An analysis of parent, student, and staff satisfaction with supplemental educational services (SES) to improve student achievement among at-risk high school students in failing schools

Cynthia A. Williams-LaNier

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An Analysis of Parent, Student, and Staff Satisfaction with Supplemental
Educational Services (SES) to Improve Student Achievement
Among At-Risk High School Students in Failing Schools

By
Cynthia A. Williams-LaNier

Dissertation
Submitted to the College of Education
Eastern Michigan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
Educational Leadership and Counseling

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. William J. Price, Chair
Dr. Theresa Saunders
Dr. Jackie Tracy
Dr. David Clifford

December 2014
Ypsilanti, Michigan
Dedication

I wish to express my most profound love and gratitude to my mother,

Mrs. Lena Arzetta Williams.

From this fine and noble lady, I was given a
depth of conviction and love for family and all humanity.
Without her guidance and examples of honesty, forthrightness, and introspection,
this dissertation would be non-existent.
Though her flame of life has been extinguished,
the glow of her strength and beauty shall live forever.
And thanks again, Mama, for you are truly “the wind beneath my wings.”

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to
my deceased father, Finis Williams, Sr., and
my deceased grandparents,
Mama Carrie, Papa, Mama Ada B, and B. H.
I will always stand on your shoulders!!
Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge my dissertation committee, Dr. William Price, Dr. Theresa Saunders, Dr. Jaclynn Tracy, and Dr. David Clifford. Through your patience and guidance, this dissertation has finally come to completion. I would also like to thank Drs. Helen Ditzhazey, Charles Achilles, Yvonne Anthony, Nora Martin, Alison Harmon, and Yvonne Calloway for their assistance as I made my journey through coursework and preliminary work on my dissertation.

Thank you to the administrator, staff, tutors, parents, and students at Alkebu-lan Village for their participation in the study. Without your help this study could not have been completed.

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A heartfelt thank you goes out to my family for their patience, prayers, and perseverance during my dissertation journey. Raynard LaNier I, Raynard LaNier II, RaiAda LaNier, and TeResa LaNier, your love and conscientious steadfast support have been immeasurable. Finis Williams, Jr., Charles Williams, Sr., Sheila Peck, Teresa Taylor, and Craig Williams, you have all been the best group of motivating siblings for which anyone could ever wish. Thanks to my god-daughter, Megan Michelle Morris, my Aunts Alice Perry and Annette Bradford, my Uncle Bennie Greene, all of my nieces, nephews, cousins, other aunts and uncles, my OU “just friends”
group members (especially Robert “H. P.” Thornton and Anthony “Ahmed” Thornton) for always just believing in me and my potential.
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine parent, student, administrator, and staff satisfaction with supplemental education services (SES) provided at a small, nonprofit, community-based, African-centered program (Alkebu-lan Village) that focused on improving English language arts and mathematics achievement among at-risk high school students. Alkebu-lan Village, an SES provider, offered an integrated comprehensive program that combined academic tutoring with breakfast and lunch, as well as social and physical activities.

A mixed methods study was conducted to determine if participation in a SES (Alkebu-lan Village) improved high school students’ reading and mathematics achievement. Student records were used to obtain the pre and post scores on the Wide Range Achievement Test. Parents, students, tutors, staff, and the program administrator participated in focus groups to determine satisfaction with the services provided by Alkebu-lan Village.

The major findings of the study indicated that student achievement improved significantly from the start to completion of their programs with a mean gain of 1.5 grade levels in reading and 1.4 grade-levels gain in math. Parents’ responses to a satisfaction survey provided support that parents were happy with the program. The outcomes related to the focus group interviews indicated that parents, students, tutors, and staff were generally satisfied with the program. Results indicated that the program could benefit from additional funding to help with transportation and more tutors. The primary limitation of this study was the use of one SES. Additional research should use student outcomes and focus groups from more than one SES to obtain a more comprehensive view of the effects of participation in an SES to improve student achievement.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine parent, administrator, and staff satisfaction with supplemental education services (SES) provided at a small, nonprofit, community-based, African-centered program (Alkebu-lan Village) that focused on improving English language arts and mathematics achievement among at-risk high school students. This mixed methods study contributed to academic and scholarly research on the contribution of SES factors to changes in at-risk African American high school students’ academic outcomes. The study collected data from parent, staff, student, and administrator focus groups to measure satisfaction with the program, as well as changes in reading, English language arts, and math outcomes.

The ultimate objective of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 (Public Law No. 107-110) was to eliminate achievement disparities by the 2013-14 school year. Schools are being held to a uniform performance goal and accountability measures aimed at accelerating the achievement of minority and low-income students (Kim & Sunderman 2005). In 2002, civil rights advocates praised NCLB for its emphasis on improving education for students of color, those living in poverty, new English language learners, and students with disabilities (Darling-Hammond 2007). Recognizably, school districts with high poverty, located in urban cities, with high percentages of students with disabilities, or with high percentages of English language learners were more likely to have low high school graduation rates. Also, a dangerously high percentage of students tended to disappear from the educational pipeline before graduating from high school in such districts.

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) was a provision of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as reauthorized by NCLB. Through SES, students from
low-income families could receive extra academic assistance if they attended a Title I school that had not made “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) for at least three years. The theory behind this component of NCLB was that students, particularly low-income and minority students in low-performing schools, could improve academically, but schools and districts also could improve as a result of competition for students, status, and resources.

NCLB and the United States Department of Education required states and districts to fulfill distinct roles in SES implementation. Each state was charged with identifying schools that did not make AYP and schools that had been identified as in need of improvement, corrective action or restructuring. Each state developed its own SES application and criteria (Steinberg 2006). States were responsible for soliciting, screening, and approving providers and for producing an updated list based on providers’ performance records. States were required to monitor each approved provider by evaluating the organization’s effectiveness in increasing students’ achievement for two consecutive years, as well as services complying with applicable federal, state, and local health, safety, and civil rights requirements. States also monitored SES providers’ instructional programs to determine if the services delivered match those described in the providers’ applications to the state. Depending on specific interests and resources, states could examine whether providers were meeting expectations related to:

- Tutors’ experience and qualifications
- The amount of tutoring time students receive
- The teaching strategies used
- Instructional grouping and student-tutor ratio
- Communication with teachers and parents
- Promised transportation of students to and from tutoring.
Children from low-income families enrolled in Title I schools and districts whose students had not made AYP for three years or more either had a choice to transfer to a school that had made AYP or remain in their present school and receive SES tutorial services in English language arts and/or mathematics. Districts with schools that had not made test score targets under NCLB had to set aside a percentage of their Title I funds for after-school programming also known as SES. Parents of eligible children selected an SES vendor from a list approved by the State. The district paid the firms directly from Title I funds.

The focus on parental choice placed important emphasis on parents’ knowledge and understanding of their child’s education needs. An important tenet of the law was that low-income parents should have the same range of options available to parents who could afford to scan “the marketplace” and select an academic intervention service that met their child’s needs (U. S. Department of Education, 2004).

SES could be provided in multiple forms: one-on-one tutoring, small group prescriptive skill building, individualized gap assessment and remediation, small-group drill and practice, computer-based assessment and skill building, interactive e-tutoring on the internet, and internet-based skill-based building with direct feedback (U. S. Department of Education, 2004). This free extra academic help was provided to students in subjects such as reading, language arts and mathematics and could be completed before or after school, on weekends, or during the summer.

Providers of SES included those from the private sector (not-for-profit or for-profit firms), local educational agencies (LEAs), public schools (as long as they were not designated as “needing improvement”), public charter schools, private schools, public or private institutions of higher education, and faith-based organizations. Entities that wanted to be included on the list of
eligible providers must contact their state education agency (SEA) staff and meet the criteria established by the state to be considered for the list of eligible providers.

**State Evaluations of Supplemental Education Services**

SES providers must pass rigorous state and federal evaluations to be able to provide tutoring services for students. Specifically, they must be financially sound; authorized by the Institute for Education Sciences (IES); comply with NCLB and other federal, state, health and safety laws; develop specific achievement goals in consultation with the student and parent; use relevant research-based interventions with students; measure and document student achievement outcomes; regularly inform teachers and parents of the student’s progress (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004).

Ross, Potter, and Harmon (2006) detailed the factors that should be considered when conducting an evaluation of an SES provider. The evaluation should link three dimensions of performance:

1. **Effectiveness.** Measured by changes in student achievement in reading/language arts or mathematics.

2. **Customer satisfaction.** Measured through surveys or interviews with students and parents of students who receive SES.

3. **Service delivery and compliance.** Measured through surveys or interviews with principals, teachers, and school-district staff to determine compliance with applicable laws and contractual procedures associated with the delivery of SES. (p. 19)

According to the “Toolkit for Faith-Based and Community Organizations to Provide Extra Academic Help (Supplemental Education Services)” (U. S. Department of Education, 2003), SES approaches must remain consistent with the content and instruction used by the local
education agency (LEA) and aligned with the state’s academic content standards. In other words, they must be high-quality, research-based, and specifically designed to increase student academic achievement.

Supplemental Educational Services (SES), a core aspect of NCLB, was designed to raise student achievement through the use of multiple tutoring approaches. SES seeks to address the achievement gap between low-income and minority students and their middle-class counterparts (Steinberg, 2006). SES provided tutoring services to students who otherwise would not be able to afford additional academic services. Historically, meeting the needs of low-income children was a primary reason for such out-of-school programs.

Although SES has been adopted by school districts nationally, limited empirical evidence from rigorous research studies existed that discussed the effectiveness of SES in general or, of specific service providers, in particular (Muñoz, 2008). Muñoz asserted that the positive effects on reading and math obtained from participation in SES programs must be determined because of the high-stakes accountability that was a requirement of NCLB. In fact, educational programs associated with NCLB must meet scientifically-based research standards to ensure that students were exposed to evidence-based approaches, methods, or interventions.

The research literature reported that the evaluation of SES providers was a relatively new and emerging endeavor, and that evaluation models were still evolving. Moreover, researchers found that very few states were evaluating the effectiveness of supplemental service providers in improving student achievement as required by NCLB (Anderson & Laguarda, 2005; Anderson & Weiner, 2004; Hess & Finn, in press; Sunderman & Kim 2004). To date, little in-depth analysis of private sector behavior under SES has been completed (Burch 2007). Specifically, less was
known about program challenges in smaller, urban SES providers with a number of questions remaining about their obstacles to effective implementation.

**Alkebu-lan Village**

The study’s setting was Alkebu-lan Village, a private, nonprofit organization providing SES services to primarily African-American at-risk youth residing in one of Detroit’s poorest neighborhoods. The SES program at this center was in existence for six years, serving students from the Detroit Public Schools and area charter schools. To qualify for participation in the program, the students had to be enrolled in schools that were school-wide Title 1 and had not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) for a minimum of three years.

