Year 2) that were both statistically significant and educationally meaningful.

- Students at the HP non-waiver schools significantly outperformed their peers at the comparison schools in reading in Year 2. In addition, in the same year, students at the HP waiver schools showed significantly higher achievement in reading and math than did their peers at the comparison schools.

While the results of this evaluation are encouraging, they should be viewed and interpreted with caution. In comparison to students in similarly-situated schools, we provided some preliminary evidence to indicate that the HP initiatives are having a positive effect on students in the HP schools during the first two years of implementation. Still, the limitations of the comparison group design (e.g., no random selection or assignment and the uneven cross-site implementation) preclude us from offering definitive conclusions at this time.

Furthermore, because of the shortened timeline for implementation in Year 1, which gave districts and schools little time to prepare, there were a number of implementation challenges and issues (some of which continued through Year 2) that were raised by stakeholders. Clearly, as implementation is broadened and refined over the next two school years, there is a need for a continued, longitudinal evaluation. Indeed, the unit-record student database that has been created through the current evaluation can be expanded to help monitor student achievement and other outcomes (i.e., attendance, retention) over time.

VIII. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

It is hoped that the following recommendations will provide DPI with helpful information to consider for the continuance and improvement of the HP initiatives. Where appropriate, suggestions for future research/evaluation areas are also offered.

There is a need for **increased communication** between DPI, the participating school districts, and the HP schools regarding the expectations and requirements of the HP Schools Initiative. We note that, as of August of 2003, DPI has already started to convene regular meetings with HP staff regarding these expectations and requirements. We recommend that these meetings continue and be expanded in the forthcoming years of the Initiative. Regarding support (e.g., information about HP funding, intent of HP legislation for the four different initiatives) for implementation, particular attention should be paid to the set of schools that received waivers in 2000-2001. These schools appeared to have less success implementing all four of the initiatives even in Year 2, when waivers were not issued. In addition to continuing to examine the differences in outcomes for waiver and non-waiver schools, it may be interesting to look at how the HP initiatives are affecting conditions and learning opportunities for different groups of students such as students with disabilities and limited English proficiency. This would be totally compatible with the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation.

It is suggested that some **flexibility with implementation** be established. There are particular issues that should be addressed for HP schools where the average class size was at or below the 1:15 student to teacher ratio before the HP Schools Initiative began. In these schools, since the additional teacher allocations were not needed/warranted, the difficulties associated with the loss of the teaching assistants were more pronounced.

The pattern of evidence emerging from recent studies suggests that districts face resource, facility, and teacher **constraints** while attempting **to implement reduced class size**. The data from the current evaluation clearly show that North Carolina is no exception. Stakeholders at the district and school level reported unanticipated financial burdens (e.g., ancillary costs such additional instructional supplies, portable classrooms, custodial services for additional days), shortages of experienced teachers, scarcity of facilities/space, and loss of teaching assistants. It is suggested that the state be cognizant of the common challenges and obstacles to the implementation of the HP initiatives, and provide whatever supports are feasible to help alleviate these difficulties for HP districts and schools. In the future, the evaluation might look to distinguish between which of these constraints are potential long-term difficulties and which are associated with start-up implementation, and also examine whether or not those HP districts or schools that are having the hardest time overcoming such obstacles show different achievement outcomes.

There is some concern from both district- and school-level staff about the stigma associated with being an HP school and that none of the schools received recognition for improvements made since the HP designation in 1999-2000. At the same time, stakeholders were apprehensive that state funding for reduced class size and professional development, in particular, would not be continued if an HP school showed improvements in student achievement. Perhaps the state could develop a strategy for **rewarding HP schools** that achieve marked improvements, while continuing to provide the HP funding and support. This might alleviate some of the problems the HP schools are having with recruiting and retaining qualified teachers.

Recognizing that reduced class size may not boost achievement unless teachers are appropriately trained, the North Carolina legislation required that HP schools provide five days of staff development. To strengthen this initiative, it is recommended that the state **provide research-based suggestions or guidance** to the districts and the HP schools regarding the **scope and content for this professional development**. The literature shows that it is not enough to reduce class size but that teachers need to change their instructional practices to achieve the full benefits of smaller classes. Some suggested areas noted in the research are individualized instruction, effective classroom management techniques for smaller classes, identifying and responding to the needs of individual students, and opportunities to build on the individual strengths of children. More targeted professional development may also offset the effects of having to hire non-credentialed or inexperienced teachers.

The relationship between parental participation and children's educational success has been well documented. The intent of the HP legislation was to **improve parental involvement** through funding a parent coordinator or parent advocate-type position at each HP school. However, the evaluation showed that the legislation did not explicitly state how these positions were to be used, and that districts and HP schools were not aware of the objective to provide the additional instructional support staff position. For the goal of increased parent involvement to be realized, it is recommended that the state fully inform the districts and the HP schools about this provision, so that they view the additional position as a viable mechanism that could facilitate positive effects on parent involvement. In subsequent years, it may be interesting to study whether or not teachers and parents communicate more frequently, given the fact that teachers have fewer parents to contact since class size was reduced, and what impact the parent coordinator might have on increasing the time parents spend in the classroom or at school activities.

An analysis of financial-related data from the first year of the HP Initiative highlights some considerations for the future. The **withdrawal of teaching assistant positions** through the reduction of state funding is being somewhat alleviated by several districts' use of other state, federal and local funds for those positions. An examination of the need for teaching assistant positions could be instituted to understand why the districts sought to make up the reduction in teaching assistant positions through other funding.

Another consideration is the fact that DPI does not **track HP Initiative spending to the school level**. Given the importance of the Initiative, it may be wise to begin such tracking and to carefully examine the extent to which those schools that are identified as HP are indeed spending HP funds. Further, a very important consideration is to carefully **examine the allocation process** as it pertains to declining enrollment. Do poorly performing schools need a different type of allocation policy than linking average daily membership to classroom teacher resources? If HP schools continue to decline in enrollment and thus in resources, can the state modify its allocation policy to consider such a pattern?

While the current evaluation study began to explore the combinations of variables (i.e., conditions) that were associated with academic achievement within the HP schools, the results were relatively inconclusive. It is simply too early in the life of the initiative to expect unambiguous findings. As the initiative moves through its subsequent phases of implementation, it is recommended that longitudinal data be maintained on the cohorts of students who are touched by the initiative, and that **additional multivariate statistical techniques** are used to help define the nuances of best practice.

APPENDIX

- Case Study Protocols
- Survey Instruments
- District-Level Stakeholder Interview Protocols

Case Study Protocols

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Metis Associates' Evaluation of the High-Priority Schools Initiative

Description of Case Study Component

¬ Why are we conducting case studies?

As part of the overall evaluation of the High-Priority (HP) Schools Initiative, Metis will conduct a series of case studies with a selected sample of eight (8) HP schools. Case studies are a form of qualitative descriptive research that is used to look at individuals, small groups of participants, or a group as a whole. The case study takes place in a natural setting (such as a classroom or a school), and strives for a more holistic interpretation of the situation under study.

The main purpose of the case study component is to gain in-depth understanding of how the HP Initiative has been realized at these eight specific schools. For example, the case studies will provide valuable information on the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding various aspect of the HP Initiative, and detailed accounts of how the different legislative initiatives --- reduced class size, extended teacher contracts, added instructional support position, and extended school year --- have been implemented thus far.

The data collection methods that will be used to conduct the case studies include:

1. **Direct Observation:**
   This method involves researchers observing program activities unobtrusively, so as not to bias the observations. Metis researchers will attempt to be as least intrusive as possible when observing classrooms and professional development and staff training situations, and will focus solely on observing activities and behaviors around him or her.

2. **Structured Interviewing:**
   This method of interviewing involves using a formal structured protocol, with a focus on specific research questions. The use of interview protocols in interviewing a large pool of informants will facilitate analyses across respondents.

3. **Review of Documentation:**
   Collection and systematic review of documentation will provide additional information on participants and activities related to the study. These data will help to clarify and/or corroborate the information gathered through observations and interviews.

Taken together, the information drawn from the case studies (e.g., observations, interviews, and reviews of documentation) will be used to provide context for and further explain or inform findings from the quantitative aspects of the evaluation (e.g., results of analyses of student achievement and other school performance data).

¬ What will occur during a visit to a case study school?

As described above, Metis will be using three major data collection methods during the site visits to the selected schools. Research teams will be composed of two Metis staff, a Lead Researcher who will conduct focus groups and observations, and a Supporting Researcher who will assist by recording, taking notes, and translating into Spanish when needed. Each team will spend a total of 15 to 20 hours at each school. The following are descriptions of the activities to be conducted by each research team.

Direct Observations:

- *Classroom Observations:* At each school, Metis researchers will observe a total of four classrooms, including one kindergarten, one first, one second, and one third grade classroom (for a total of 32 classroom observations across the sites). Each classroom will be observed for a minimum of 45 minutes during a mathematics, science, or language arts lesson. Metis staff will refer to the Classroom Observation Protocol to record observational notes on instructional methods, classroom organization, discourse, teacher role, and student engagement.

- *Professional Development Session Observations:* HP-sponsored professional development sessions occurring during Metis site visits will be observed for up to three hours at each of the selected schools. Metis staff will use a Professional Development Observation Protocol to observe the content and strategies presented to teachers and school staff.

Structured Interviews:

- *Parent Interviews:* At each school, Metis staff will interview a group of seven to twelve parents with children in grades K – 3. The interviews will last for approximately one hour and will be conducted, if possible, at a location other than the school. The questions of the interview protocol focus on parents' thoughts on the HP initiatives and their impact on their children's performance and achievement. The interviews will be conducted in Spanish when necessary.

- *Teacher Interviews:* Teachers of grades K – 3 will be interviewed for one hour, in a group setting of 6 to 10 teachers in each of the selected schools. The interview protocol will focus on the implementation of the HP initiatives and related professional development, opinions and observations of the HP Initiative's impact on student performance and behavior, and recommendations for improvement.

- *Principal/Administrator Interviews:* Each Principal or other designated school administrator of the selected schools will be interviewed for approximately two hours during the site visit. The interviews may be conducted in two different sessions, as needed, to accommodate the schedules of the principals. Metis staff will use a structured interview protocol focusing on the implementation of HP initiatives, funding issues, and the impact of the initiatives on the school and students.

Review of Documentation:

Documentation will be reviewed at each school in order to obtain additional information on the following:

- *Implementation of the HP initiatives*: expenditure information; allocation/use of resources from different funding sources; etc.

