We hope you are enjoying the summer. We have two important announcements. Dr. Donna McCaw, our associate editor, has retired after twelve years working at the department. Dr. Jess House, our department chair, is leaving us after chairing the department for four years. We thank both for their contributions to the development of this publication and wish them best of luck in their new ventures.

We are delighted to introduce you to the third issue of Spotlight on Research. In this issue we present doctoral dissertation abstracts with topics ranging from Response to Intervention to the Everyday Mathematics curriculum, to Comprehensive School Reform programs, to leadership strategies and management techniques.

Dr. Chad Allaman’s dissertation examined the effect of Response to Intervention on student achievement. In addition to reviewing the performance of all students, special attention was given to the performance of economically disadvantaged students.

Focusing on rural school mathematics performance, Dr. Michael Grady’s dissertation compared the Everyday Mathematics curriculum to traditional programs and evaluated the effects on student mathematics achievement.

Dr. James McEnroe’s dissertation utilized longitudinal achievement data from mandated standardized tests to investigate the effects of the various federally funded Comprehensive School Reform program models on student performance.

Do leadership strategies and management techniques represent two distinct constructs? Dr. Sarah Willey’s dissertation explored this question. Her study went on to examine the relationship between leadership strategies, management techniques, and student achievement.

With the increased accountability of schools, it is not surprising that the studies presented in this issue all emphasize student achievement. We hope you find them relevant, and we value the opportunity to share these recently completed doctoral dissertation research studies. Please feel free to share these publications with your colleagues or to contact us or the authors about their research. We would be happy to hear from you.

Dr. Bridget Sheng (Editor)
Dr. Lloyd Kilmer (Associate Editor)
The Effect of Response to Intervention on Student Achievement in Selected Illinois Elementary Schools

Author: Chad H. Allaman, Superintendent, Central School District #51

Abstract
Utilizing quantitative data analysis to discern causal-comparative relationships between a school district that implemented Response to Intervention (RtI) and a non-RtI school district, the study examined DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency scores from a sample consisting of students from the RtI pilot school and students in a demographically similar school that did not pilot RtI over a two year period (2006-2007 and 2007-2008). In addition to reviewing the performance of all students, attention was given to the differential performance between boys and girls and between disadvantaged and economically advantaged students.

Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation and confidence levels about the mean were used to study the demographic information. Inferential statistics utilized in the study involved a mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with three between-subjects variables (RtI, gender, and economically disadvantaged status) and one within-subjects variable (time) to assess the study hypotheses. Power analyses were performed using G*Power software, and results indicated that a total sample size of 170 was adequate to detect a medium-size effect (f=0.25).

Results for four of the hypotheses tested utilizing the mixed analysis of variance did not reflect statistical significance. Findings were counter to the expectation that districts with RtI programs would realize significant achievement gains compared to districts without RtI programs. Two hypotheses that were supported by the study relate to time effect and its impact on achievement for all students and time effect and its impact on achievement between economically disadvantaged students and economically advantaged students. For both hypotheses, the effect of time was favorable. Overall student achievement increased significantly over the two years of the study, and economically advantaged students’ beginning and ending scores were significantly higher than economically disadvantaged students’ scores over the same two-year period.

Practical Implication
Knowledge gained from the study provides insight in regard to whether Response to Intervention programs implemented in Illinois elementary schools impact student achievement. The study serves as a conceptual framework for future studies evaluating Response to Intervention programs and their impact on other components of public education, such as teacher training and professional development.

Citation
who received the entire K-6 Everyday Mathematics curriculum were compared to students who were taught exclusively using a traditional mathematics curriculum and those who were taught exclusively a traditional mathematics curriculum supplemented by Mountain Math through sixth grade. The results of this study indicated that the K-6 Everyday Mathematics curriculum did not outperform the traditional or modified traditional curriculum on the sixth grade ISAT mathematics test.

Practical Application
The importance of this study is multifaceted. Rural schools understand the importance of mathematics education so that their students can compete on national and international levels. The current research on Everyday Mathematics has focused on urban settings. This study adds to the research base on rural mathematics instruction by comparing a constructivist mathematics curriculum to traditional programs.

Citation
Management Techniques and Student Performance as Perceived by Superintendents in Illinois School Districts: A Replication and an Extension of Byrd’s 2000 Study

Author: Sarah A. Willey, Superintendent, Riverdale School District #14

Abstract
This study was an examination of the role of the superintendent in student success in school districts within Illinois. Only unit districts were included to remain consistent with the design of the study being extended and contribute to generalization. Participants were asked to respond to six demographic and 29 topical questions designed to assess their use of leadership and management practices in their districts.

The study had several purposes: (1) to determine whether there is a significant relationship between leadership strategies and management techniques, (2) to replicate Byrd’s examination of the leadership strategies employed by the district superintendent to determine their relationship to student academic achievement, (3) to replicate Byrd’s examination of the management techniques employed by the district superintendent to determine their relationship to student academic achievement, and (4) to replicate Byrd’s examination of the demographic data of the school districts to determine whether selected demographic data affect leadership strategies and management techniques in relation to student achievement.

Descriptive statistics were generated and correlational analysis was used to identify relationships between the identified leadership strategies, management techniques, and student achievement growth. Structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the relation between leadership strategies and management techniques as well as the relationships between selected demographics variables. Correlational analysis found a significant correlation between the factors of leadership strategies and management techniques. No significant relationships were found between the variables of leadership strategies, management techniques, and student achievement. The study found a very weak but statistically significant effect of gender on management techniques, suggesting further investigation may be warranted.

Practical Implication
Since this study found very little evidence of a relationship between the behaviors of the superintendent and student achievement, it must be interpreted with caution. Current research is indicating that the leadership of the superintendent may well have an effect on student achievement. Research indicates that both leadership and management functions are necessary for the CEO of a school district to operate; however, they may be difficult to measure discretely and accurately. In our current political climate of criticism of public education, it is critical that we understand these functions and can defend our choices of both people and behaviors.

Citation