An annual evaluation of the Alkebu-lan Village SES was completed by the State of Michigan. An overall letter grade was assigned and individual grades were assigned based on student performance, parent satisfaction survey, and teacher responses. The letter grade assigned to the Alkebu-lan Village SES was a B- for the 2009-2010 academic year (Michigan Department of Education, 2010).

For those programs evaluated, one measure of successful SES program implementation was assessing the effects of an SES program on student achievement. The SES program at the Alkebu-lan Village had been evaluated to determine its effectiveness in improving student achievement.

**Problem Statement**

The problem that must be considered in this study was the need for an evaluation of the Alkebu-lan Village SES that reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the program in improving student outcomes. The state assessment lacked the rigor needed to determine the effectiveness of
the program, especially when most of the students could not be assessed because they did not complete MEAP tests because of their grade levels.

To determine which elements of the program satisfied parents and students, their perceptions of strengths and weaknesses inherent in the program and suggestions for making the program more successful, which were obtained using focus groups. Separate focus groups with parents and students could provide an environment that allowed them to speak freely, with the synergy developed in the group meeting adding to the depth of discussion of the structured questions established for the study.

The staff at Alkebu-lan Village were included in the study. The administrator and tutors were directly responsible for providing educational services to students enrolled in their program. Their levels of satisfaction with the program, along with their comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the program were obtained through a focus group discussion guided by the researcher.

In addition, the study compared pretest scores of the WRAT, Slosson, and Brigance standardized tests with the students’ posttest scores to determine change over the 2011-2012 academic year. Changes in a positive direction provided evidence of the effectiveness of the Alkebu-lan Village SES in improving students’ academic outcomes in reading and mathematics.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine parent, student, administrator, and staff satisfaction with SES provided at a small, nonprofit, community-based, African-centered program (Alkebu-lan Village) that focused on improving English language arts and mathematics achievement among at-risk high school students. This evaluation differed from the MDE evaluation in several ways. First, most of the parents of high school students completed the
Alkebu-lan Village parent satisfaction survey and additional information from the focus groups provided in-depth information. The state results were based on the input from one parent.

Second, the students’ satisfaction with the program was not considered in the state assessment of the program. Students, as direct recipients of the tutoring services, needed to be included in determining the effectiveness of the program. The third difference in the evaluation for the present study and the state assessment was the inclusion of the administrators, tutors, and support staff in the evaluation. The state used information from the classroom teachers who were not in direct contact with the tutors on a regular basis, if at all. The input from the tutors could help provide additional information regarding the merit of the program. The final difference was in the comparison of academic achievement for the students. The state evaluation used a single score (MEAP) for reading and math and compared it to the state average. The assessment of the program for the present study used change scores from three standardized assessment tests (Brigance, WRAT, and Slossen) to determine improvement in two areas: reading and English language arts, as well as mathematics. The use of the MEAP was somewhat limited. Students completed the MEAP for reading each year in grades 3 through 9, but the math test was only completed in grades 4 and 7. No attempt was made to determine growth by comparing prior years MEAP reading scores with current year MEAP reading scores for each student. Using the Center for Research in Educational Policy framework (Muñoz, Potter, & Ross, 2006), the following areas are discussed:

*Academic Growth Effectiveness:* Did participation in the Alkebu-lan Village SES program improve student achievement in reading, language arts, and mathematics?
Customer Satisfaction: Are parents, administrators, and staff who were involved in either receiving or providing SES services satisfied with the program and students’ progress in the program?

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are:

1. To what extent did participation in the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES Model contribute to improvement in student achievement in reading/language arts?
2. To what extent did participation in the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES Model contribute to improvement in student achievement in mathematics?
3. Which factors contribute to parent satisfaction with their children’s participation in Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES model?
4. Which factors contribute to students’ satisfaction with their participation in Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES model?
5. Which factors contribute to administrators, tutors, and staff satisfaction with the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES model?

Significance of the Study

Alkebu-lan Village is an African-centered, community-based organization, predominantly staffed by minority instructors and administrators that was used as a resource by minority students and parents. Alkebu-lan Village Tutorial Services was a state-certified SES program that was located within the Detroit Public Schools (DPS) school district and had been in existence since 2005. In 1978, Alkebu-lan Village was founded as the Alkebu-lan Martial Arts Federation. The original purpose of the organization was to provide affordable martial arts training to African American youth. Since its inception, the organization has trained 250,000
individuals in martial arts. Over the years, the organization expanded to include youth and adult sports and fitness, leadership training, visual and performing arts, homework assistance and tutoring, youth entrepreneurship training, and community service.

A relatively new development in education policy, Supplemental Educational Services (SES) remained an area where in-depth analytic work on its character and effects was needed to determine its effectiveness (Burch, 2007). According to Burch (2007), research on SES fell into one of four categories:

1. Internal performance evaluations by SES provider companies to demonstrate program effectiveness in implementing their proprietary online curriculum and assessment programs.
2. Evaluation studies conducted by third party evaluators (i.e., non-district, non-provider entities) providing a broad overview of implementation patterns occurring in local school districts.
3. Evaluation studies conducted by Chicago and Minneapolis school districts providing a more detailed analysis of SES companies.
4. Academic and scholarly research on supplemental education services (e.g., Farkas & Durham 2006; Peterson 2005; Sunderman & Kim 2004)

This mixed-methods study contributed to academic and scholarly research (Category 4), building upon the nascent body of scholarship on SES pertaining to implementation of a single SES program, and its academic impact on African-American at-risk high school students in Detroit.

While the state of Michigan conducted an evaluation of SES programs statewide, their evaluation methods were not comprehensive. If a total of five satisfaction surveys were returned from parents and teachers, the tutoring program received a grade. The lack of information from a
broad cross-section of all stakeholders (parents, students, tutors, administrators, and staff) was not required to determine the effectiveness of the tutoring program in improving student academic outcomes. The present study obtained input from all stakeholders in the tutoring programs to determine satisfaction with the SES program and its impact on learning. In addition, the state evaluation was limited to MEAP scores for students in grades 3 through 9. The study used results from three standardized tests for reading and English language arts, as well as for mathematics for students from 9th through 12th grades. This comprehensive evaluation data provided support for the effectiveness of the Alkebu-lan Village SES.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study did not attempt to isolate individual components of the SES program for their singular effect on student achievement, but rather examined the holistic nature of the program as delivered to students. Further limitations for this research concerned both the scope and data collection of the study. This study examined an African Centered Education Community Center serving a particular geographic area in the city of Detroit. The findings might not be generalizable to other programs located in Detroit or surrounding suburbs.

The sample primarily consisted of African American at-risk students and parents (although a very small number of students are different in terms of race and class). The findings might not be relevant to other racial/ethnic groups of students or parents.

Given these limitations, the findings of this study might not be generalizable or representative of SES implementation throughout the entire state of Michigan. This study, therefore, was intended to provide a detailed understanding of the effectiveness of one African-Centered-Education SES program viewed in its entirety.
Definition of Terms and Abbreviations

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP): According to the Michigan Department of Education AYP is “The measure used to hold schools and districts responsible for student achievement in English language arts and mathematics. AYP is based on Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test results, participation rates in MEAP testing, and attendance or graduation rates” (Michigan DOE, 2011).

African Centered Education (ACE): A philosophy that encourages people to embrace the rich history, culture, and tradition of Africa.

Achievement Gap: The difference in academic performance between students from different economic circumstances and racial/ethnic backgrounds (Education Equality Project, 2010).

Brigance Assessment: Also known as the Brigance Test of Basic Skills or the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revise, this assessment is meant to identify a student's academic level of functioning (i.e., strengths and weaknesses). Subjects assessed in the Brigance are reading decoding, reading comprehension, writing,
listening comprehension and math. Students may be assessed in a group setting or on an individual basis.

**Detroit Public Schools (DPS):** A school district covering the entire city of Detroit, Michigan. The student population of the Detroit Public Schools is about 66,000 (2011-2012 academic year) with the Detroit Public Charter Schools having an additional 56,000 students for a combined total of about 122,000 students (Detroit Public Schools, 2011).

**English Language Learners (ELL):** Students attending U. S. schools with limited English proficiency NCLB requires ELL students attain English proficiency, and meet the same challenging academic standards all students are expected to meet (U. S. Department of Education, 2010).

**Local Education Agencies (LEA):** A school district or entity that operates local public primary and secondary schools within the U.S.

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB):** Simply, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, NCLB has the goal of reducing the wide achievement gap present in the U. S. by demanding that schools have increased accountability for the education of all students, stronger emphasis on
School Improvement (SI) Status: Classification of Title I schools that do not make AYP for at least two consecutive years. Schools who reach SI status are required by federal law to develop plans for student improvement.

Supplemental Education Services (SES): Tutoring or other academic programs operated by state-approved service providers outside of the regular school day and paid for by sanctioned districts. Under NCLB, students who have received free or reduced-price lunches and attend Title I schools that have failed to make AYP for three or more years are entitled to receive SES. Parents are given the right to choose the services from a list of approved providers developed by their state (Blankenship, 2007).

Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT): A standardized word recognition assessment. Orally, and individually-administered to students, students are shown groups of twenty words and asked to pronounce them. The number of words pronounced correctly in each group is used to determine the student's word recognition skills.

Title I: The $12 billion federal government aid program for high-poverty schools, as established under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and now embodied by NCLB. Title I funds math, reading, and science, greater choice for students and parents, improved teacher qualifications, and greater flexibility for state and local constituents in the use of federal funding (Debolt, 2004).
are distributed by state and LEAs to public schools with the highest percentages of students from low-income families, who are often at risk of failing to meet state standards (Blankenship, 2007).

**Underserved Student Populations:**
Students whose educational needs have been traditionally overlooked (i.e., students of color, students with special needs (specifically special education), and ELL students).

**Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT):**
A brief achievement test measuring reading recognition, spelling, and arithmetic computation. Formed in two levels, level I is normed for children ages 5-0 to 11-11; level II is normed for children aged 12 through adults aged 64.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the literature concerning Supplemental Educational Services (SES) to improve student achievement among at-risk high school students in failing schools. The chapter is separated into major topics that begin with an overview of the SES program, the SES provider market, followed by research on student achievement among at-risk high school students and the impact of standardized high-stakes tests on at-risk youth within the context of SES programs. Parent satisfaction with SES programs is then discussed. The chapter concludes with the theoretical framework that connects this research to existing knowledge and guides every aspect of the research from formulation of the research questions through methodology, results, and policy implications.

Overview of Supplemental Educational Services (SES)

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 emerged during the administration of President Lyndon Johnson. This Act was part of his Great Society initiative that was designed to eliminate poverty. Through this Act, the federal government played a part in education through the disbursement of funds to elementary and secondary schools. The funds were distributed through a formula involving the number of students living in poverty in each state.