- *School based information*: Student rosters; professional development agendas, notices, and training materials; staffing information; parent involvement; student performance data; etc.

Summary of Activities to Be Conducted at Each Site

Activity	Time Allotted
• Tour School Grounds	1 hour
• Classroom Observations	3 hours
• Professional Development Observations	3 hours
• Principal/Administrator Interview	2 hours
• Teacher Interview	1 hour
• Parent Interview (off-site)	3 hours (Includes travel time)
• Review of Documentation	3 hours
Across activities	**16 hours**

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Evaluation of the High-Priority Schools Initiative

Interview Guide for School Principals

Introduction/Background Information

As you know, DPI has asked Metis Associates to conduct an evaluation of the initiatives being implemented by the State's High-Priority Schools in response to recent legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly. The evaluation will look at both the implementation of the initiatives designed to support these schools (e.g., class size reduction, extended teacher contracts, extended school year, additional instructional support) and at the effects these initiatives are having on student performance. The results of this evaluation will be used by NCDPI to inform their work with the schools in the State.

As part of the evaluation, Metis is conducting site visits at a sample of eight HP schools, and conducting in-depth interviews with each of the principals at the selected sites. The questions I have for you should take from 1 ½ to 2 hours to complete. If you do not mind, I would like to tape record our conversation so that I do not miss anything that you have to say. Please be assured that all of the information you provide will be strictly confidential, never attributed to any one individual, and *only* reported in the aggregate. Do you have any questions before I begin?

Initiatives/Resources

1. Your school was awarded special State funding as a result of the High Priority Schools Initiative. Can you describe how you used the allocated monies to support --- (1) reduced class size; (2) extension of teacher contracts for professional development; (3) the extended school year initiative; and (4) the hiring of one additional instructional staff position?

2. In your opinion, was your school provided with sufficient resources by the State to meet the needs associated with these four initiatives? If not, what was lacking?

3. What were the unexpected costs (if any) associated with the implementation of each of these initiatives? How were these unexpected costs paid for?

4. Did your school combine the HP funds with Title 1 School-wide program money to implement the class size reduction in grades K-3? Have you been able to defray the cost of class size reduction through funding sources other than Title I? Which sources?

   - Were you able to utilize other funding sources for the extended school year and related professional development? If so, can you identify the sources of funding for each?

5. We understand that you did not accept/accepted technical assistance from the State Technical Assistance Team. Why not?/ Why? What type of technical assistance did you receive? Was this general assistance or did it focus on the HP initiatives? Were you satisfied with the assistance provided?

6. What school-wide strategies (if any) have been implemented in conjunction with reduced class size to assist in improving achievement?
   a. Probe: changes in instructional methods, changes in curricula, teacher development initiatives, strategies for increasing parent involvement, and/or provision of health services

7. Can you fully describe the activities that were/will be implemented to meet the requirement for the 5 instructional days' extension of the school year initiative this year?
    - Who is/will be participating in these activities?
    - Have you made/will you make any changes during implementation?
    - How are/will curricula contents for extended school year being/be determined?
    - How are/will the additional days used (e.g., for professional development, additional classroom instruction, etc.)?

    How about last school year, could you describe how the initiative was implemented then?

8. How did you implement your 5-day contract extension PD last year? How many teachers participated in the voluntary 5-day contract extension? How useful was it?
    - How did you/do you plan to implement the 5-day contract extension this year?

Scheduling/Instructional Methods

9. Has your school modified its schedule or faculty arrangements in order to implement class size reduction with lower costs—e.g., parallel block scheduling, use of team teaching?

10. Have you observed any changes in classrooms with regard to teaching and learning methods as a result of the class size reduction initiative? To what extent have you observed:
    - Increases in teachers' use of small group or project-based instruction?
    - Changes or modifications in teachers' methods of student assessment?
    - Increases in time spent on instruction versus classroom management?
    - Reductions in the number of student discipline referrals to your office?

Assignment of Personnel

11. How many teachers have you hired with HP funds to support the class size reduction initiative?
    a. How many of those teachers are State certified to teach in their assigned grade?
    b. How many had no prior teaching experience when you hired them?

12. In your opinion, have the benefits associated with class size reduction outweighed the loss of the teaching assistants in grades K-3?

13. We understand that one additional instructional staff person was to be hired and placed at your school through the HP Schools Initiative. Who was assigned to your school and what position did he/she fill? Did you have any input regarding the decision? How satisfied are you with the role filled by this staff member?

Physical Facilities

14. What problems (if any) were encountered in finding appropriate space to create enough classrooms for the reduction in numbers of students per teacher as specified in the legislation?

15. What strategies were used to find facilities for new classrooms? Probe for the following:
    - Used portables
    - Reconfigured existing school facilities into classrooms (e.g., libraries, art/music rooms, science labs, gyms, faculty lounges)
    - Used partitions/shared space within existing classrooms

- Received facility donations from local CBO's
- Re-opened closed schools
- Shared use of public facilities (e.g. libraries, parks, auditoriums, and recreation facilities)

16. Were any programs displaced as a result of the implementation of the class size reduction initiative? If so, which ones? How was the decision made to replace programs?

Professional Development

17. Please describe the content and delivery of the 5-day contract extension professional development (PD) that has been implemented in your school. Be sure to get details that include:
    a. Who has delivered the training? [Probe for school-based staff developer, District staff developer, other District-level staff, Principal, master teachers, outside consultants or agency --- or some combination of these]
       How did you select this provider?
    b. Who has been trained?
    c. What has been offered?
    d. What is the connection (if any) between what was offered and the class size reduction initiative? [Probe for details on content, looking for an emphasis on strategies for:
        i. Promoting active learning — e.g., thematic planning, language approaches, inquiry-based instruction, project-based instruction, using manipulative materials, computer-assisted learning;
        ii. Working in smaller class size settings --- e.g., cooperative learning, smaller group instruction, peer tutoring; and
        iii. Working with diverse student populations—e.g., students with disabilities, limited English proficient students]

18. In general, can you describe when and how the 5-day contract extension professional development (PD) opportunities were offered?
    - [Probe: after school workshops, inter-class visitations; weekly, grade-level collaboration; on-site follow-up; on-site coaching and modeling; study groups; teacher mentoring; college/university coursework or training?]

19. How has your school determined the need for the PD content that was covered during the 5-day contract extension professional development (PD)? To what extent was it based on students' and/or teachers' needs? Research on best practices in class size reduction?

If respondent noted that an outside agency or consultant was used to deliver some or all of the 5-day contract extension professional development (PD) Training, then ask:

20. How would you describe the relationship between your school and your partnering PD agency (university or private organization) or consultant? How about the relationship between your partnering PD agency and your teachers?

21. To what extent were teachers provided or offered opportunities for follow-up to these PD sessions (i.e., in-classroom assistance or training from partner agency, time for reflection, teacher mentoring, on-site coaching or modeling, etc.)?

22. To what extent did the PD address the NC Standard Course of Study and how to incorporate the standards into classroom practice?

23. In your opinion, has your school been given adequate resources with which to provide the

mandated five days of professional development to your teachers?

District Administrative Support

24. How would you describe your District's overall support of the different HP Initiatives at your school?
    a. What has the District done to communicate expectations about the Initiatives?
    b. What has the District done to provide concrete support for the Initiatives?

General School Budgeting

25. To what extent are you able to be flexible with your overall school budget?
    - In the end all dollars are green; that is, if you have left over categorical or other types of dollars that you cannot use, can these funds be turned into the district to get another type of dollar to pay for some specific need?
    - At the end of the school year, are you able to keep any surpluses you have in any type of fund?
    - Are you able to transfer funds from one purpose to another?
    - If your school raised funds or received funding from outside sources, are you allowed to use these monies in any way you deem appropriate?
    - Are you able to purchase materials and equipment that your may school need without prior district approval?
    - Are you able to exchange one vacant position for another type of position?

26. Are there any additional issues related to the HP Initiative (from a funding perspective) that you believe are important or could inform the evaluation?

Issues

27. Thinking about the past two years of implementation, what has worked well for your school in implementing these Initiatives?
    a. In your opinion, are there particular factors in this school or in your District that have supported implementation? What are they?

28. What issues or obstacles, if any, have you encountered in implementing these initiatives?
    a. In your opinion, are there particular factors in this school or in your District that have created difficulties for implementation? What are they?

29. To what extent have you been able to resolve issues and obstacles? Why/why not? What strategies, if any, have you used to address these issues or work to overcome obstacles?

30. From your perspective, what has been the overall impact of implementing the different HP Initiatives on each of the following outcomes:
    a. Student achievement
    b. Staffing patterns
    c. School policies such as:
        - Teacher recruitment/retention
        - Staff evaluation procedures
        - Teacher assignments, reassignments and transfer
        - Teacher certification requirements
        - Guidelines for professional development (including provisions for inexperienced and newly hired teachers)
    d. Instructional methods

e. Parent involvement

31. In your opinion, can the socio-economic background of students become an obstacle to learning? (Probe for explanation) Do you believe that there are lower expectations for students with lower socio- economic status? Do you feel these obstacles can be surmounted?

32. What recommendations do you have for changes or improvements in the different HP Initiatives? Would you recommend that some or all aspects be continued? If so, in what form? If not, why not?

33. Are there any additional topics or issues pertaining to the HP Schools Initiative that you feel might inform the evaluation about which I did not already ask?

Thank you very much for your time!

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Evaluation of the High-Priority Schools Initiative

Focus Group Interview Guide for Teachers

Introduction/Background Information:

Good morning/afternoon. My name is (lead researcher) and this is (supporting researcher), and we are from an organization called Metis Associates. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) has asked Metis to conduct an evaluation of the initiatives being implemented by the State's High-Priority Schools in response to recent legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly. The evaluation will look at both the implementation of the initiatives designed to support these schools (e.g., class size reduction, extended teacher contracts, extended school year for students, additional instructional support) and at the effects these initiatives are having on student performance. The results of this evaluation will be used by NCDPI to inform their work with the schools in the State.

As part of the evaluation, Metis is conducting site visits at a sample of eight HP schools, and conducting focus group interviews such as this one with teachers in grades K-3 at the selected sites. This session should take about 1 hour to complete. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and we are very interested in your opinions even if they differ from something someone else might have said.

If no one minds, we would like to tape record our conversation so that we do not miss anything that you have to say. Please be assured that all of the information you provide will be strictly confidential, never attributed to any one individual, and *only* reported in the aggregate. Do you have any questions before I begin?

School Initiatives

1. Your school has received State funding as part of the High-Priority Schools Initiative to support improved student achievement. Can you describe how your school has implemented --- (1) the reduced class size initiative; (2) extended teacher contracts for professional development; (3) the extended school year initiative; and (4) the hiring of one additional instructional staff position?

Professional Development

2. Please describe the content and delivery of the 5-day contract extension professional development (PD) that has been implemented in your school. ***Be sure to get details that the Principal didn't elaborate on, focusing on***:
   - What was offered during the voluntary PD last year? Who participated? Who delivered the PD?
   - What was/is being/will be offered during the mandatory PD this year? Who participated/is participating/will be participating? Who delivered/is delivering/will deliver the PD?
   - How has the PD been offered (is being offered/will be offered) (e.g., after school workshops, weekend institutes, summer institutes, during grade level meetings or conferences)?
   - When was/is/will the PD offered/being offered/be offered (e.g., beginning of the school year, throughout the year, during a particular month, end of school year, during the

summer)?
- What other areas of professional development were/are being/will be offered? Who delivered/is delivering/will deliver the PD? Who participated/is participating/will participate in the PD?
- Did you have any choice about which PD opportunity in which to participate?

3. Were all K-3 teachers required to extend their contracts to attend this PD or was it voluntary? ***If voluntary ask***: How many of you elected to extend your contracts to receive the 5-day contract extension PD?

4. How did your school determine the need for the content that was covered during the 5-day contract extension PD? What mechanisms (if any) were put into place to ensure that the PD incorporated teachers' input and/or needs? [Probe: needs assessment surveys, informal discussions at grade level meetings, teacher involvement in PD planning meetings]

5. In your opinion, how well did the 5-day contract extension PD that has been completed prepare you to teach in a smaller classroom setting? What examples can you provide to show or explain how the content of the PD helped you to improve or change your teaching practices?
   - **Probe** for examples that show the connection between what was taught in the PD and the implementation of class size reduction and/or the extended school year initiative.

6. To what extent did/is the PD address(ing) the NC Standard Course of Study and how to incorporate the standards into classroom practice?

7. What types of opportunities for follow-up to these PD sessions (i.e., assistance/training from the partner agency, time for meeting with teachers for reflection, teacher mentoring, on-site coaching or modeling) were/are being/will be offered to teachers?
   - Do teachers have access to or avenues for approaching the trainer or trainers who provided the 5-day contract extension PD to discuss successes or challenges in implementing any of the topics?
   - If teachers are having problems implementing the PD topics/strategies into the classroom, whom, if anyone, would they approach with their concerns?

8. In your opinion, what aspect to date of the 5-day contract extension PD has been most effective or useful to you? What has been least effective or least useful? Why do you think that?

Class Size Reduction

9. Over the past two school years, your school has received HP funding to reduce class size in grades K-3. Has your physical classroom space changed over the past two years? How so?
   - What changes have been made to your physical classroom space to allow for class size reduction? (Probe: Are there spaces being utilized this year in order to accommodate the reduction in class size?)
   - Do you think your physical classroom space is adequate? Why or why not?

10. Have you been able to teach in a classroom with fewer students? If so, how have you adjusted to teaching in a classroom with fewer students? What has been working well with your students? What issues and challenges have you encountered? What issues has your school encountered?

11. For those challenges that you mentioned, to what extent have you been able to get these

resolved? Why/why not? What strategies, if any, have you used to address these issues or work to overcome challenges?

12. In what ways have you changed or modified your methods of student assessment (if at all) since the class size reduction initiative began?

13. What types of changes have you observed in classrooms (yours or others) with regard to teaching and learning methods as a result of class size reduction initiative?
    - Probe: Greater individualized instruction, more small group instruction, more project-based instruction, greater time on task, decreased time on classroom management.

14. To what extent do you believe that reduced class size has resulted in an improved classroom atmosphere?
    - Probe: Fewer discipline problems, greater levels of student effort, improved relationships among students, improved relationships between teacher and student

15. In your opinion, what impact (if any) has the reduced class size initiative had on the amount and quality of parent-teacher interaction/communication or parent involvement in the classroom?

16. From what you've experienced so far, do you believe that the benefits associated with class size reduction outweigh the loss of the teaching assistants in grades K-3? Why or why not?

Other HP-Funded Initiatives

17. How has/is/will your school extend the school year this year? Were/are you aware of the initiative? If so, who was/is/will be involved in the planning?

    - What additional curricula or types of activities were/are/will be added (PD, school-wide program, activities at the end of the school year)?
    - Who was/is/will be participating in these activities?
    - Who was/is/will be staffing these activities? How was this determined?

18. We understand that one additional instructional staff person was to be hired and placed at your school through the HP Schools Initiative. Was an additional instructional staff person assigned to your school? If so, what position did he/she fill? How has this staff person been of assistance to you? Can you provide an example?

Overall Impact

19. From your perspective, what has been the overall impact of implementing the HP Initiatives on:
    - Student performance and achievement
    - Instructional methods
    - Professional development

20. What recommendations do you have for changes or improvements to the different HP Initiatives? Would you recommend that some or all aspects be continued? If so, in what form? If not, why not?

21. Are there any additional topics or issues pertaining to the HP Schools Initiative that you feel might inform the evaluation about which I did not already ask?

Thank you very much for your time!

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Evaluation of the High-Priority Schools Initiative

Focus Group Interview Guide for Parents

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is (lead researcher) and this is (supporting researcher), and we are from an organization called Metis Associates. Metis is a consulting firm that was asked by the North Carolina Department of Instruction to conduct a study of a particular group of 35 schools across the State of North Carolina that includes your child's school, _____ Elementary.

The purpose of this focus group is to gather parents' opinions about their child's class and about the school as a whole. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions, and that we are very interested in everyone's opinion even if it is different from what someone else might have said.

The questions should take about 40 minutes to get through. If no one minds, we would like to tape record our conversation so that we do not miss anything that is said. Is the tape recording ok with everyone? Please be assured that all of your comments are strictly confidential, and will never be attributed to any one person when reported. Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

1. Let's start by going around the room. Could you state your first name, the number of children you have in this school and what grade each child is in?

2. Have you had the opportunity to visit your child's classroom this year?
   How often were you able to do this? [Give some examples --- once a week, once a month, four times this year, once this year]

3. During the visit(s) to your child's classroom, do you think that there was an appropriate [or "ok"] number of children in the class? Why or why not?

4. In general, do you feel as though your child is getting enough help from the teacher?

5. Do you believe that your child is comfortable in his or her classroom? Do you think that your child feels comfortable asking the teacher questions during class? What do you think might help your child ask questions in class?

6. Does your child's teacher do a lot of group projects with the students? What types of group activities does the teacher do with the students?
   a. When you've visited the classroom, did you mostly see students working on projects together or do you mostly see students working on their own on assignments?
   b. Do you feel that students worked well together and that, in general, they got along with each other and with the teacher?
   c. When you've been in the classroom, were most students listening to the teacher? Were most students well-behaved?
   d. Were there students who were interrupting the class or misbehaving? If so, how did the teacher handle that?

7. Is there anything in particular that you especially like about how your child's teacher runs the class?

8. What has the school staff done (if anything) to tell you about the new programs in the school? What new programs have you learned about?
    a. Do you know about the HP Initiative that's being implemented in your child's school to lower the number of children in each class in grades K-3?

9. What (if anything) do you know about the extension of the school year at your child's school? What is it like? Is your child learning more and/ or different things because the school year has been extended? Are you satisfied with what your child is learning? Why/why not?

10. What has the school staff done to get you involved in the school? What types of activities have they organized for parents? How have they told you about these activities? Is there anything they could do to help you become more involved in the school activities?

11. Do you feel that school staff members expect all students to make good grades and behave in school, no matter what their background might be? How do you know?

12. Is there anything special you would like to see the staff do to make the school better for your children?

13. Is there anything else you would like to add about your child's class this year?

Thank you very much for your time!

Evaluation of High-Priority School Initiative
Classroom Observation Form

Today's Date_____	School: _____
Number of students in class:_____	Grade level:_____
Teacher:_____	Observer:_____
Length of observation: from _____ to _____	

1. Subject area:_____

2. Lesson topic:_____

3. Lesson objectives: _____

_____

Did the teacher make the lessons objectives clear at outset? _____

Did students have the opportunity to clarify the purpose of the lesson? _____

4. Describe the physical space:

_____ Traditional classroom _____Shared classroom space with dividers

_____ Shared classroom space without dividers _____Portable classrooms

_____ Space not traditionally associated with classroom teaching (e.g., music room, gym, hallways, large group instruction rooms)

_____ Leased/rented space outside of school building

_____ Other (specify)_____ _____

Was the space large enough to accommodate the number of students?_____

Was it appropriate for teaching?_____

Were there any outside distractions?_____

5. Were any parents present in the classroom?_____ If so, what role did they play?_____

6. Were there more than one teacher leading the class? ___If so, what was the other teacher(s)'s role?_____

7. Did the class have a teacher assistant?____ If so, what role did this person play?_____

8. Describe classroom activities using the codes listed below. Provide explanations and/or examples when appropriate.

Categories and Codes	Observational Notes:
Instructional Methods: **Key:** **C**=Cultural References **PS**=Problem Solving **PB**=Project-Based **LC**=Learning Centers **HO**=Hands-On Learning **Tech**=Technology **SA**=Student Assessment **Lect**=Lecture **Trans**=Effective Transition Between Topics/Lessons	
Classroom Organization: **Key:** **WG**=Whole Group **Team**=Team/Group **Pair**=Student Pairs **Indiv**=Individually	
Discourse: **Key:** **Teacher**=Teacher Dominated **Stu/Teach**=Equal Participation **Student**=Student Dominated **SD***=Student Discipline	
Teacher Role:	

Key: **TInt**=Teacher Interaction with Individual Students/Groups **TResp**=Teacher Response to Student Questions/Concerns **TRespMod**=Teacher Responds & Modifies Instruction/Lesson **Trans**=Effective Transition Between Activities **TGuide**=Teacher Guidance/Modeling **Mgmt**=Classroom Management **Dis**=Maintained Discipline **Lect**=Lecture	
Student Engagement: **Key:** **SPart**=Student Participation **ActB**=Active Behavior **SNeed**=Student voiced difficulties & needs **PassB**=Passive Behavior **Stask**=Students On Task **SQuest**=Student Inquisitiveness	

9. Describe any assessment activities conducted to give students and the teacher an indication of mastery of the lesson's intent:

10. Additional Comments:

Evaluation of High-Priority School Initiative
Professional Development Observation Form (2002—2003)

Name of Observer_____ Name(s) of Trainer(s):_____
Title of Training Session _____
Major Topics Covered: _____
Total number of Trainees_____ Location of Training/School _____
Today's Date: ____/____/____ Start Time: _____ End Time _____

Directions: Indicate (√) which of the following items you observed. Provide explanations, examples, and/or descriptions when appropriate.