In 1994, ESEA was reauthorized, resulting in a shift in the extent of federal involvement in education. The government moved from mere compliance with financial assistance and programs to a focus on the academic success of economically disadvantaged students. Title I, Part A of the amended ESEA, provided financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to
ensure that all children would meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds currently are allocated through four statutory formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state (Public Law 107-110, Part A, Subpart 2. Allocations2001).

The Title I program targeted resources primarily to high-poverty districts and schools to help ensure that all children had the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state standards and assessments (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012; Heinrich & Burch, 2011). Under Title I, districts with schools that failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for a third year were required to offer Supplemental Educational Services (SES) to students attending those schools.

SES was additional academic instruction offered outside the regular school day by state-approved providers. SES consisted primarily of tutoring, outside of the regular school day hours. Academic assistance was provided for core subjects, such as reading, language arts, and mathematics, before or after school, on weekends, or during the summer. However, as with nearly any federal program, SES was not always the same everywhere. SES providers offered a variety of services to different-size groups of children for diverse numbers of hours. Models varied from computer-based instruction to one-on-one tutoring. Priority for these academic support services was required to be given to the lowest-achieving students in identified Title I schools, particularly when the number of students participating in SES was large enough that costs reached the SES expenditure cap (Institute of Education Sciences, 2012).

On January 8, 2002, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed into law by President Bush, as a reauthorization of the ESEA. Coming at a time of wide public concern about the state of education, the NCLB legislation set requirements in place to ensure that schools
would be held accountable for the academic progress of every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, income level or zip code. It expanded the federal role in education and took particular aim at reducing the achievement gap of disadvantaged students in public education. All public schools receiving Title I funds that failed to meet federal educational standards (i.e., Adequate Yearly Progress [AYP]) for three consecutive years, were required under NCLB to offer low-income students attending these schools two alternatives. Students could either be transferred to another school that was making AYP or receive free supplemental educational services (SES). At the core of the NCLB Act, a number of measures were designed to drive broad gains in student achievement and to hold states accountable for student progress. They are:

- **Annual Testing:** By the 2005-06 school year, states were required to begin testing students in grades 3-8 annually in reading and mathematics. By 2007-08, they had to test students in science at least once in elementary, middle, and high school. The tests had to be aligned with state academic standards.

- **Academic Progress:** States were required to bring all students up to the “proficient” level on state tests by the 2013-14 school year.

- **Report Cards:** Starting with the 2002-03 school year, states were required to furnish annual report cards showing a range of information, including student-achievement data broken down by subgroup and information on the performance of school districts. Districts must provide similar report cards showing school-by-school data.

- **Teacher Qualifications:** By the end of 2005-06 school year, every teacher in core content areas working in a public school had to be “highly qualified” or proficient in each subject he or she taught. Also, all school paraprofessionals paid by Title I funds
had to complete at least two years of college, obtained an associate’s degree or higher, or passed an evaluation to demonstrate knowledge and teaching ability.

- **Reading First**: The Act created a new competitive-grant program, funded at $1.02 billion in 2004, to help states and districts set up “scientific, research-based programs for children in grades K-3 (with priority given to high-poverty areas). [The program’s funding was later cut drastically by Congress].

The Michigan Department of Education (2011) required that supplemental educational services be “high quality, research-based, and specifically designed to increase the academic achievement of eligible children on academic assessments (i.e., Michigan Education Assessment Program [MEAP] tests) and attain proficiency in meeting the State’s academic achievement standards.” (p. 5).

AYP was one of the primary components of the NCLB Act. In Michigan, changes in student achievement on the MEAP test from year-to-year were one of the indicators used to determine AYP. NCLB also required other indicators to be used in determining AYP. For example, attendance rates were used for elementary and middle schools, with graduation rates used for high schools.

In Michigan, AYP applied to each school and district in the state (Michigan Department of Education Provider Handbook, 2011). However, NCLB sanctions concerning schools that did not make AYP for two or more years in a row, only applied to those districts and schools that received Title I funds. Each school received a holistic AYP status, but also received disaggregated AYP status for subgroups of students: race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, limited English proficiency (LEP) and economically disadvantaged. Michigan schools receiving Title 1 funding that failed to meet AYP for a third, fourth or fifth consecutive year must offer
students the option of transferring to another school within the district, or provide supplemental education services (SES) to improve academic outcomes. Those schools that failed in the fourth or fifth year also had to take specific actions to make major changes in the school, such as providing a new curriculum and appropriate professional development, decreasing the school’s decision-making authority, appointing an outside expert to advise the school, or changing the structure of the school. Schools must continue to offer SES until they were no longer identified as needing school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring.

Under NCLB, various guidelines and criteria had been developed for both state and local educational agencies to follow when planning and implementing SES programs. These guidelines included, but are not limited to such items, as approving SES providers, arranging for their services, and managing contracts and financial systems. SES programs also had to meet specific state-mandated criteria regarding tutor qualifications, tutoring session length, instructional strategies, and curricula (Burch, 2009; Burch, Steinberg & Donovan, 2007; Henrich, 2011).

Once a school was required to provide SES services, the district in which it was located was required to provide information about this option to parents of eligible students prior to the beginning of the school year. Such information included a list of state-approved SES providers from which eligible students and their families could choose. States were accountable for monitoring and evaluating SES providers annually. Once families chose a provider, then the district contracted with the provider and paid for its services. When establishing contracts, districts and providers worked together to indicate requirements and expectations of the SES, particularly regarding how “effectiveness in increasing student achievement” would be determined. Once a parent selected a provider for SES, districts developed agreements with tutors. The agreements must include:

- Specific achievement goals for the student,
• Information on how student progress would be measured,
• A timetable for improving achievement, and
• How parents and teachers would be informed about a student’s progress (Public Law 107-110, Title A, Subpart 1, Basic Program Requirements, 2001).

Districts also were responsible for student enrollment in the selected SES program. The district was responsible for local administration of the program, including arranging payment to the individual tutor providers. Such payments were based on a federally defined “per-pupil allocation” typically in the range of $1,200 to $1,500 per student per year (Public Law 107-110, Title A, Subpart 2, Allocations to States, 2001). These payments increased to a maximum of $2,200 per pupil. Districts could provide services, but if a district had been identified as “needing improvement,” it first had to obtain a waiver from the U.S. Department of Education to provide these services. To date, many districts attained a waiver from the U. S. Department of Education and no longer provide SES.

An explicit NCLB requirement made each state responsible for evaluating individual SES providers regarding their effectiveness in improving achievement and satisfying clients (parents, teachers, school leaders; Ross, Paek, & McKay, 2008). Each state was obligated to measure and report provider effectiveness in improving student achievement. According to the Center for Research in Educational Policy and the American Institutes for Research (2006), depending on specific interests and resources, states could examine whether providers are meeting expectations related to:

• Tutors’ experience and qualifications
• The amount of tutoring time students receive
• The teaching strategies used
• Instructional grouping and student–instructor ratios
• Communication with teachers and parents
• Promised transportation of students to and from tutoring

The state was responsible for removing SES providers that were unable to demonstrate gains in student achievement. Depending on the severity of compliance violations, providers could be downgraded from the highest status rating (e.g., full standing) to a lower, probationary status, or in extreme cases, removed. Measures of the SES’s influence on student academic achievement were important to a state’s evaluation of SES providers. This evaluation was especially true because NCLB required that, at a minimum, states remove providers from their approved list if the provider failed to increase student achievement for two consecutive years.

Evaluations of SES providers included students’ scores on yearly achievement assessments, as well as student scores on other valid assessment measures in reading/language arts or math (e.g., an individually administered reading inventory, such as the Woodcock–Johnson test battery or the Durrell Oral Reading test; Center for Research in Educational Policy and the American Institutes for Research, 2006). At minimum, NCLB required that states assess student achievement to determine the provider’s effectiveness in the tutored subjects (reading/language arts and/or mathematics). Some providers developed or implemented their own assessment instruments to measure student progress.

States might include service delivery measures in their SES provider evaluation. Questions about service delivery could include: Did the provider deliver the services it promised with regard to (a) the experience and qualifications of instructors; (b) the amount of tutoring time received by students; (c) instructional strategies used; and (d) its communication with schools, districts, and parents about student progress? Did the provider meet its contractual and legal obligations with the school district? Service delivery measures also address whether a provider
complies with applicable laws and contractual procedures associated with SES, including federal, state, and local health, safety, and civil rights requirements (Center for Research in Educational Policy and the American Institutes for Research, 2006). State evaluation results, in general, indicated mostly positive, but very modest, measureable effects on tutored students compared to demographically matched “control” students (Ross et al., 2008).

**The Current SES Provider Market**

With state and local educational agencies drawing on well-established after-school tutoring programs, supplemental services could be provided through a variety of entities, including: non-profit groups, for-profit companies, local community programs, national organizations, public schools and districts, public charter schools, private schools, public or private institutions of higher education, and faith-based organizations. A potential SES had to meet criteria established by the respective state to be listed as an eligible provider. Consistent with the intent of the law, SES programs were implemented at the local level and relied on the private sector to offer eligible students a range of free tutoring choices outside of regular school hours.

The United States Department of Education reported that a majority of approved tutoring providers were private for-profit and non-profit (88% in 2008), while school districts encompassed approximately 10%, with the remaining 2% comprised of faith-based and other entities. Similarly, the Department’s data showed that most qualifying schools (76%) used private providers compared to using school districts (13%) or others (11%).

The stability of SES programs was questionable and was in a constant state of flux with ever-changing vendors. Since initiation of the program, the SES vendor market had seen many smaller organizations entering into SES only to leave shortly given their inability to attract a
sufficient number of students to meet their expenses. Conversely, the market also had seen its share of providers rapidly increase their revenues by increasing the number of students served.

Some school districts also were trying their hand at being SES providers; however, the provision of SES was conditional on the district making AYP. Still, school districts were held to the same standards as private-sector providers, with district providers often failing to meet the state criteria for SES programs. This market instability complicated state and local educational agency efforts to comply with NCLB requirements in two ways: (a) recognizing providers who provided effective services that were consistent with state and local instructional programs and (b) revoking approval from providers that were unable to improve student achievement for two consecutive years (Heinrich & Burch, 2011).

Theoretically, providers were held accountable primarily for servicing SES through the exercise of provider choice. Participating parents and students were given (and subsequently used) information distributed both by SES providers and school districts in an effort to distinguish which provider could best meet their child’s needs (Heinrich & Burch, 2011). Students apprised of their SES eligibility had the option of registering to participate in the provider program of their choice. SES providers invoiced the total number hours for which students received services to school districts for up to a maximum per-dollar student allocation. If SES programs were implemented to the exact letter of the law, exceptional providers of SES would rise to the top as their share of participating students would increase. Less effective providers could see their share of participating students decline over time. Heinrich and Burch (2011), however, argued that the existing arrangement amounted to being only a cost-reimbursement contract with no existing performance contingencies. Additionally, state educational agencies possessed the sole program authority to make decisions concerning SES,
such as approving SES providers, as well as establishing program criteria (i.e., providing acceptable student/tutor ratios for providers to meet).