Observational Notes:

____ **Teachers' general classroom teaching skills were addressed.**
Skills addressed:

_____ **There was discussion of strategies for teaching in smaller classrooms.**
Describe strategies discussed:

_____ **There was discussion of teaching students of varying populations.**

_____ **There was discussion of teaching students with special needs (e.g., ELS, Special Education)**

_____ **There was specific mention of the NC Standard Course of Study.**

_____ **Discussion of NS state standards included how to align the standards with classroom practices.**

_____ **There was discussion of various student assessment methods.**
_____ **The session was data driven, using actual student information.**
_____ **The session was organized so that teachers' various skills were utilized (teachers teaching other teachers) and built upon** (e.g., those weak in math have the opportunity to learn more from knowledgeable peers).
_____ **There was discussion/evidence of collaboration among teachers.**
_____ **Trainees participated, asking and responding to questions, volunteering information, and/or giving feedback.**
_____ **The facilitator organized hands-on activities for the participants** (e.g., creating lesson plans, sample classroom activities, writings, drawings, etc.)
_____ **The facilitator suggested ways teachers might obtain follow-up support on implementing the strategies** (e.g., internet/library resources, educational websites, contact info, future meetings/training, etc.).
_____ **The facilitator evaluated the extent to which trainees acquired the necessary information or skills (e.g., verbal or written feedback, tests, demonstration).**

Additional Comments:

Survey Instruments

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Evaluation of the High-Priority Schools Initiative

School Administrator Survey
--- High Priority Elementary School ---

In response to recent legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has asked Metis Associates, an independent research and evaluation firm, to conduct a study focusing on the High-Priority (HP) North Carolina Schools. As you know, the State legislature prescribed three initiatives for the HP schools: reduced class size (K-3); extension of teacher contracts for professional development, and extension of the school year for students. The purpose of the evaluation study is to assess the impact that these legislatively prescribed initiatives are having on student performance and other outcomes. School administrators at each of the 35 HP schools are being asked to complete this survey.

We appreciate your cooperation, and encourage you to answer the questions honestly and as completely as possible. Please know that the survey is anonymous, and that all of your answers will remain strictly confidential. Responses to the items will be reported in the aggregate and never attributed to any one individual. Please return your completed survey to Metis Associates in the attached self-addressed, postage-paid envelope. If you have any questions, please contact Celinda Casanova using Metis' toll-free phone number, 1-877-638-4568.

Annotated School Administrator Survey, Total N=50

SECTION I - BACKGROUND

1. What is your position at the school? **N=50**
   - ☐ Principal **(74.0%)** ☐ Assistant/Vice Principal **(26.0%)** ☐ Other (specify): **(0.0%)**

2. Please indicate the number of years you held this position:
   a. At this school? **N=49**
   - ☐ 1-3 years **(69.4%)** ☐ 4-6 years **(22.4%)** ☐ 7-10 years **(2.0%)** ☐ 11 or more years **(6.1%)**

   b. In this District? **N=47**
   - ☐ 1-3 years **(34.0%)** ☐ 4-6 years **(25.5%)** ☐ 7-10 years **(10.6%)** ☐ 11 or more years **(29.8%)**

   c. In the State of North Carolina? **N=47**
   - ☐ 1-3 years **(25.5%)** ☐ 4-6 years **(19.1%)** ☐ 7-10 years **(10.6%)** ☐ 11 or more years **(44.7%)**

   d. Outside of North Carolina? **N=16**
   - ☐ 1-3 years **(50.0%)** ☐ 4-6 years **(6.3%)** ☐ 7-10 years **(12.5%)** ☐ 11 or more years **(31.3%)**

3. What is your highest education achievement? **N=49**
   - ☐ Bachelor's (4-year) degree **(0.0%)** ☐ Doctoral or advanced degree **(30.6%)**
   - ☐ Master's degree **(69.4%)** ☐ Other (specify): _____ **(0.0%)**

4. For the past two schools year, what additional school-wide initiatives have been implemented along with the HP Schools Initiative (e.g., reduced class size in grades K-3) to improve academic achievement at your school? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=47**

- ☐ Specific instructional approaches **(95.7%)**
- ☐ Other teacher development programs **(59.6%)**
- ☐ School-based health/mental health services **(27.7%)**
- ☐ None **(0.0%)**
- ☐ Strategies for increasing parental involvement **(91.5%)**
- ☐ New curricula for particular subject areas **(44.7%)**
- ☐ Other (specify): _____ **(17.0%)**

SECTION II – CLASS SIZE REDUCTION INITIATIVE

1. How many new teachers has your school hired with HP Schools Initiative funding to implement the class size reduction initiative in grades K-3? **N=42** **Mean=3.2 [Range: 0 to 9]**

2. Of the total number of newly hired teachers, how many:
   a. Had State certification in the grade in which they now teach? **N=38** **Mean=3.2 [Range: 0 to 9]**
   b. Had prior teaching experience in grades K-3? **N=39** **Mean=2.6 [Range: 0 to 8]**

3. What types of scheduling changes (if any) were made in order to implement reduced class size with lower costs? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=48**

☐ Parallel or block scheduling	**(18.8%)**	☐ Multi-age grouping of students	**(27.1%)**
☐ Team teaching	**(37.5%)**	☐ No scheduling changes were made	**(43.8%)**
☐ Other (specify): _____	**(6.3%)**		

4. What strategies has your school used to physically accommodate the increased need for classroom space? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=50**

☐ We divided classroom space by using dividers	**(10.0%)**
☐ We divided classroom space without dividers	**(6.0%)**
☐ We used portable classrooms	**(38.0%)**
☐ We used space not traditionally associated with classroom teaching (e.g., music room, gymnasium, storage areas, hallways, large group instruction rooms)	**(26.0%)**
☐ We leased/rented space outside of the school building	**(2.0%)**
☐ None – We had enough classroom space to accommodate additional classes	**(42.0%)**
☐ Other (specify): _____	**(6.0%)**

5. From what you've observed, what changes have occurred in the K-3 classrooms with respect to teaching and learning as a result of the reduced class size initiative? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=49**

☐ None	**(8.2%)**
☐ Increased use of small group instruction	**(83.7%)**
☐ Increased use of project-based instruction	**(14.3%)**
☐ Increased time spent on instruction	**(67.3%)**
☐ Reduced time spent on classroom management	**(44.9%)**
☐ Fewer discipline-related problems	**(59.2%)**
☐ Positive changes in level of student effort and initiative (e.g., completing assignments, asking more questions, working well with other children)	**(59.2%)**
☐ Greater incidence of individualized student instruction	**(63.3%)**
☐ Increased parental involvement in the classroom	**(16.3%)**
☐ Increased use of alternative student assessment methods	**(28.6%)**
☐ Other (specify): _____	**(4.1%)**

6. The HP Schools Initiative provided for one additional instructional support staff person at each HP school. What type of instructional position was allotted to your school? (Check ***only one***) **N=43**

☐ **(46.5%)** K-3 classroom teacher	☐ **(0.0%)** Parent liaison or family worker
☐ **(9.3%)** Resource teacher	☐ **(0.0%)** School administrator
☐ **(0.0%)** Specialty teacher (art, phys ed, music)	☐ **(4.7%)** Staff developer
☐ **(9.3%)** Student support staff (e.g., guidance counselor, social worker)	☐ **(30.2%)** Other (specify): _____

7. In your opinion, have the benefits associated with reduced class size outweighed the loss of the teaching assistants in grades K-3? **N=47**

   □ Yes **(31.9%)** □ No **(34.0%)** □ Not sure/too soon to tell **(34.0%)**

Section III – Extension of Teacher Contracts for Professional Development

1. How many teachers were/are employed at this school in:

   a. 2001-2002 in Grades K-3? **N=39, Mean=13.97**
      2001-2002 in Grades 4-5? **N=39, Mean=6.31**

   b. 2002-2003 in Grades K-3? **N=43, Mean=15.98**
      2002-2003 in Grades 4-5? **N=44, Mean=6.59**

2. Of these, how many teachers participated in the voluntary and/or mandatory 5-day contract extension professional development that has been (or will be) offered?

   a. 2001-2002 in Grades K-3? **N=26, Mean=10.65**
      2001-2002 in Grades 4-5? **N=33, Mean=15.27**

      □ Not applicable – We did not implement the voluntary contract extension professional development component during the 2001-2002 school year

   b. 2002-2003 in Grades K-3? **N=25, Mean=5.44**
      2002-2003 in Grades 4-5? **N=33, Mean=7.42**

      □ Not applicable – We have not (or do not plan to) implement the mandatory contract extension professional development component during the 2002-2003 school year

The remaining questions in this Section need only be completed if your school has (or will) implement some or all of the contract extension professional development in 2001-2002 or 2002-2003.

3. Which of the following describe(s) the major content areas or topics covered during the 5-day contract extension professional development that has been (or will be) offered at your school? (Check ***all*** that apply for each school year)

2001-2002 (V) N=26	2002-2003 (M) N=41	
57.7%	**51.2%**	Individualized instruction
65.4%	**63.4%**	Small group instruction
38.5%	**56.1%**	Cooperative learning
34.6%	**29.3%**	Theme-based instruction
46.2%	**43.9%**	Language learning approaches
38.5%	**43.9%**	Learning centers
61.5%	**58.5%**	Manipulatives
34.6%	**29.3%**	Inquiry-based instruction
23.1%	**19.5%**	Project -based instruction
57.7%	**61.0%**	Technology as a learning tool
34.6%	**34.6%**	Strategies for increasing parental involvement
61.5%	**29.3%**	Lessons that incorporate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study
38.5%	**70.7%**	Specific strategies for teaching students with disabilities

15.4%	**31.7%**	Specific strategies for teaching English language learners
19.2%	**14.6%**	Other (specify):
3.8%	**7.3%**	This school has not offered any contract extension PD

4. Who has (or will) determine the curriculum for the 5-day contract extension teacher professional development sessions? (Check ***all*** that apply for each school year)

2001-2002 (Voluntary) N=22	**2002-2003 (Mandatory) N=39**	
13.6%	**25.6%**	Experts selected by the district
31.8%	**43.6%**	All pedagogical staff at this school
45.5%	**38.5%**	District personnel
9.1%	**5.1%**	Non-pedagogical school staff
22.7%	**20.5%**	Experts selected by the school staff
50.0%	**30.8%**	Affected teachers and other pedagogical staff at this school
18.2%	**33.3%**	Other (specify): _____
		We have not or do not plan to provide the contract extension PD

5. For each school year, have (or will) participating teachers be compensated for their time spent participating in the 5-day contract extension professional development?

a. 2001-2002 **N=28** ☐ No **(14.3%)** ☐ Yes **(85.7%)** ☐ Not applicable

≡ If ***yes*** is checked, who incurred this expense?