An unfortunate consequence of this lack of organization led to an SES reality where instructional practices varied greatly, both between providers, as well as within the same provider depending on the setting and individual tutoring styles (Heinrich & Burch, 2011). This reality presented challenges to efforts made by both state and local agencies to collect and assess additional information on SES program content and effectiveness.

Burch and Good (2009) identified three main features of SES that were important to its effectiveness: (a) activities and resources used in instruction, (b) the nature of interactions between both students and providers, and (c) institutional and structural elements that influence tutoring instructional practices. Ironically, Burch and Good (2009) pointed out that these three key features remained the least visible to states and school districts in need of this information to improve SES programs.

**Evaluation of SES Programs**

The state used results of their parent and teacher surveys to assign a letter grade to each program and to determine continued eligibility of the SES program for the next school year. The letter grade was based on the surveys received from the parents, teachers, and district coordinators. The response rate was very low for these surveys. For example in the 2010-2011 academic year, parent surveys were sent to 25 parents. Of this number, 1 survey was returned for a response rate of 4.0%. Teacher surveys were sent to 25 participants, and 5 usable surveys were returned for a response rate of 20%. A survey was completed by the district coordinator who did not visit the school but relied on information from the monitors who visited Alkebu-lan Village SES two or three times a year. The state’s evaluation of the academic outcomes of students was
based on their MEAP scores for the previous year. The students’ scores were compared to state averages for reading and math. In the report for the 2010-2011 academic year, 16,043 students were receiving services from SES programs. Of this number, assessment of academic achievement was done statewide with 1,519 reading and 1,605 math scores available for analysis. The achievement scores were not analyzed for each SES, but for the state as a whole to determine if SES programs were helping students improve their academic achievement. The letter grade was a weighted function of:

- Parent survey: Responses to two questions:
  - Overall, are you satisfied with this tutor?
  - What overall grade would you give your child’s tutor?
- [Classroom] teacher survey: Responses to one question:
  - The tutor is positively impacting this student’s learning.
- MEAP analysis:
  - Of the students (N = 16,043) who participated in SES programs in the 2010-2011 academic year, MEAP analysis was based on approximately 10% (reading 1,519 students and math 1,605). The other students were eliminated from the analysis because of exclusionary criteria (hours of reporter SES was zero, blank, or less than 1; no UIC was associated with student record; student was not in grades 3-7 in 2009; student grade was not identified; No MEAP record in 2009; No MEAP record in 2010; and student was retained, double-promoted, or had some other nonstandard grade change).
Overall grade: All providers were initially assigned a letter grade of “C” for MEAP performance overall (including those without any data on MEAP impacts). Any single statistically significant finding of positive impact on the MEAP score for any subject at any grade level resulted in a one-grade increase (from “C” to “B”). Additional findings of positive impact resulted in an additional one-grade increase (from “B” to “A”). Statistically significant findings of negative impact similarly managed with grade reductions imposed for each instance of a negative finding. (Michigan Department of Education, 2011, p. 36).

According the MDE (2011), “for the survey-based items, no minimum number of surveys was established; one completed survey was sufficient to establish a grade” (p. 36). As a result, the letter grade assigned by the state might not reflect the success of the SES in improving student outcomes. In addition to the state assessment, Alkebu-lan Village conducted a parent satisfaction survey and a separate student satisfaction survey at the end of the school year. The results were tallied and presented to board of directors and other stakeholders who supported the SES.

**Student Achievement among At-Risk Students**

In American society, the problem of the at-risk student is a growing phenomenon that is becoming the focus of increased attention. According to DeNofa (1993), the term “at-risk” is used to describe a specific group of students who have difficulty in acquiring skills and knowledge that is required to move from high school to college, work, or the military. The difficulty in mastering these skills and knowledge has been attributed to a variety of issues, such as low socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, urban neighborhoods, and poor schools. DeNofa
(1993) suggested that students who were at risk were likely to be “undereducated, unemployable, and economically dependent” (p. 215). In addition, he asserted that these students could become anti-social and encounter social and personal problems as adults.

Youth, who live in poverty, could be disadvantaged, have limited-English proficiency, and/or may be raised in dysfunctional or abusive homes. These children might be at risk of failing in school and in adulthood. Other characteristics used to define a youth at-risk include: minority status, low socioeconomic status, potential dropout, reading below grade level, not meeting requirements for promotion or graduation, and having English as a second language. Additionally, students also were considered at risk if they were attending school in unstable school districts (such as the case in the city of Detroit), living in single-family homes, living with parents who are not high school graduates, and being home alone more than three hours a day (Chesebro et al. 1992). Dropout rates were much higher for minorities, and the numbers of African American students who were college bound have plummeted. Minority students were more likely to be labeled “at risk” than White students (Thornburg & Remeika, 1991).

Approximately one-half of all American adolescents engage in some degree of at-risk activities that may endanger their ability to succeed (deGuzman & Pohlmeier, 2014). Some factors and behaviors that contribute to students’ risk levels include: unsafe sex, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, truancy, and delinquency or criminal actions. These problem behaviors often are related and overlap.

Researchers (Bryant et al. 2003; Caldas & Bankston, 1997; King et al. 2006) found that these factors could have a significant influence on the academic achievement of at-risk students and schools. Most often, these students were not successful and eventually would drop out of school or pursue a GED. Berliner (2009), in particular, viewed poverty as the single most
determining factor in a child’s education that can have a myriad of effects on a child’s life. While students from affluent communities (e.g., Grosse Pointe) presumably have a safe home environment in which all of their fundamental needs are being met (and thus, they are able to focus on schoolwork easily), children from impoverished communities may not have these luxuries, and tend to seek out security before deciding on schoolwork, if at all.

Detroit is one of the most impoverished cities in the United States, with at least 72% of the children considered economically disadvantaged. As of the 2012-2013 academic year, all students in the Detroit Public Schools received free lunch. Compare this outcome to Grosse Pointe Public Schools where 25% of students in the 2012 – 2013 academic year were considered to be economically challenged. Detroit is the largest school system in Michigan and one of the largest in the nation. The majority of students (91%) in the district are African American.

Worley (2007) reported that teacher-student relationships, parent or caregiver-student relationships, socioeconomic status, motivation and peer-influence could improve success for at-risk students. Worley emphasized that academic support in the form of after-school tutoring (such as SES) may help improve academic achievement and have a positive effect on motivation to succeed.

For example, an evaluation by Vanderbilt University and the Rand Corporation found significant and positive effects of SES participation on student test scores in mathematics (Allen 2008; Springer et al. 2009). Moreover, students who received two years or more SES tutoring experienced substantial cumulative impact on test score gains in both mathematics and reading (Springer et al. 2009). Although the results of the Allen (2008) study found increased developmental scores for Title I students who received tutoring in mathematics, no statistically
significant results were found on increased academic achievement for students who received tutoring in reading only or in reading and math.

Chicago Public Schools, in particular, found that SES participants experienced a 5% greater reading gain and a 13.2% greater mathematics gain than would have been expected had they not participated in SES (Chicago Public Schools, Office of Research, Evaluation and Accountability, 2007). Results showed that student achievement in math was directly influenced by the number of hours in SES instruction, and that SES-served students with disabilities achieved more substantial gains in reading and math than students without disabilities.

A study by the U.S. Department of Education found that, on average, across seven large urban districts, participation in SES had a statistically significant effect on students’ achievement in mathematics (a gain of 0.09 standard deviations) and reading (a gain of 0.08 standard deviations). The study reported that, when compared, achievement gains by students served by district and nondistrict providers varied and showed no specific pattern (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

However, Salling (2012) used a variety of methodologies and reported no statistically significant effects on student achievement, when comparing SES participants with eligible nonparticipants. Both district staff and researchers have encountered many challenges when attempting to evaluate student- and provider-level SES effects appropriately. Nevertheless, Portland Public Schools (2010) confirmed a strong relationship between the intensity of SES or the number of hours of SES attended, and its effectiveness. SES provider hourly rates directly influence the number of hours of SES students can attend.
Standardized Tests

Education research consistently has found that socioeconomic factors have a significant influence on standardized test results. For example, at-risk students tend to show persistent patterns of underachievement. Most often, students at-risk fail to meet minimal standards on state comprehensive assessment tests. Evidence is displayed in standardized test scores where minority students, including African-American and Hispanic students, score significantly lower on standardized tests than nonminority students (Wilhelm, Hillocks & Smith, 2005). Additionally, poverty and gender contribute to the achievement gap with minority students. In contrast to policy aims developed to help promote the “well-being” of all learners and “equity” within the educational systems, at-risk youth may feel “shame” and show further marginalization due to this testing mechanism.

NCLB mandates that every child will be successful and perform at a certain level of academic excellence. NCLB requires that children from the four challenging subgroups (i.e., low socioeconomic status, minority, English as a second language, and students with disabilities) succeed on standardized tests. Three of these four subgroups encompass student groups that are considered at-risk. Research is needed on NCLB outcomes, such as this study, that examined the role of SES as a contributor to academic success of at-risk students.

Evaluation of SES Programs

Given its scope and detail, the No Child Left Behind Act has been the source of considerable controversy and debate in the education community. Some educators and policymakers have questioned the feasibility and fairness of its goals and timeframes. Concerns have focused particularly on its rules surrounding adequate yearly progress (AYP) and the goal of 100% proficiency by 2013-14. By 2010, 38% of schools were failing to meet AYP, up from
29% in 2006. In 2011, the United States Secretary of Education issued dire warnings that 82% of schools would be labeled “failing” that year. In actuality, some states saw failure rates of over 50% (McNeil, 2011).

Evaluations of SES and/or provider-specific effects are notably deficient in many states and school districts. Some states and districts rely only on information self-reported by providers or from relatively weak data-collection efforts, such as parent satisfaction rates from voluntarily completed surveys (with very low and selective participation). Few school districts have in-house capabilities to apply rigorous approaches to evaluating the impact of SES programs on student achievement and other metrics (Heinrich & Burch, 2011).

Much of the published research focusing on potential benefits and costs of both NCLB and SES have begun to surface and evolve in recent years. According to Burch, Steinberg, and Donovan (2007), a large component of this research focused primarily on how city and county governmental organizations are meeting the mandates of these laws. However, despite the existing literature available, comprehensive research on supplemental educational services remains limited. Many scholars have attributed this lack of research on SES being a recent innovation in education (Burch et al., 2007).