N=22 ☐ The District **(72.7%)** ☐ The school **(0%)** ☐ Other (specify): **(27.3%)**

b. 2002-2003 **N=37** ☐ No **(10.8%)** ☐ Yes **(89.2%)** ☐ Not applicable

≡ If ***yes*** is checked, who incurred this expense?

N=31 ☐ The District **(64.5%)** ☐ The school **(0%)** ☐ Other (specify): **(35.5%)**

6. Using the scale below, circle the number that best describes how much of the content of the 5-day contract extension professional development has been (or will be) directed toward helping teachers and other school staff work with smaller class sizes? **N=44, Mean=3.75**

1	2	3	4	5
None of the content		Some of the content		Most of the content

7. Was (or is) the curriculum for the 5-day contract extension professional development the same for all HP schools in the District or did it vary by school? **N=43**

☐ The same for all **(23.3%)** ☐ Varied by school **(62.8%)**
☐ Varied by other criteria **(2.3%)** ☐ This is the only HP school in the District **(11.6%)**

8. What assistance has (or will) the District offer your school to help plan or carry out the 5-day contract extension professional development sessions? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=42**

☐ Additional funding **(19.0%)** ☐ District-level staff developers **(71.4%)**
☐ Contracts with outside experts **(23.8%)** ☐ Assistance with linkages to outside experts **(33.3%)**
☐ Physical space **(21.4%)** ☐ Supplies and materials **(31.0%)**
☐ No District assistance has been offered **(9.5%)** ☐ Other (specify): **(0.0%)**

9. How well has the 5-day contract extension professional development provided thus far prepared:

   a. Teachers in grades K-3 to effectively implement the class size reduction initiative? **N=39**

☐ Not at all	☐ Partially	☐ Adequately	☐ Fully	☐ Not applicable
(5.1%)	**(23.1%)**	**(43.6%)**	**(28.2%)**	**(7.1%)**

   b. Teachers or other staff to effectively implement the extended school year initiative? **N=42**

☐ Not at all	☐ Partially	☐ Adequately	☐ Fully	☐ Not applicable
(5.9%)	**(26.5%)**	**(47.1%)**	**(20.6%)**	**(19.0%)**

10. Were teachers offered opportunities for training, activities, or other experiences as a follow-up to any of the 5-day contract extension professional development? **N=38**

☐ Yes **(84.2%)** ☐ No **(15.8%)**

   a. If ***yes***, the opportunities that followed the initial 5-day contract extension professional development (PD) activity took the form of: (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=39**

☐ A workshop that built on what was learned in the PD activity.	**38.5%**
☐ Meetings with other teachers to reflect on the PD experience and how to implement what was learned.	**59.0%**
☐ Visits to classrooms of other teachers, either within or outside the school, to better understand how to implement what was learned in the initial PD activity.	**56.4%**
☐ Coursework at a postsecondary institution that was related to the initial PD activity.	**5.1%**
☐ Someone coming into classrooms to model or assist in using what was learned at the initial PD activity.	**61.5%**
☐ An experienced teacher working with other teachers over a period of time as a mentor to assist to implementation of what was learned at the initial PD activity.	**59.0%**
☐ Discussions held during regular teacher meetings of the entire staff or certain grade level teachers.	**82.1%**
☐ No opportunities for follow-up were offered	
☐ Other (specify): _____	**10.3%**

11. To date, to what extent has the 5-day contract extension professional development covered:

	Not at all	Partially Covered	Adequately Covered	Fully Covered	Not applicable
a. North Carolina's Standard Course of Study, including strategies for classroom practice **(N=42)**	--	**19.0%**	**59.5%**	**19.0%**	**2.4%**
b. Special strategies for working with diverse student populations (e.g., disabilities, limited English proficiency) **(N=43)**	**11.6%**	**30.2%**	**46.5%**	**9.3%**	**2.3%**
c. Strategies for promoting active learning **(N=41)**	**2.4%**	**17.1%**	**51.2%**	**26.8%**	**2.4%**
d. Specific needs of the participating teachers **(N=38)**	**5.3%**	**26.3%**	**47.1%**	**18.4%**	**2.6%**
e. Specific needs of the students in your school **(N=40)**	--	**22.5%**	**57.5%**	**17.5%**	**2.5%**
f. Strategies for implementing research-based or "best practice" methods **(N=42)**	**7.1%**	**21.4%**	**40.5%**	**28.6%**	--
g. The school's overall plan for improved student achievement **(N=42)**	--	**14.3%**	**52.4%**	**31.0%**	**2.4%**

Section IV --- Extended School Year Initiative for Students

1. How has (or will) the school year be extended by five additional days for students in grades K-5? (Check *all* that apply) **N=45**
   - ☐ By providing additional instructional days during the regular school year (e.g., on weekends, during school year holidays or breaks) **(40.0%)**
   - ☐ By providing additional instructional days that extend the regular school year (e.g., on summer vacation days) **(26.7%)**
   - ☐ By providing additional instructional days both during the school year and through an extended school year **(17.8%)**
   - ☐ Other (specify): **(8.9%)**
   - ☐ Not applicable – This school is not implementing an extended school year **(24.4%)**

2. Is (or will) the extended school year for students being (or be) implemented in all schools in this District or only within the HP-designated schools? **N=35**
   ☐ District-wide **(11.5%)** ☐ In HP schools only **(82.9%)** ☐ Don't know **(5.7%)**

3. Which best describes the instructional focus that has been (or is being) planned for the extended school year initiative for students at this school? (Check *all* that apply) **N=34**
   - ☐ An extension of what is being taught during the regular school day **(88.2%)**
   - ☐ Enrichment activities that are not part of the regular school day curriculum **(26.5%)**
   - ☐ Other (specify): **(8.8%)**
   - ☐ Don't know/not sure **(2.9%)**

4. In the space below, please describe the content of the professional development that has been (or will be) offered to teachers who are (or will be) implementing the extended school year program?

Section V - Effectiveness of Implementation

1. How effective has the implementation of the HP Initiative been in your school in terms of:

	Not applicable	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not at all effective
a. Reconfiguration/expansion of existing physical space **(N=24)**		**20.8%**	**37.5%**	**4.7%**
b. Reducing class size for particular groups of children **(N=44)**		**68.2%**	**27.3%**	**4.5%**
c. Obtaining qualified teachers for each newly created class **(N=40)**		**30.0%**	**37.5%**	**32.5%**
d. Improving teacher knowledge and skills in teaching methods appropriate for use with lower class size **(N=42)**		**38.1%**	**50.0%**	**11.9%**
e. Improving teacher knowledge and skills in using appropriate assessment methods **(N=39)**		**41.0%**	**48.7%**	**10.3%**
f. Improving teacher knowledge and skills in using classroom management methods **(N=40)**		**37.5%**	**55.0%**	**7.5%**
g. Improving student achievement (grades K-3) **(N=43)**		**58.1%**	**37.2%**	**4.7%**
h. Improving student achievement (all grade levels) **(N=42)**		**47.6%**	**47.6%**	**4.8%**

	Not applicable	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not at all effective
i. Improving student attendance **(N=37)**		**18.9%**	**54.1%**	**27.0%**
j. Increasing parental involvement in the classroom **(N=40)**		**7.5%**	**62.5%**	**30.0%**

2. Has your school combined funds from other funding sources to support or defray the costs associated with implementing the different HP Initiatives? (Check ***all*** that apply)

	NA	Federal (e.g., Title 1)	State (Other than HP funding)	Other local funds
a. Reduction of class size in grades K-3 **(N=33)**		**72.7%**	**24.2%**	**27.3%**
b. Extension of school year for students **(N=14)**		**21.4%**	**28.6%**	**57.1%**
c. Extension of teacher contracts for professional development **(N=17)**		**35.3%**	**41.2%**	**41.2%**

3. Sometimes there can be challenges or obstacles that make it difficult for schools to implement new initiatives. Reflecting on the past two years of HP implementation, for ***each*** of the following potential challenges, check ***yes*** if it has been a problem for your school, or ***no*** if it has not been a problem for your school.

	N	Yes - significant problem	Yes – small problem	Not a problem
a. Lack of commitment from District administrators	**41**	**4.9%**	**14.6%**	**80.5%**
b. Poor working relationship between the school and outside agency that provided PD	**40**	**7.5%**	**5.0%**	**87.5%**
c. Insufficient HP funding from the State	**37**	**21.6%**	**27.0%**	**51.4%**
d. Not enough support from parents	**44**	**34.1%**	**31.8%**	**34.1%**
e. Resistance from teachers to change their instructional methods and approaches	**41**	**12.2%**	**26.8%**	**61.0%**
f. Insufficient instructional materials and resources	**40**	**5.0%**	**15.0%**	**80.0%**
g. Insufficient District funding to supplement HP monies	**32**	**6.3%**	**31.3%**	**62.5%**
h. Lack of teacher assistant positions in the K-3 classrooms	**42**	**54.8%**	**33.3%**	**9.5%**
i. Lack of available State certified teachers in grades K-3	**37**	**45.9%**	**29.7%**	**24.3%**
j. Other:				

4. What changes (positive or negative) have taken place at your school as a result of the implementation of the HP Schools Initiative?

5. Finally, what changes can you suggest to improve the overall design or implementation of the different HP Initiatives?

Thank you for completing this survey.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Evaluation of the High-Priority Schools Initiative
Teacher Survey
--- High Priority Elementary School ---

In response to recent legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly, the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has asked Metis Associates, an independent consulting firm, to conduct an evaluation of the High-Priority (HP) North Carolina Schools. As you may know, the State legislature prescribed three initiatives for the HP schools: reduction of class size (K-3); extension of teacher contracts for professional development, and extension of the school year for students. The purpose of the study is to assess the impact that these initiatives are having on student performance and other outcomes. Teachers at all of the HP schools are being asked to complete this survey.

We appreciate your cooperation, and encourage you to answer the questions honestly and as completely as possible. Please know that the survey is anonymous, and that all of your answers will remain strictly confidential. Responses to the items will be reported in the aggregate and never attributed to any one individual. Please place your completed survey in the attached envelope, and return the sealed envelope to the specially marked box located in your school's main office. If you have questions, please contact Celinda Casanova using Metis' toll-free number, 1-877-638-4568.

Annotated Staff Survey, Total N=972

SECTION I - BACKGROUND

1. What is your position at the school? **N=950**

☐ Classroom teacher - Grades K-3	**46.2%**	☐ Classroom teacher - Grades 4-6	**16.2%**
☐ Specialty teacher (art, phys ed, music)	**6.7%**	☐ Resource teacher (ESL, special ed, reading)	**11.7%**
☐ Pre-kindergarten teacher	**2.7%**	☐ Teaching assistant	**8.2%**
		☐ Other (specify): _____	**8.2%**

2. Please indicate the number of years of teaching experience you've had teaching:

c. At this school? **N=936**

☐ 1-3 years **48.9%** ☐ 4-6 years **21.0%** ☐ 7-10 years **10.6%** ☐ 11 or more years **19.4%**

d. In this District? **N=866**

☐ 1-3 years **41.1%** ☐ 4-6 years **21.1%** ☐ 7-10 years **9.0%** ☐ 11 or more years **28.8%**

e. In the State of North Carolina? **N=880**

☐ 1-3 years **29.4%** ☐ 4-6 years **19.1%** ☐ 7-10 years **11.9%** ☐ 11 or more years **39.5%**

f. Outside of North Carolina? **N=314**

☐ 1-3 years **41.1%** ☐ 4-6 years **20.4%** ☐ 7-10 years **13.1%** ☐ 11 or more years **25.5%**

3. What is your highest education achievement? **N=943**

☐ Bachelor's (4-year) degree	**64.5%**	☐ Doctoral or advanced degree	**1.3%**
☐ Master's degree	**27.0%**	☐ Other (specify): _____	**7.2%**

4. Are you fully licensed and/or accredited for your current position? **N=952**

☐ Yes **84.0%** ☐ No **16.0%**

5. Which best describes the population(s) of students with whom you work? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=950**

☐ General education	**84.6%**	☐ English language learners	**34.9%**	☐ Special needs children	**44.0%**
☐ Other special needs children	**18.6%**	☐ Other (specify): _____	**5.9%**		

SECTION II – REDUCED CLASS SIZE INITIATIVE

1. Over the past two school years, your school received HP funding to reduce class size in grades K-3. Has the number of students in ***your class*** decreased as a result of this Initiative? **N=825**

   ☐ No **30.5%** ☐ Yes **69.5%**

   a. If ***yes***, what is the current number of students in your class? **Mean=13.9**

2. What types of scheduling changes (if any) have been implemented at your school to support the implementation of reduced class size? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=671**

   ☐ Parallel or block scheduling **30.1%** ☐ Multi-age grouping of students **14.0%**
   ☐ Team teaching **34.3%** ☐ No scheduling changes were made **37.7%**
   ☐ Other: _____ **11.2%** ☐ Don't know

3. Have any changes been made to your physical classroom space to allow for class size reduction? **N=847**

   ☐ No **83.0%** ☐ Yes **17.0%**

   a. If ***yes***, what effect (if any) has the change in physical classroom space had on instruction? (Check ***one*** response) **N=186**

      ☐ Neutral - The change in classroom space has **not had any effect** on instruction. **25.3%**
      ☐ Positive - The change in classroom space has **facilitated** effective instruction. **61.3%**
      ☐ Negative - The change in classroom space has made instruction **difficult**. **13.4%**

4. From what you've observed, what changes have occurred in the K-3 classrooms with respect to teaching and learning since the reduced class size initiative? (Check ***all*** that apply)

	No change	Modest change	Substantial change	Not sure/too soon to tell
• Increased use of small group instruction **(N=719)**	☐ **9.9%**	☐ **29.9%**	☐ **60.2%**	☐ **12.2%**
• Increased use of project-based instruction **(N=568)**	☐ **26.6%**	☐ **44.5%**	☐ **28.9%**	☐ **24.5%**
• Increased time spent on instruction **(N=706)**	☐ **14.6%**	☐ **27.6%**	☐ **57.8%**	☐ **13.1%**
• Reduced time spent on classroom management **(N=688)**	☐ **26.2%**	☐ **39.0%**	☐ **34.9%**	☐ **14.0%**
• Fewer discipline-related problems **(N=715)**	☐ **29.1%**	☐ **39.0%**	☐ **31.9%**	☐ **12.5%**
• Positive changes in level of student effort and initiative **(N=690)**	☐ **15.4%**	☐ **39.7%**	☐ **44.9%**	☐ **13.4%**
• Greater incidence of individualized student instruction **(N=722)**	☐ **10.0%**	☐ **37.0%**	☐ **53.0%**	☐ **11.1%**
• Increased parental involvement in the classroom **(N=691)**	☐ **58.9%**	☐ **31.3%**	☐ **9.8%**	☐ **15.5%**
• Increased use of alternative student assessment methods **(N=654)**	☐ **20.8%**	☐ **48.2%**	☐ **31.0%**	☐ **18.4%**
• Other (specify): **(N=43)**	☐ **20.9%**	☐ **32.6%**	☐ **46.5%**	☐ **58.7%**

Section III – Extension of Teacher Contracts for Professional Development

1. The High Priority Schools Initiative calls for schools to extend teachers contracts to provide five additional days of professional development. Did you participate in the voluntary 5-day contract extension professional development offered as part of the 2001-2002 school year (including the summer months)? **N=869**

☐ No **43.2%** ☐ Yes **56.8%**

2. Which of the following describe(s) the major content areas or topics covered during the 5-day contract extension professional development that has been or will be offered at your school? (Check ***all*** that apply)

	2001-2002 (Voluntary Contract Extension) N=359	2002-2003 (Mandatory Contract Extension) N=511
• Individualized instruction	☐ **46.2%**	☐ **50.1%**
• Small group instruction	☐ **57.4%**	☐ **63.6%**
• Cooperative learning	☐ **51.0%**	☐ **56.0%**
• Differentiated instruction	☐ **48.5%**	☐ **52.8%**
• Theme-based instruction	☐ **35.1%**	☐ **39.5%**
• Language learning approaches	☐ **32.9%**	☐ **40.3%**
• Learning centers	☐ **42.9%**	☐ **45.2%**
• Manipulatives	☐ **47.9%**	☐ **47.4%**
• Inquiry-based instruction	☐ **28.1%**	☐ **35.2%**
• Project -based instruction	☐ **23.4%**	☐ **32.5%**
• Technology as a learning tool	☐ **49.0%**	☐ **56.4%**
• Alternative assessment approaches	☐ **29.2%**	☐ **43.1%**
• Classroom management techniques	☐ **56.3%**	☐ **62.8%**
• Strategies for increasing parental involvement	☐ **38.7%**	☐ **42.5%**
• Lessons that incorporate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study	☐ **55.4%**	☐ **65.2%**
• Specific strategies for teaching students with disabilities	☐ **29.0%**	☐ **30.9%**
• Specific strategies for teaching English language learners	☐ **18.4%**	☐ **24.9%**
• Other (specify):	☐ **10.3%** **N=445**	☐ **11.9%** **N=562**
• I did not participate in the contract extension PD that was offered	☐ **20.0%**	☐ **10.1%**
• This school has not offered any contract extension PD	☐ **10.8%**	☐ **9.1%**

3. Were you given or do you anticipate being given an opportunity to provide input into the content or scope of the 5-day contract extension professional development that has been or will be offered? **N=755**
   ☐ Yes **57.7%** ☐ No **42.3%**
   ☐ Not applicable - This school has not offered any contract extension PD ≡ **Skip to Section IV**

4. In general, how helpful was/is the professional development that has been/is being offered through the 5-day contract extension? (Check ***only one*** response) **N=644**
   ☐ Not at all helpful **9.9%** ☐ Somewhat helpful **47.7%** ☐ Very helpful **42.4%**
   ☐ Don't know - I haven't attended any contract extension PD ≡ **Skip to Section IV**

The remaining questions in this Section need only be answered by teachers who have participated in some or all of the 5-day extension contract PD in either the 2001-2002 or 2002-2003 school year.

5. How well has the 5-day contract extension professional development prepared you to effectively implement the class size reduction initiative? (Check ***only one*** response) **N=473**
   ☐ Not at all **19.7%** ☐ Partially **23.8%** ☐ Adequately **43.7%** ☐ Fully **12.7%**
   ☐ Not applicable – My class size has not been reduced

6. In your opinion, how well has the 5-day contract extension professional development addressed the following (check ***only one*** response for each):

   a. North Carolina's Standard Course of Study, including strategies for putting this into classroom practice **N=631**
   ☐ Not at all **12.4%** ☐ Partially **27.3%** ☐ Adequately **42.6%** ☐ Fully **17.7%**

   b. Special strategies for working with diverse student populations (e.g., students with disabilities, English language learner students) **N=621**
   ☐ Not at all **21.3%** ☐ Partially **36.6%** ☐ Adequately **33.3%** ☐ Fully **8.9%**

   c. Strategies for promoting active learning **N=631**
   ☐ Not at all **7.9%** ☐ Partially **25.0%** ☐ Adequately **50.1%** ☐ Fully **17.0%**

   d. Strategies for implementing small group instruction **N=630**
   ☐ Not at all **12.2%** ☐ Partially **25.1%** ☐ Adequately **45.6%** ☐ Fully **17.1%**

   e. The specific needs of the participating teachers **N=622**
   ☐ Not at all **16.9%** ☐ Partially **31.0%** ☐ Adequately **42.6%** ☐ Fully **9.5%**

   f. The specific needs of the students in your school **N=630**
   ☐ Not at all **8.6%** ☐ Partially **33.7%** ☐ Adequately **46.2%** ☐ Fully **11.6%**

   g. Strategies for implementing research-based or "best practice" instructional methods **N=622**
   ☐ Not at all **10.8%** ☐ Partially **28.3%** ☐ Adequately **45.0%** ☐ Fully **15.9%**

   h. The school's overall plan for improved student achievement **N=631**
   ☐ Not at all **6.3%** ☐ Partially **26.3%** ☐ Adequately **48.5%** ☐ Fully **18.9%**