The existing research on SES can be divided into four categories: internal performance evaluations by SES provider companies; evaluation studies by third parties (i.e. non-district, non-provider entities); evaluation studies conducted by local school districts; and academic and scholarly research (Burch et al., 2007). Although literature is emerging on the quality, access, and equity that are claimed within the priorities of the federal law, some limitations still exist concerning research on SES, particularly when looking through the lens of SES programs provided through after school and weekend programs.
One such concern would be the noticeable absence in many states and school districts of comprehensive evaluations on the specific effects of SES and its providers on student achievement. This absence may be due to the lack of a standardized reporting system that holds both providers and districts accountable. The current situation is twofold. On one side, some states and districts rely on information-poor data that are collected from either providers’ self-reports or weak data-gathering efforts with very low and/or selective participation. Conversely, some districts try to make the best of data they have collected on students by referring to “hard-numbered” data that include, but are not limited to, SES student attendance and invoices from SES-operating providers. Only a small number of larger school districts possess in-house capabilities to apply more research-intensive approaches that are able to account for student selection and other estimation problems (Henrich, 2012). A study completed by Springer, Pepper, and Gosh-Dastidar (2009) supported the finding of a lack of rigorous assessments that examine and acknowledge differences in the characteristics of students who choose to participate in SES. Matching students who favor one SES over another in regard to the characteristics of the SES is important, because authors of these studies drew credible conclusions regarding the effectiveness of SES programs based on comparisons of academic progress made by students who choose to forego SES and those who choose to participate.

**Parent Satisfaction with SES Programs**

At the local level, parents are the sole selector of the SES provider, as long as that group is able to operate in or near the geographical area of the school district. The school district may recommend a specific SES provider to parents, especially if they request help in selecting one, but parents are not required to accept a school district’s recommendation (NCLB Action Brief, 2003).
To monitor SES providers effectively, states need to develop an assessment system that offers valid and highly usable data to evaluate the impact of each SES provider’s services. States are encouraged to consider a provider’s outcomes in three areas (Center for Innovation and Improvement, 2006):

- **Effectiveness**: Did the provider increase student achievement in reading/language arts and math?

- **Customer Satisfaction**: Are parents of students who received SES satisfied?

- **Service Delivery and Compliance**: Did the provider comply with applicable state and district laws and contractual procedures associated with the delivery of SES?

Measures of parent and student experiences and perceptions not only offer information about a provider’s effectiveness, but can also reveal details about a provider’s service delivery. Like student achievement, parent satisfaction also can demonstrate the extent to which the program has been successful. The presumption is that parents (along with the state, local school district and SES provider) all play important roles in making SES programs work effectively. Few states collect parent satisfaction data on SES; yet, what is available, shows positive outcomes. Chicago Public Schools, for example, found that 87% of SES parents were satisfied with their child’s instruction, with 80% of parents indicating that their child’s study skills had improved, made homework easier, and resulted in better grades. In another survey of four states, 82% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that they were pleased with the SES services received by their children, and believed these services helped their children achieve academic success.

In 2008, Public Policy Associates in its “Summary Report on the Evaluation of Supplemental Education Services” on behalf of the Michigan Department of Education, reported that 82.4% of all SES parents indicated, on average, that they were generally satisfied with the tutoring received. A comparison of the evaluation results between parents whose children were in the Detroit Public School (DPS) district or a non-DPS district showed that the groups were
similar for most indicators of tutor satisfaction (i.e., would send their child to the tutor again or would recommend the tutor to someone else). Nearly half of the comments were a positive appraisal of the tutor, citing qualities such as professionalism, results, or dedication of the tutor. Public support exists, including among many parents, to continue an intervention that provides free, extra academic assistance to struggling students.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is grounded in several theories and concepts. First, *ecological theories* were adopted for the study. Bronfenbrenner (1986) has shown that community, family, school, and peers have an influence on what happens to a child in school, as well as out of school. If these external forces are supportive of what takes place during the day (and vice versa), then the academic, emotional, and social development of the child are more likely to complement one another and lead to the healthy development of the whole child. If external forces are not in harmony, it can be more difficult to attain this goal. Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) model shows the concentric circles associated with each of the overlapping systems. Figure 1 presents the model.

*Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model*
Second, *cognitive theory* is used as a theoretical framework for the study. Cognitive researchers (Piaget, 1952, 1964; Vygotsky, 1978) discussed the importance of children having cognitively stimulating experiences and the importance of having a mentor or tutor to guide this process. Piaget discussed how children in learning new concepts must be given both time and a suitable environment to assimilate and accommodate this knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) added that even if the environment creates stimulating situations for children, the growth of the child may be limited if they are not exposed to a “more capable other” who is skilled in stimulating curiosity through dialogue and questions. Thus, Vygotsky (1978) asserted that the extent to which children can reach their potential depends on which level the “more capable other” is functioning at the time of the interactions.

Third, the developmental processes of youth, and of the adults that they become, are put at risk from circumstances of poverty, violence, abuse and neglect, as well as substance abuse. Theoreticians and researchers have recognized and responded to these challenges by examining *resilience* in children who experience circumstances that put them at risk, yet emerge from their challenges with positive developmental outcomes (Garmezy, 1985; Rutter 1987; and Sameroff, 1993). The term *resilience* has been used to label three different types of phenomena: (a) individuals who have experienced traumatic events but have been able to recover well; (b) persons who belong to high-risk groups, but who have more favorable outcomes than expected; and (c) persons who show positive adaptation despite life stressors (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990).

The students attending Alkebu-lan Village are examples of the second phenomena; they are not expected to do well, but in spite of their challenges manage to succeed as shown by their
growth in reading and mathematics during their participation in the SES. Alkebu-lan Village provides a setting that helps children and teens develop resilience to live in today’s world.

This theory is applied to the present study given that SES participants in urban communities, such as Detroit, are affected by the constellation of both risk and protective factors. Some participants have the capacity for, and experience outcomes of successful adaptation despite adversities that exist in their environment. Adversities can be characterized as stressful life events that can cause stress in many people, and seriously disrupt normal functioning. Life stressors can be examined by level of severity: traumas, ordinary stressors and “daily hassles.”

Adaptation to the stress caused by life events is affected by risk factors that are associated with elevated probabilities of undesirable outcomes for a specific group. Risk factors include such adversities as poverty, low maternal education, low socioeconomic status, low birth weight, family instability, mental illness in the primary caregiver, and parental substance abuse (Chicchetti & Garmezy, 1993). Recovery from stressful life events, produced through the “self-righting” processes labeled resiliency, has been characterized using a variety of terms: attaining a positive developmental trajectory, successful performance of life tasks, and positive mental health. Such outcomes are academic success and positive parenting practices.

Fashola (2002) recommended that academically-oriented after-school programs (e.g., Alkebu-lan Village) should have “teaching-staff members with credentials, who practice teaching in the target areas… an accredited instructor must be in the supervisory role, constantly overseeing and supervising the academic implementation of the programs” (p. 65). In addition to general training, Fashola underscored the importance of using implementation and procedural manuals as reference guides as the program progresses. Fashola (2002) theorized that after-
school programs are capable of addressing three developmental needs (i.e., academic, recreation and culture) of the whole child.

The literature is rich in reporting how after school programs have been a means of accelerating student achievement among those who are considered to be at risk for academic failure due to poverty, lack of parent support, reduced opportunities to learn and other socioeconomic and academic factors (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989; McAdoo & Crawford, 1988; McGillis, 1996). Fashola (2002) reported that few research studies have been published on the effects of specific academically based after-school programs, and those that were found reported inconsistent findings. She concluded that limited research primarily has included middle-income, Caucasian students in the study samples, making it difficult to generalize findings to high-risk, disadvantaged minority students. Identifying effective strategies for students outside school hours, particularly for at-risk students, is limited.

**Summary**

Supplemental educational services (SES) was a core provision of the NCLB Act of 2001 and was considered an important policy initiative of the NCLB Act. NCLB required that a Title I school had an SES program available for students if it fails to meet AYP goals for three consecutive years. If a school failed to meet AYP goals for two years, it was classified as “a school in need of improvement” (SINI) and must offer parents the option of transferring their child to another public school. During the third year of failing to meet AYP goals, the parent had the option of enrolling their child in an after-school tutoring program paid for by the school district. The SINI-designated school was required to set aside up to 20% of its Title I funds to pay for supplemental services that might have been provided by state-approved providers. Providers could be for-profit, non-profit, and public or private companies. States were
responsible for evaluating SES providers’ records of academic achievement under SES. The
evidence used in this evaluation could include pre- and post-test achievement scores or other
evidence that the providers’ services improved academic achievement.

As reported in the literature, SES reform reflected marketplace actions, such as
outsourcing, limited government regulations, competition and choice. Although mandated at the
national level, implementing the SES program required adapting to local conditions (i.e., the
differing conditions of states, districts, or schools). When NCLB was enacted, Congress
promised to provide the necessary resources to meet the many mandates of the law: provide
school improvement funds to failed AYP schools, provide increased resources especially for
Title I teacher quality to close achievement gaps, and ensure that all students had a high quality
teacher. Program funding declined, with most states and school districts facing unfunded
mandates, budget cuts, and no funds to turn around low-performing schools.

Other problems with the SES program included: limited capacity of the state and school
districts to implement and monitor programs effectively and efficiently, alignment of SES
services with school curriculum, impact on extracurricular activities and benefits, insufficient
accountability of providers, and issues of access and quality for high-need students.
Administrators also lacked the necessary financial resources and expertise to administer SES
programs successfully. The web of issues – technical, instructional, organizational and political –
had civil rights implications since a majority of SES program participants tended to be poor and
non-White. Both poverty and race/ethnicity were pronounced and pervasive within urban major
school districts, such as the city of Detroit. SES, therefore, was essential to ensure that students
with the greatest need benefitted adequately regarding academic improvement, as well as for
nonacademic issues, such as engaging in healthier, less risk-taking behaviors and better bonding with school personnel and peers.
Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology that was used to collect and analyze the data needed to address the research questions developed for this study. The topics that are included in this chapter are a restatement of the problem, research design, setting for the study, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis. Each of these topics is presented separately.

Restatement of the Problem

The problem that was considered in this study was the need for an evaluation of the Alkebu-lan Village SES that reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the program in improving student outcomes. The state assessment lacked the rigor needed to determine the effectiveness of the program, especially when most of the students could not be assessed because they did not complete MEAP tests because of their grade levels.

Research Design

A nonexperimental mixed methods research design was used to study the effectiveness of a SES program providing academic tutoring services to students in the lower east section of Detroit. This type of research design combines qualitative (case study) and quantitative (ex post facto) research to produce results that provide information regarding the change in students’ academic outcomes and parent and staff satisfaction with the program. According to Johnson et al. (as cited in Creswell, 2008) mixed methods research is defined as:

Mixed methods research is the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration. (p. 4)
Mixed methods research was defined by Tashakkori and Creswell (as cited in Creswell, 2008), as mixed methods research is... research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry. (p. 5)

**Setting for the Study**

The study’s setting is Alkebu-lan Village, a private, nonprofit organization providing SES services to primarily African-American at-risk youth residing in one of Detroit’s poorest neighborhoods. Alkebu-lan Village is located in a highly economically deprived area of the city of Detroit. Most families are low income, living below the poverty levels. Opening in 1978, Alkebulan-Village continues to evolve, moving from providing martial arts training for children and adults to providing educational services and family programs. The program has expanded to include African American cultural awareness, leadership training, health and wellness, homework assistance and tutoring, entrepreneurship, training, sports, and fitness, as well as the Media-Smart Youth Program, Youth Assistance Program, Academy for the Arts, and Strengthening Families Program. These programs are held after school and on Saturdays during the school year and during the day in the summer. Field trips to events are offered during the school year and an annual college tour is available to older teens at Spring break. Summer employment opportunities throughout the city are available to Alkebu-lan Village youth. The programs are funded through a number of agencies and through donations from businesses and the community at large.

Alkebu-lan Village has been an approved SES provider in the state of Michigan since 2006. According to the *Michigan State Approved Supplemental Service Providers (SES) Information Booklet 2006-2007*, Alkebu-lan Village is an “African-Centered community-based organization committed to developing a nurturing environment where families work together to
build healthy minds, bodies and communities” (p. 13). Students can receive from 36 to 60 hours of tutoring during the week and on Saturdays. Students are given a pretest to determine their academic levels and then are assigned a tutor based on individual needs. Students practice and reinforce what they learn on computers located at Alkebu-lan Village’s Computer Lab Center. Alkebu-lan Village’s academic support services are provided consistently throughout the academic year (September – June) and during the summer months (June – August) where students receive both academic tutoring and remediation. Underlying Alkebu-lan Village’s interest in serving as an effective after-school program is its potential to improve a wide range of educational outcomes for Detroit elementary, middle, and high school youth. The primary goal of the agency’s afterschool program is to improve academic outcomes by helping students become more capable in the classroom, learn more about subject matter, and have higher grades and test scores.

**Participants**

The participants in the study were parents and students who are attending high school in Detroit, either in the public school system or in charter schools and are participating in the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES program. A total of 79 students in the 9th through the 12th grades participated in the reading, English language arts, and mathematics tutoring programs during the 2011-2012 academic year. These students completed a pretest in English language arts, reading, and/or math at the beginning of the year and a posttest at the end of the year. The change in scores from pre to post-test provided evidence of the effectiveness of the program in improving academic achievement.

A second group of participants was the parents of students who participated in the program. The parents were asked to complete a satisfaction survey regarding their children’s
participation in the program. The parents complete this survey once a year. A random sample of 20 to 25 parents also was asked to participate in focus groups to discuss their children’s academic progress in the SES program. The students’ academic progress and their parents’ satisfaction surveys were linked.

The staff at Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES program were asked to participate in a focus group to discuss their role in providing academic services to students who are being tutored in the program. The staff included eight high school tutors, one kitchen worker, four van attendants, three van drivers, a security person, one administrator, two receptionists, and one chief executive officer (CEO). These staff interacted directly with the students and helped contribute to the students’ experiences either directly or indirectly. All members of the Alkebu-lan Village organization have some type of effect on the students. The receptionist sells the program to the parents and students during their initial contact and when obtaining demographic information for the students’ records. The other support staff (kitchen worker, van attendants, van driver, and security person) provided encouragement and were available to listen to the students when problems arose. This group of people interacted with the students in a more casual, nonacademic manner. Students often were more willing to talk to someone other than a tutor or teacher when they were having social or emotional difficulties. The tutors interacted directly with the students providing instruction in academic areas of need. These individuals worked as a team to provide effective educational and social experiences for the students. Their focus group provided information regarding their role in the program in helping students improve their academic achievement.
Instrument

The students completed the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) and Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT). If the student was receiving special education services, he/she completed the Brigance Math and Reading Assessment.

The WRAT is a screening measure that can be used for individuals from 5 through 75 years of age. The topics that are included in the measure are reading recognition, spelling, and arithmetic. As the measure does not assess reading comprehension, it is not usable in screening for learning disabilities. The WRAT has been normed for 23 age groups, four geographical regions, and diverse ethnic groups (African American, Hispanic, and other). The WRAT has been tested for reliability and validity. Using the median alternate forms, the internal consistency was .89 and the test stability was .91. These results provide support that the WRAT has good to excellent reliability. The validity reported by the scale authors included increased raw scores with age, strong correlations between spelling and reading, poor correlations between arithmetic and reading and spelling. Correlations were adequate with the WAIS III and the WISC III FSIQ, VIQ, and PIQ. Based on these findings, the WRAT is a valid and reliable instrument for determining change in reading recognition, spelling, and arithmetic.

The Slosson Oral Reading Test was used to measure a participant’s oral word recognition. This instrument is not meant to be a diagnostic measure and does not measure reading comprehension or word knowledge. It is used as a screening instrument to determine a person’s reading level. The test can be completed in 3 to 5 minutes, with a basal level attained when an individual can pronounce 20 words in a group. The instrument has been tested for internal consistency and stability, with all reported alpha coefficients exceeding .95. The Slosson Oral Reading Test has been administered with other tests of reading recognition and
comprehension (i.e., Woodcock-Johnson Test of Achievement and Reading Comprehension. The correlation coefficients were between .68 and .83, providing support for the validity of the instrument.

The Brigance Test of Basic Skills is a criterion-referenced assessment that is used to identify students’ academic functioning levels. The instrument can be administered individually or in a classroom setting. The areas measured on this instrument include: reading decoding, reading comprehension, writing, listening comprehension, and math. The test can be used with students from pre-kindergarten through high school. The test is used to identify academic deficiencies and is used to help monitor students with special needs in charting progress toward meeting annual Individualized Education Program goals. The instrument has been tested extensively for reliability and validity. Based on the results of the testing, the authors asserted that the instrument has good reliability and validity.

These tests are commercially available and have been tested for validity and reliability. The students complete these tests at the beginning of the year and again at the end of the year. Academic growth is measured by the increase in scores.

Parent Satisfaction Survey was distributed to parents at the end of the academic year. The survey included 31 items that were rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The items had been constructed to obtain information about their children’s experiences, as well as the parents’ experiences in the program. The 31 items were rationally assigned to three subscales: (a) parents, (b) child’s direct academic, and (c) child’s indirect academic. The parents subscale measures parents’ experiences with the program (e.g., the hours of the program meet my needs), while the child’s direct academic experience subscale assess parents’ perceptions of their child’s academic experiences (e.g., the program has helped my child
develop analytic skills). The subscale measuring the children’s indirect academic experiences are parents’ perceptions of program effects that are not directly related to academics (e.g., there was adequate supervision in the program). The numeric ratings for the items on the survey were summed to obtain a total score that was then divided by the number of items (31) to obtain a mean score that reflected the original unit of measure. Table 1 provides the subscales and associated items that are included on the Parent Satisfaction Survey.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Satisfaction Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subscale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s Direct Academic Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s Indirect Academic Experiences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Parent Satisfaction Survey has not been tested for validity and reliability. For the purpose of the present study, the ratings on the items were tested for internal consistency using Cronbach alpha coefficients. This analysis produced an alpha coefficient of .94 for the overall survey, indicating the survey has excellent internal consistency. The alpha coefficients for the three subscales ranged from .77 to .88 providing evidence that the subscales had adequate to good internal consistency.

**Data Collection**

The administrator at Alkebu-Lan Village African-Centered Community Center was contacted to discuss the study. He was asked to provide the pretest and posttest scores for the 2011-2012 academic year. The administrator participated in a semi-structured face-to-face interview. In addition to test scores, four focus groups were held: parents, staff, tutors, and
students. Each of these focus groups was held separately, but used corresponding questions to obtain rich data regarding experiences with the Alkebu-lan Village SES.

The parents were asked to complete the satisfaction survey at the end of the year. The last question on the satisfaction survey asked if they were interested in participating in a focus group to discuss their children’s progress in the program. If more than 25 parents agreed to be in the focus groups, a random sample of 25 was obtained. Three focus groups were held at times that accommodated the availability of the parents. A set of semi-structured questions was asked at the focus groups. Each parent was encouraged to provide input and an ensuing discussion of the topic was held.

Seven staff members who interacted directly with the students (e.g., kitchen help, transportation drivers and attendants, security personnel, etc.) were asked to participate in a focus group. The questions asked at the focus group meetings were similar to those asked of the parents to obtain information from both the perspective of the parents and staff regarding what factors were contributing to the effectiveness of the SES program.

A focus group with seven tutors was held. The questions asked at the focus group were similar to those asked of the parents and staff regarding their participation in the program and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the SES program.

Eight students who participated in the Alkebu-lan Village during the 2011-2012 academic year were asked to participate in a focus group. They were asked to describe their experiences with the program and their interactions with the tutors and staff. Each student was encouraged to provide input by addressing the questions posed by the facilitator.

A graduate student facilitated all of the focus groups, with two scribes attending each focus group taking notes. The researcher attended the meetings, but did not want to influence the
responses. In addition, the focus groups were audiotaped. The audiotapes were transcribed and compared to the scribes’ notes to assure that the transcriptions are accurate depictions of what occurred during the focus groups.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected from the closed records of the students who participated in the program were analyzed using IBM-SPSS – Ver. 21.0. The analysis included comparisons of students’ change scores in the one year of the program using t-tests for dependent samples. The purpose of this analysis was to determine if students’ academic abilities improved after participating in the program. The student outcomes also were compared by grade level and gender to determine if students had consistent growth across all grade levels or if one grade improved more than other grades. A 4 x 2 multivariate analysis of variance was completed using change scores on the WRAT as the dependent variable and grade level and gender used as independent variables. The type of analysis used to address the research questions depended on the number of students for whom complete data were available. The parents’ responses to their survey were analyzed to determine if they were satisfied with their children’s progress in the program and if they perceived the program should be continued. All decisions on the statistical significance of the inferential analyses were made using a criterion alpha level of .05.

The qualitative data from the four focus groups at Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered Community Center were analyzed using content analysis procedures and a thematic approach to determine patterns and trends in the data. The results of the focus groups were transcribed and compared to the notes taken by the scribes during the session. Corrections were made to the transcriptions prior to beginning the content analysis. The researcher developed a codebook to aid in finding patterns and trends in the data. The focus group results were summarized by
question for each focus group. Questions that were similar for the different focus groups were then grouped to examine responses for similarities and differences that could be used to address the research questions. The findings from the focus group were presented by themes that had emerged from the data. The results from the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study were integrated to develop conclusions and recommendations in the discussion chapter.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Chapter 4 presents the results of the data analysis used to describe the sample and address the research questions developed for this study. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides a description of the three participant groups (parent, student, administrator and staff, and tutor). The second section provides results of the quantitative analyses designed to determine changes in academic performance after participating in the Alkebu-lan Village supplement educational services (SES) program. The third section of the analysis presents a summary of the separate focus groups for the parents, students, administrator and staff, and tutors. In the final section, the focus group responses are combined to provide an overview of the satisfaction with the SES administered by Alkebu-lan Village.