7. Were you offered any opportunities for training, activities, or other experiences as a follow-up to any of the 5-day contract extension professional development? **N=627**
   ☐ Yes **66.7%** ☐ No **33.3%**

   a. If ***yes***, the opportunities that followed the initial 5-day contract extension professional development activity took the form of: (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=445**
   ☐ **68.3%** A workshop that built on what was learned in the professional development activity.
   ☐ **65.8%** Meetings with other teachers to reflect on the professional development experience and how to implement what was learned.
   ☐ **39.8%** Visits to the classrooms of other teachers, either within or outside the school, to better understand how to implement what was learned in the initial professional development activity.
   ☐ **11.5%** Coursework at a postsecondary institution that related to the initial professional development activity.
   ☐ **35.7%** Someone coming to your classroom to model or assist you in presenting what you learned at the initial professional development activity.
   ☐ **27.6%** An experienced teacher working with you over a period of time as a mentor to assist you to implement what you learned at the initial professional development activity.
   ☐ **72.6%** Discussions held during regular teacher meetings of the entire staff or certain grade level teachers.
   ☐ **4.9%** No opportunities for follow-up were offered
   ☐ **1.1%** Other (specify):

8. Thinking about the year you taught prior to the HP Initiative and how you currently teach, how would your rate your skills in using the following teaching methods or approaches?

	-- Prior to HP Initiative --				--Currently--			
	N	Not at all	Moderately skilled	Highly skilled	N	Not at all	Moderately Skilled	Highly Skilled
• Individualized instruction	561	☐ 5.7%	☐ 51.0%	☐ 43.3%	582	☐ 2.9%	☐ 35.7%	☐ 61.3%
• Small group instruction	564	☐ 3.5%	☐ 45.4%	☐ 51.1%	576	☐ 2.1%	☐ 27.1%	☐ 70.8%
• Theme-based instruction	534	☐ 8.8%	☐ 52.1%	☐ 39.1%	549	☐ 3.8%	☐ 43.5%	☐ 52.6%
• Cooperative learning	539	☐ 4.8%	☐ 52.1%	☐ 43.0%	563	☐ 2.5%	☐ 41.2%	☐ 56.3%
• Learning centers	535	☐ 11.4%	☐ 50.3%	☐ 38.3%	548	☐ 6.8%	☐ 38.0%	☐ 55.3%
• Language learning approaches	504	☐ 10.1%	☐ 60.3%	☐ 29.6%	522	☐ 7.1%	☐ 50.0%	☐ 42.9%
• Strategies for using manipulatives	536	☐ 5.2%	☐ 48.5%	☐ 46.3%	550	☐ 1.6%	☐ 31.5%	☐ 66.9%
• Inquiry-based instruction	494	☐ 14.0%	☐ 64.0%	☐ 22.1%	506	☐ 9.5%	☐ 53.2%	☐ 37.4%
• Project-based instruction	497	☐ 18.3%	☐ 61.4%	☐ 20.3%	511	☐ 11.9%	☐ 58.1%	☐ 29.9%
• Technology as a learning tool	530	☐ 11.9%	☐ 66.2%	☐ 21.9%	535	☐ 4.9%	☐ 51.0%	☐ 44.1%
• Lessons that incorporate the North Carolina Standard Course of Study	538	☐ 5.8%	☐ 39.6%	☐ 54.6%	556	☐ 1.4%	☐ 24.1%	☐ 74.5%
• Strategies for increasing parental involvement	537	☐ 12.8%	☐ 63.7%	☐ 23.5%	556	☐ 9.0%	☐ 57.7%	☐ 33.3%
• Specific strategies for teaching English language learners	521	☐ 30.7%	☐ 51.6%	☐ 17.7%	536	☐ 22.0%	☐ 50.0%	☐ 28.0%
• Specific strategies for teaching students with disabilities	529	☐ 21.0%	☐ 58.4%	☐ 20.6%	547	☐ 16.5%	☐ 55.0%	☐ 28.5%

9. How would you describe the overall purpose(s) of the 5-day contract extension professional development that has been or is being offered at your school? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=597**

☐ To assist all teachers in developing new teaching methods strategies	**76.4%**
☐ To prepare K-3 teachers in working with students in a smaller class setting	**46.6%**
☐ To assist all teachers in planning and implementing an extended school year	**44.9%**
☐ To support this school's overall plan for improving student achievement	**86.6%**
☐ To support an overall plan for District improvement	**45.9%**
☐ To improve parental involvement in this school	**48.2%**
☐ To assist all teachers in improving general class management	**63.5%**
☐ Other (specify):	**3.7%**
☐ Don't know/not sure	
☐ Not applicable – This school has not provided contract extension PD	

Section IV - Extended School Year Initiative for Students

1. How has or will this school extend the school year by five additional days for students in grades K-5? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=576**

☐ By providing additional instructional days during the regular school year (e.g., on weekends, during traditional school year holidays or breaks)	**53.1%**
☐ By providing additional instructional days that extend the regular school year (e.g., on summer vacation days)	**50.9%**
☐ By providing additional instructional days both during the regular school year and through an extended school year	**42.7%**
☐ Other (specify):	**3.3%**
☐ Don't know/not sure	
☐ Not applicable – This school is not implementing an extended school year program ≡ **Skip to Section V**	

2. How would you describe the content or instructional focus that has been or is being planned for the extended school year initiative for students? (Check ***all*** that apply) **N=565**
   - ☐ An extension of what is being taught during the regular school day **86.9%**
   - ☐ Enrichment activities that are not part of the regular school day curriculum **37.3%**
   - ☐ Other (specify): **2.3%**
   - ☐ Don't know/not sure

3. From your knowledge, how well has the 5-day contract extension professional development prepared teachers and/or other school staff to implement the extended school year initiative? (Check ***only one*** response) **N=541**
   ☐ Not at all **11.6%** ☐ Partially **28.5%** ☐ Adequately **48.8%** ☐ Fully **11.1%**
   ☐ Don't know

Section V - Effectiveness of Implementation

1. How effective was the implementation of the HP Schools Initiative in your school in terms of:

	Not at all effective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	Don't know	Not applicable
• Reconfiguration/expansion of existing physical space **(N=491)**	☐ **34.0%**	☐ **38.3%**	☐ **27.7%**	☐	☐
• Reducing class size for particular groups of children **(N=709)**	☐ **7.1%**	☐ **29.6%**	☐ **63.3%**	☐	☐
• Obtaining qualified teachers for each newly created class **(N=645)**	☐ **15.5%**	☐ **35.7%**	☐ **48.8%**	☐	☐
• Improving students' academic achievement (grades K-3) **(N=643)**	☐ **7.8%**	☐ **40.4%**	☐ **51.8%**	☐	☐
• Improving students' academic achievement (all grade levels) **(N=660)**	☐ **8.2%**	☐ **42.9%**	☐ **48.9%**	☐	☐
• Increasing parental involvement in the classroom or school **(N=664)**	☐ **35.7%**	☐ **46.2%**	☐ **18.1%**	☐	☐

2. What changes (positive or negative) have taken place at your school as a result of the implementation of the High Priority Schools Initiative?

3. Finally, what changes can you suggest to improve the implementation of the different HP Schools Initiatives?

Thank you for completing this survey.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

High-Priority Schools Evaluation --- Annotated Parent Survey
High Priority Elementary School
(N=633)

The Department of Public Instruction would like to know how you feel about the education your child is getting at Clark Street Elementary School. Thinking about your child who is in grades K-3 and what the classroom is like where they spend most of their school day, please answer the questions below.

We appreciate your cooperation, and encourage you to answer as honestly and completely as possible. Please know that the survey is anonymous, and that all of your answers will remain strictly confidential.

Please return your completed survey in the attached postage paid envelope by next Friday.

GRADE LEVEL: **(N=531)**

Grade	Number	Percent
Pre-Kindergarten	9	1.7%
Kindergarten	104	19.6%
1st grade	95	17.9%
2nd grade	99	18.6%
3rd grade	126	23.7%
4th grade	50	9.4%
5th grade	45	8.5%
6th grade	3	0.6%

		☐ AGREE	☐ DISAGREE	☐ DO NOT KNOW
1.	My child gets individual help from the classroom teacher when needed. (N=629)	**501 (79.7%)**	**68 (10.8%)**	**60 (9.5%)**
2.	My child is comfortable asking questions in class. (N=627)	**478 (76.2%)**	**84 (13.4%)**	**65 (10.4%)**
3.	My child's classroom teacher often has the students learning through group activities. (N=627)	**481 (76.7%)**	**29 (4.6%)**	**117 (18.7%)**
4.	Students in my child's class mostly work on their own individual assignments. (N=624)	**348 (55.8%)**	**87 (13.9%)**	**189 (30.3%)**
5.	I am well informed about what is happening in my child's class. (N=629)	**534 (84.9%)**	**75 (11.9%)**	**20 (3.2%)**
6.	My child's classroom teacher has high expectations for the students in the class. (N=627)	**529 (84.4%)**	**38 (6.1%)**	**60 (9.6%)**
7.	There are too many students in my child's class. (N=625)	**111 (17.8%)**	**444 (71.0%)**	**70 (11.2%)**
8.	My child's classroom teacher quickly answers my questions or returns my phone calls. (N=629)	**547 (87.0%)**	**65 (10.3%)**	**17 (2.7%)**
9.	My child's classroom teacher is well qualified and prepared to teach. (N=627)	**526 (83.9%)**	**36 (5.7%)**	**65 (10.4%)**