The purpose of this study is to examine parent, student, administrator and staff, and tutor satisfaction with SES provided at a small, nonprofit, community-based, African-centered program (Alkebu-lan Village) that focused on improving English language arts and mathematics achievement among at-risk high school students. In addition, the study compared pretest scores of the WRAT, Slosson, and Brigance standardized tests with the students’ posttest scores to determine change over the 2011-2012 academic year. Changes in a positive direction provided evidence of the effectiveness of the Alkebu-lan Village SES in improving students’ academic outcomes in reading and mathematics.

History and Background

Alkebu-lan Village has provided community-based education and youth-development programs to Detroit’s eastside residents for over 30 years. Founded as the Alkebu-lan Martial Arts Federation in 1978, the original purpose of the organization was to provide affordable
martial arts training to African American youth. The organization has trained over 250,000 individuals in the martial arts since its inception. Throughout its existence, Alkebu-Lan Village administrators have recognized the benefits of skillfully incorporating martial arts as a tool for youth development.

Over the years, Alkebu-Lan Village programs have expanded to include youth and adult health and fitness training, leadership development, visual and performing arts, academic enrichment services, youth entrepreneurialship training, cultural and recreational programs to thousands of Detroit youth and their families each year, through on-site and outreach programs. Pursuant to Title I Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by No Child Left Behind, these services were provided to improve academic achievement of at-risk students in compliance with the Detroit Public School District’s Improvement Plan.

Alkebu-Lan Village established a supplemental education program (SES) program that focused on building student achievement skills in the areas of Math, Language Arts, and Social Studies. This SES program reflected teaching and learning based on content standards of the state of Michigan in Social Studies, English Language Arts, and Math to achieve (1) higher-order thinking, (2) deep knowledge, (3) substantive conversation, and (4) connections to the world beyond the classroom. The Alkebu-Lan Village SES program incorporated three instructional approaches in administering services to the students:

- One-on-one
- Group (peer interactions)
- Computer Assisted Instruction

Each instructional approach provides unique benefits, with the determination of the approach that was used based on the assessment of the individual student and their learning styles.
The “one-on-one” tutoring enabled the student to receive the undivided attention necessary to master techniques in subject areas of math, English language arts, and social studies. Students benefited in this setting because it was a continuation of what was learned in the classroom and allowed students to receive instruction in familiar subject matters that might be difficult to grasp in the larger class setting. The one-on-one approach enabled students to receive personalized instruction and learning methods for better understanding.

The “group” approach helped students develop confidence in their abilities to improve their skill sets and supported the “peers reaching peers” philosophy that had been found to be effective among students. The group approach also allowed a sense of belonging for individual participants and instilled a desire to excel among their peers. Students also were motivated to excel when encouraged and assisted by those they deemed to be a part of the group.

The “computer assisted instruction” familiarized students with the basic uses of computers and various software programs designed as tutorials for math, English language arts, and social studies. Participants first learned the functions of the computer and then became engaged in course work and tutoring programs used to enhance or reinforce skill development. The curriculum used at Alkebu-lan SES was designed to diagnose and address gaps in students’ preparation. Mastery models allowed students who needed more assistance to receive it while allowing those who quickly grasped concepts to advance in an accelerated mode. Assessment was embedded in the content of the computer software programs, and took place at the beginning and ending of the tutoring experience.

**Participant Groups**

Four participant groups were included in the study: parents, students, administrator and staff, and tutors. A total of 16 parents participated in three focus groups. The parents had at least
one child attending the SES at Alkebu-lan Village during the 2011-2012 academic year. Twelve (75.0%) of the 16 participants were women, with 4 (25.0%) men also participating in the study. Two (12.5%) participants were Caucasian and 14 (87.5%) were African American. Seven students also participated in a focus group that provided input into complementary questions that were used in the parent focus groups.

The third set of participants was the administrator and staff members who provided support services to the students while at Alkebu-lan Village. These staff members included the drivers who transported the students to and from the sessions, the kitchen staff who were responsible for preparing meals and snacks for the students while at the Village, and security who maintained the safety of the Village for the students, tutors, and staff. The administrator also participated in the focus group.

The tutors who provided small group instruction in reading and mathematics for the students comprised the fourth focus group. Eight tutors participated in the focus group meeting. All of the tutors had at least a bachelor’s degree and six (75.0%) were certified by the state of Michigan. All of the tutors had participated in specialized training prior to working with the students. In addition, after the tutoring sessions were completed, they facilitated the additional activities in the Village (e.g., shopping at the store, roller-skating, table games, etc.). The tutors also went on field trips with the students, including the college tour that was held annually during Spring break.

**Description of the Students**

A total of 135 students who had attended Alkebu-lan Village SES during the 2011-2012 academic year had completed the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) for reading and mathematics both when they entered the program and again when they left the program. The age,
gender, and grade level of the students were obtained for the study. Frequency distributions were used to summarize their demographic characteristics. Table 2 presents results of these analyses.

Table 2

*Frequency Distributions – Demographic Characteristics of the Students (N = 135)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender of Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eleventh</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twelfth</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students ranged in age from 15 \( (n = 25, 18.5\%) \) to 19 \( (n = 9, 6.7\%) \) years of age. The largest group \( (n = 36, 26.7\%) \) were 17 years of age, with 32 \( (23.7\%) \) reporting their age as 16 years and 33 \( (24.4\%) \) indicating their age as 18 years. The majority of students \( (n = 83, 61.5\%) \) were male, with 52 \( (38.5\%) \) reporting their gender as female. Thirty-six \( (26.7\%) \) students were in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grades. Twenty-seven \( (19.9\%) \) reported they were in the twelfth grades.

The number of hours that students had participated in tutoring was summarized using descriptive statistics. Table 3 presents results of this analysis.
Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics – Tutoring Hours*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>39.01</td>
<td>6.85</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students had attended tutoring at Alkebu-lan Village an average 39.01 (SD = 6.85) hours over a 9-week period. The median number of hours was 38, with a range from 2 to 74 hours.

**Research Questions**

Five research questions were developed for this study. The first two questions were answered using inferential statistical analyses, with the remaining questions addressed using qualitative analyses. All decisions on the inferential statistical analyses were made using a criterion alpha level of .05.

1. To what extent did participation in the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES Model contribute to improvement in student achievement in reading/language arts?

To determine the extent of change and direction of the change in student achievement in reading/language arts, the pre and posttest scores of the students on the Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) for reading/language arts were compared using t-tests for dependent samples. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.
Table 4

$t$-Tests for Dependent Samples – WRAT Reading/Language Arts Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>$t$-Value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>19.40</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>134</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the $t$-tests for dependent samples comparing the pretest scores on the reading/language arts test on the WRAT were statistically significant, $t (134) = 19.40, p < .001$. This result provided support that the students who participated in Alkebu-lan Village tutoring program experienced statistically significant increases in their reading levels from a mean of 6.27 ($SD = 2.38$) on the pretest to 7.79 ($SD = 2.40$) on the posttest.

2. To what extent did participation in the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES Model contribute to improvement in student achievement in mathematics?

To determine the extent to which students in the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES model improved their scores on the WRAT mathematics test, a $t$-test for dependent samples was used to compare pretest and posttest scores. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

$t$-Tests for Dependent Samples – WRAT Math Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>$t$-Value</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>23.58</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>134</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The comparison of the pretest and posttest WRAT math scores using \( t \)-tests for dependent samples was statistically significant, \( t (134) = 23.58, p < .001 \). This result indicated that students’ mathematics scores increased significantly from pretest \( (M = 5.94, SD = 1.92) \) to posttest \( (M = 7.38, SD = 2.04) \) while participating in tutoring at the Alkebu-lan Village SES.

A 4 x 2 multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to determine if there was an interaction between the grade level and gender of the students on change scores for the WRAT reading/language arts and math scores. Change scores were calculated by subtracting the pretest scores from the posttest scores. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*4 x 2 Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Reading/Language Arts and Math Change Scores by Grade Level and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Hotelling’s Trace</th>
<th>( F ) Ratio</th>
<th>( DF )</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>( \eta^2 )</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
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<td>1.98</td>
<td>6, 254</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.58</td>
<td>2, 126</td>
<td>.210</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade x Gender</td>
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<td>2.19</td>
<td>6, 250</td>
<td>.044</td>
<td>.05</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The results of the 4 x 2 MANOVA on the two main effects of grade \( (F [6, 254] = 1.98, p = .069, \eta^2 = .04) \) and gender \( (F [2, 126] = 1.58, p = .210, \eta^2 = .02) \) were not statistically significant. The interaction effect of grade x gender was statistically significant \( (F [6, 250] = 2.19, p = .044, \eta^2 = .05) \). However, the effect size of .05 was small, indicating that while the result was statistically significant, the outcome had little practical significance. To determine which of the tests were contributing to the statistically significant outcome, the between subjects effects were analyzed. Table 7 presents results of this analysis.
### Table 7

*Between Subjects Effects—Reading/Language Arts and Math Change Scores by Grade Level and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<td>Grade</td>
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<td>1.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Means in a cell sharing a subscript are significantly different from each other. For all measures, higher means indicate greater gain from pretest to posttest.

A statistically significant difference was found for change scores in math, $F (3, 127) = 3.74, p = .013$. To determine which grade was contributing to the statistically significant
difference, Scheffe a posteriori tests were used to compare all possible pairwise comparisons. A statistically significant difference was found between the ninth grade students \((M = 1.17, SD = .38)\) and twelfth grade students \((M = 1.70, SD = .87)\). The remaining pairwise comparisons were not statistically significant.

The interactions between grade and gender were statistically significant for change scores for reading/language arts and mathematics. To demonstrate where differences were occurring among the interactions, a graph was developed for each change score. The scores indicate gains in grade levels. Figure 1 presents the interaction for reading/language arts change scores.

![Graph of reading/language arts change scores](image)

*Figure 2: Change Scores for Reading/Language Arts*

The male and female students had similar gains in reading/language arts in the ninth grade \((M = 1.25)\), with female students \((M = 1.79)\) having greater gains in the 10th grade than the boys \((M = 1.41)\). In the eleventh grade, boys \((M = 1.81)\) had higher gains in reading/language arts than the girls \((M = 1.33)\), while the male students in the twelfth grade \((M = 1.75)\) had higher gain scores than the female students \((M = 1.55)\).

The change scores were compared for male and female students across the four grade levels. Figure 2 presents the graphical representation of this interaction.
The mean change scores for the male and female students in the ninth grade were the same (M = 1.17). Boys had a mean grade level change of 1.23, while girls’ change scores increased 1.79. In the eleventh grade, boys had an increase of 1.67 grade levels, compared to girls who increased 1.27 grades. Among the 12th grade students, boys increased 1.50 grade levels, while girls increased 2.00 grade levels.