10.	My child's regular classroom teacher has a good understanding of my child's strong points and difficulties. **(N=630)**	**539 (85.6%)**	**57 (9.0%)**	**34 (5.4%)**
11.	Student interruptions are a problem in my child's class. **(N=620)**	**166 (26.8%)**	**244 (39.4%)**	**210 (33.9%)**
12.	My child's regular classroom teacher is willing to spend extra time with my child. **(N=627)**	**427 (68.1%)**	**88 (14.0%)**	**112 (17.9%)**
13.	I am sometimes invited to volunteer in my child's classroom. **(N=624)**	**487 (78.0%)**	**104 (16.7%)**	**33 (5.3%)**
14.	I feel welcome in my child's classroom. **(N=625)**	**575 (92.0%)**	**37 (5.9%)**	**13 (2.1%)**
15.	I feel welcome when I visit my child's school. **(N=616)**	**577 (93.7%)**	**32 (5.2%)**	**7 (1.1%)**
16.	The principal at this school has high expectations for my child. **(N=617)**	**477 (77.3%)**	**37 (6.0%)**	**103 (16.7%)**
17.	I usually see the principal when I visit the school. **(N=615)**	**445 (72.4%)**	**156 (25.4%)**	**14 (2.3%)**
18.	Parents are usually able to see the principal when needed. **(N=614)**	**505 (82.2%)**	**56 (9.1%)**	**53 (8.6%)**
19.	The school staff is generally friendly and helpful. **(N=617)**	**558 (90.4%)**	**42 (6.8%)**	**17 (2.8%)**
20.	I receive timely information about school activities. **(N=609)**	**532 (87.4%)**	**70 (11.5%)**	**7 (1.1%)**
		□ YES	**□ NO**	**□ DO NOT KNOW**
21.	I know that this school has lowered the number of students in each class in grades K through 3. **(N=618)**	**279 (45.1%)**	**39 (6.3%)**	**300 (48.5%)**
22.	Classes in grade 4 and 5 should have fewer children. **(N=615)**	**257 (41.8%)**	**64 (10.4%)**	**294 (47.8%)**
23.	I know that this school has extended the school year for the children by five additional days (e.g., during teacher workdays or at the beginning or end of the school year). **(N=619)**	**380 (61.4%)**	**42 (6.8%)**	**197 (31.8%)**
24.	The extended school year program benefits my child. **(N=607)**	**383 (63.1%)**	**86 (14.2%)**	**138 (22.7%)**
25.	Please use the space below to provide additional comments about your child's class or school:			

Thank you very much for participating in our survey!

District-Level Stakeholder Interview Protocols

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Evaluation of High-Priority Schools Initiative

Interview Questions for District Finance Officer

1. Can you describe the functions of the District Finance Officer?

2. Who is the person(s) responsible for developing and administering the overall school budget at the school level? The principal, others?

   a. Within each school, are there separate budgets that are maintained for grants or other funding sources? If so, who is the person responsible(s) for administering those budgets?

   b. Is the principal aware of the size of the budget he/she has to manage?

   c. To what extent is the principal able to be flexible with the school budget?

      i. In the end all dollars are green; that is, if the school principal has left over categorical or other types of dollars which he/she cannot use, can these funds be turned into the district to get another type of dollar to pay for some specific need?

      ii. At the end of the school year, are principals able to keep any surpluses they have in any type of fund?

      iii. Are principals able to transfer funds from one purpose to another?

      iv. If schools raise their own funds or receive funding from outside sources, are they allowed to use these monies in any way they deem appropriate?

   d. Are principals able to purchase materials and equipment that they need without prior district approval?

   e. Are principals able to exchange one vacant position for another type of position?

3. Can you describe the general process used to allocate State funds to the schools in your District?

4. In general, over the last three years, has there been an increase in State funding apart from the HP legislative funding to individual schools districts above and beyond what would be normally allocated when there is an increase in student enrollment?

5. Again, thinking about the last three years, regardless of the source of the funding, has there been an increase in State funding apart from the HP legislative funding earmarked for professional development?

6. Your District was awarded special State funding as a result of the High Priority Schools Initiative. Can you describe the process that was used to allocate these monies to the HP school(s) to support --- (1) reduced class size; (2) extension of teacher contracts for professional development; (3) the extended school year initiative; and (4) the hiring of one additional instructional staff position?

a. How did this process differ (if at all) from the process generally used to allocate resources to the schools in your District?
b. Were the HP schools in your District able to make decisions regarding the use of the legislative resources in terms of planning content/scope of PD offered, programming of extended school year, and hiring the additional instructional staff member? If not, how was it determined how these funds were utilized?

7. We understand that [INSERT NAME OF HP SCHOOL] currently receives Federal [insert names of funding sources and/or programs], and State [insert names of funding sources and/or programs] funding. To the best of your knowledge, to what extent are the HP schools using these other funds to enhance or support the reduced class size, professional development, or the extended school year initiatives?

   a. Are you aware of any other funding or resources that the HP schools receive that I didn't already mention? If so, how are the schools using these funds? Are there any additional examples that show how the HP schools are using other funding sources to support the cost of CSR, related PD, or the extended school year program?
   b. Has your District or any of the HP schools used Title 1 funds to support reduced class size? If so, how have they been used?

8. In your opinion, were the HP schools in your District provided with sufficient resources by the State to meet the needs associated with these four initiatives their educational needs? If not, what is lacking?

9. Aside from the HP legislative initiative, has your District implemented reduced class size in other schools?
   a. If so, how did the district pay for reduced class size? Please the name particular funding sources used by the District.
   b. In how many schools was this implemented?
   c. When was it implemented?
   d. By approximately how students were the class sized reduced?

10. Does your District have a budget or set of funds specifically earmarked for professional development?
    a. If so, to what extent did the District use its PD funds to support or enhance the legislatively prescribed PD that was required of the HP schools?
    b. If not, what types of district-wide PD initiatives did the District offer that would support the HP schools efforts to implement CSR (e.g., individualized instruction, alternative assessment)?

11. Did the District provide the HP schools with any extra funding for PD to help support their efforts to implement reduced class size or extended school year programming? If so, how much?

12. Finally, are there any other issues related to the HP Initiative (from a funding perspective) that you believe are important or could inform the evaluation?

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Evaluation of the High-Priority Schools Initiative

Interview Guide for Directors of Instruction
(or other District Staff Person Responsible for Overseeing/Monitoring the HP Initiative)

Introduction/Background Information

As you may know, DPI has asked Metis Associates to conduct an evaluation of the initiatives being implemented by the State's High-Priority Schools in response to recent legislation passed by the North Carolina General Assembly. The evaluation will look at both the implementation of the initiatives designed to support these schools (e.g., class size reduction, extended teacher contracts, extended school year, additional instructional support) and at the effects these initiatives are having on student performance. The results of this evaluation will be used by NCDPI to inform their work with the schools in the State.

As part of the evaluation, Metis is conducting interviews with District-level staff who have oversight responsibility for the HP Initiative in their District. The questions I have for you should take about a ½ hour to complete. If you do not mind, I would like to tape record our conversation so that I do not miss anything that you have to say. Please be assured that all of the information you provide will be strictly confidential, never attributed to any one individual, and *only* reported in an aggregated manner. Do you have any questions before I begin?

1. To begin, can you describe what your role is in relation to the High Priority Schools Initiative in your District? Are there particular activities (e.g., reporting requirements, fiscal oversight, implementation oversight) for which you are responsible to the State as part of the HP Initiative? What support or technical assistance do you provide to the HP schools?

2. Your District has **** schools, insert names of schools, which were designated as High Priority (HP). For each school, to what extent have the four legislatively-prescribed initiatives that been realized ---
   - (1) Reduced class size in grades K-2;
   - (2) Extension of teacher contracts for professional development;
   - (3) The extended school year initiative; and
   - (4) The hiring of one additional instructional support position

   [***Note: If respondent indicates that an initiative has not been implemented at a particular HP school, probe for reasons why this occurred***]

3. In your opinion, were the HP schools provided with sufficient resources (either funding or technical assistance regarding implementation) by the State to assist these schools in implementing these four initiatives? If not, what was lacking?

4. How well has NCDPI communicated expectations about the HP initiatives to the District? How was this done (e.g., group meetings, individual, memos)? How about to the HP schools?

5. What role did the District play in communicating expectations about the HP initiatives to each of its HP schools?

6. What efforts were implemented by the District to ensure that principals at the HP schools

understood what funds were available to help them implement the four initiatives?

7. What effects has the implementation of the HP Initiative had on policy either at the District or school level? What examples of this can you provide?

8. What were the unexpected costs (if any) associated with the implementation of each of these initiatives? How were these unexpected costs absorbed?

9. What problems (if any) did the HP schools face in finding appropriate space to create enough classrooms for the reduction in numbers of students per teacher as specified in the legislation? What strategies were used to find facilities for new classrooms (e.g., portables, reconfigured art or other specialty rooms)?

10. To what extent did the HP schools or the District have difficulty finding qualified, licensed teachers to staff the additional classes in grades K-2? Of those who were hired through the HP allotment, how many were licensed? How many were new teachers with no or little prior experience?

11. Was your District able to keep the teaching assistant positions in the HP schools despite the loss of allocation for those positions in grades K-3? If so, how?

12. In your opinion, have the benefits of class size reduction outweighed the loss of the teaching assistant allocations in grades K-3?

13. Since the High Priority legislation was passed in 1999-2000, have any of your HP schools received technical assistance from the State?

    - ***If yes***: What is your opinion of the technical assistance that has been or is being provided by the State Technical Assistance Team to the HP schools? What is the connection between the technical assistance and the schools' efforts to implement the different HP initiatives? What (if anything) could be done to improve the services provided by the State Technical Assistance Team to the HP schools?

    - ***If no***: What this assistance ever offered to the HP schools in your District? What why was the assistance not accepted?

14. How was the content or curriculum determined for the five-day teacher contract extension professional development? To what extent did you or the District influence or provide input into the content of the training? ***If applicable, ask:*** Did this process vary by school or was it the same for each HP school?

15. What efforts, if any, were undertaken to ensure that the professional development was designed to enhance instruction in a reduced class size setting? [Probe for content of the PD]

16. What assistance, if any, did the District provide to the HP schools to support the implementation of these five professional development days (e.g., additional money, staff developers, supplies)?

17. We understand that one additional instructional staff person was to be hired and placed at the HP schools. What is the job title of the person who was hired to fill this position? What process was used to determine what type of additional staff position was allocated to each HP school? Was this position the same or different for each HP school?

18. In your opinion, to what extent has the HP Initiative contributed to improved academic achievement or greater classroom learning at the HP schools? How has the HP Initiative helped to improve skills of classroom teachers in grades K-3 at the target schools? What other changes have you observed either at the HP schools (or at the District level) that you attribute to the HP Initiative?

19. What recommendations do you have for changes or improvements in the HP Initiative? Would you recommend that some or all aspects be continued? If so, in what form? If not, why not?

20. Are there any additional topics or issues pertaining to the HP Schools Initiative that you feel might inform the evaluation about which I did not already ask?

Thank you very much for your time!