Based on these findings, it appears that tutoring at Alkebu-lan Village helped both male and female high school students experience grade level changes for both reading/language arts and mathematics. In addition, it appears that the changes were different for each grade level.

3. Which factors contribute to parent satisfaction with their children’s participation in Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES model?

The parents’ mean scores for parent experiences with the program, child’s direct academic experiences, child’s indirect academic experiences, and family income were correlated to determine the strength and direction of the relationships among the variables using Pearson product moment correlations. Table 8 presents results of these analyses.
Table 8

*Pearson Product Moment Correlations: Parent Satisfaction with Alkebu-lan Village*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parent Experiences with Program</th>
<th>Child’s Direct Academic Experiences</th>
<th>Child’s Indirect Academic Experiences</th>
<th>Family Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r</td>
<td>Sig</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>Sig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Experiences with Program</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
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<td>Child’s Direct Academic Experiences</td>
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<td>&lt;.001</td>
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<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s Indirect Academic Experiences</td>
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<td>.81</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Income</td>
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<td>.22</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistically significant correlations were found between parent experiences with the program and child’s direct academic experience ($r = .79, p < .001$) and child’s indirect academic experiences ($r = .75, p < .001$). The correlation between parent experiences with the program and family income was not statistically significant ($r = .20, p = .143$). The correlations between family income and child’s direct academic experiences ($r = .22, p = .093$) and child’s indirect academic experiences ($r = .10, p = .450$) were not statistically significant, providing support that family income was not a predictor of parents’ experiences with the program and child’s direct or indirect academic experiences.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was used to determine if parent satisfaction differed among parents with different ethnicities. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 9.
The Hotelling’s trace of .14 obtained on the oneway MANOVA comparing the three subscales measuring parent satisfaction with the Alkebu-Ian Village SES program by the ethnicity of the parents was not statistically significant, $F(6, 102) = 1.21, p = .307, \eta^2 = .07$. This finding indicated that the three subscales measuring parent satisfaction, parent experiences with the program, child’s direct academic experiences, and child’s indirect academic experiences did not differ by the parents’ ethnic background. To examine this lack of statistically significant differences further, descriptive statistics were obtained for the three subscales measuring parent satisfaction. Table 10 presents results of this analysis.

### Table 9

**Oneway Multivariate Analysis of Variance – Parent Satisfaction by Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Hotelling’s Trace</th>
<th>$F$ Ratio</th>
<th>$DF$</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>$\eta^2$</th>
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<td>6, 102</td>
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<td>.07</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10

**Between Subjects Effects – Parent Satisfaction with Program by Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$DF$</th>
<th>$F$ Ratio</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Parent Experiences with Program</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Child’s Direct Academic Experiences</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Child’s Indirect Academic Experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>African American</td>
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<td>3.60</td>
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</table>
The parents appeared to be very satisfied with their experiences with the Alkebu-lan Village regardless of their ethnicity. This satisfaction also was apparent in their child’s direct and indirect academic experiences. Based on these findings, it does not appear that ethnicity was a factor that resulted in differences in parent satisfaction with the program.

Focus Group Results

Focus groups were held with each stakeholder group (students, parents, staff, tutors, and administrator). The focus group responses were used to address the fourth and fifth research questions:

4. Which factors contribute to students’ satisfaction with their participation in Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES model?

5. Which factors contribute to administrators, tutors, and staff satisfaction with the Alkebu-lan Village African-Centered SES model?

The same basic set of questions was asked of the participants in each of the focus groups. Their responses to the five areas (strengths of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program, weaknesses of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program, most and least helpful components of the program, and suggested improvements). In addition, the parents were asked about talking to the tutors.

The transcriptions of the focus group responses were reviewed by the researcher and coded to summarize the statements into the five areas that were considered themes present across all of the focus groups. The transcriptions were read repeatedly and coding was reviewed to make sure that all of the responses were summarized correctly. The expected themes emerged from the data, providing support that all of the groups were positive about the strengths of the program.
Program Strengths

Each focus group (students, staff, parents, tutors and administrator) were asked to identify what they considered the strengths of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program. After a few moments, the focus group members shared their responses. Although each focus group was held separately, with three parent focus groups, the responses to the questions were similar. When asked about the strengths of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program, members of the four programs indicated that the development of a holistic sense of community was important. All of the students, tutors, and staff knew each other by name, with the students calling the adults mama and baba. The adults treated the students like their own children and were involved in making the sessions family like. The administrator stated:

Well, once again, the strength is to always show that you care… and you love and respect,… and let it be known that… it’s not for me, but it is for we. It is the understanding that “Each one, teach one… Each one, reach one.” Once the children felt that it was not us against them, but for us to help each other, and it was the understanding that together we stand and divided we fall.

The social, emotional, and academic support was mentioned as a strength of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program by all four focus group participants. Students were given social support by all of the adults in the program. One of the students indicated that “I think that dancing and drumming, as well as other stuff, were strengths of the program.” Another student noted: … I was really motivated….’cause when I was walking up there I had seen things to think about…. about all my classes at Alkebu-lan Village…. And some fun activities early in the morning… and always working.

The nonacademic activities (e.g., walking, roller skating, basketball, etc.) were important part of the program that allowed students to interact informally with the adults and other students. If students had problems, one of the adults was always available to talk with them and
help them solve the problem. One student stated: One of the instructors who was no longer with Alkebu-lan helped me out and taught me a lot of things. I will never forget this tutor. (Note: This tutor passed away during a holiday break from the program.)

While the tutors were directly responsible for working on academics with the students, the other adults provided encouragement at all times. Everyone celebrated success and helped students who were experiencing difficulties in mastering a particular topic in mathematics or reading. One of the tutors stated that:

I think the strength of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program was the culture of the village, which was infused with Afrocentric traditions and models. The holistic community that exists at Alkebu-lan Village provides students with an environment conducive to learning. The students do not call the tutors “teacher” or “instructor”, instead they are called “mama” or “baba” or “elder” or similar terms. Because the students are able to form close relationship with the tutors, they become open to learning. The biggest strength, in my opinion, is the culture, the Afrocentric heritage, and the way they enrich the children with the background and knowledge of the community; it reaches the whole child and it supports a family system in learning.

Members of the four focus groups commented that the program amenities (transportation, meals, recreation, etc.) was a strength of the program. Parents indicated that having their children picked up and dropped off for sessions was a strength of the program. Some of the parents may not have had transportation available to bring them to Alkebu-lan Village SES, which could have prevented their children from attending. The staff who drove the two vans liked picking up the students from their homes, although they would have liked to have more available. One student suggested that “being picked up on time, having three meals a day and getting a chance to go outside were strengths of the program.”

The students received breakfast, lunch, and snacks at Alkebu-lan Village SES. Breakfast was served hot (bacon and eggs; French toast, etc.), with students allowed to have multiple servings if they wanted to eat more. Lunch also was a hot meal that included all of the food
groups as recommended by the United States Department of Agriculture. The staff responsible for preparing the food indicated they enjoyed interacting with the students during the meals. The students enjoyed eating the meals. The tutors thought that students who were not hungry were more willing to learn. Recreational activities also were considered to be a strength of the program. The members of the four focus groups thought that by including recreational activities in the Alkebu-lan Village SES program, the students’ needs were being met. The students in the program benefited from being able to be physically active after sitting for tutoring. The recreational programs varied from sports and walking to table games. The students were able to interact with others informally through roller skating or playing foosball table games. They were able to shop at an internal store with money they earned by completing tutorial assignments, listening to and following instructions, and helping with staff (cleaning up after meals, etc.).

**Program Challenges**

Focus group participants were then asked to name factors that they felt represented challenges within the Alkebu-lan Village SES program. While most of the participants in the four groups had little to say about weaknesses of the program, some weaknesses were mentioned. For example, tardiness because of transportation was a weakness. Some parents, especially those whose children were picked up last, indicated that their children often waited for the van and then were tardy. However, any problems encountered while picking up the first students could result in late arrivals for the subsequent pickups. Road conditions and other situations that were beyond the drivers’ control often contributed to late pickups and tardiness.

Many parents, tutors, and staff thought the lack of funding was a weakness of the program. Funding for Alkebu-lan Village SES programs come from the school district sending students for tutoring. According to one staff member, “more transportation, more instructors…"
But, that comes with more money. Then again, … more money we could service more babies.” Another staff member commented, “I would say some of the weaknesses was funding and not having enough time and enough funding… enough to have more staff … so that we could, you know if we had the time, we would have been able to do more.” It is also interesting to note that the members of the three focus groups [parents, students, and tutors] that cited lack of funding as a weakness suggested that a monetary awareness was never present and thus was not a detracting factor for students’ overall learning/growing experience within the program.

Several students indicated that tutoring time was not enough because “we needed more help.” One student stated “I needed more time with math because I ain’t know it.” Another student indicated that being late was a weakness of the program. This student stated, “They picked me up from the suburb, which made other people late. Two students thought that one of the weaknesses of the program was having to get up on Saturday mornings, but these same students talked about the lack of time for tutoring.

The tutors thought that the least helpful thing in the Alkebu-lan Village SES program was parent support. One tutor stated that “parents view SES as babysitters. They don’t understand that students have to have consistent tutoring for the growth to actually happen.” Another tutor indicated that “parents being involved is very vital.” One of the tutors indicated that parents do not understand the full scope of what is going on in the SES program. He/she continued:

That hinders the child or the thing that I really didn’t like was the parent saying “Oh she don’t wanna come today. I’m gonna keep her home.” . . . When you don’t have parents who have the social fortitude to know that they have enrolled their child in this and they have to see them through to the end and honor the commitment that hinders the growth of the overall program.

The timing of the program was also a weakness of the program. As one tutor reiterated, “The program isn’t long enough. The programs should be extended year ‘round. Just when the
students get adjusted, the program is ending. Then they come back and it’s almost as if you have to start all over again.”

According to one of the tutors, grouping the students according to grade level was a weakness of the study. He/she suggested that students should be grouped according to skill level based on the results of a pretest. He/she argued that with this information, “we would know exactly where they should start.”

It is interesting to note that members of the parent group provided no responses regarding the weaknesses of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program. The remaining groups, however, while responding to the weaknesses in the program did not reach a consensus on any single weakness.

**Suggested Improvements**

Participants were asked to offer suggestions to make the Alkebu-lan Village SES tutorial program more effective for improving students learning experiences. The strongest reaction from the three parent groups was with regard to having no suggestions. In fact, nine of the 16 parents had no suggestions. Parents responded with comments such as:

- I don’t have any suggestions other than I think tutors and staff should keep being leaders, staying powerful, staying motivated and consistent.
- I have no suggestions other than maintain the program as it is.
- I think the facility is doing a great job and I have no specific suggestions to improve the program.

Parents who offered suggestions typically reflected the need to increase funding to provide additional services and expand the tutoring program. Examples of their responses included comments such as:

- I would like to help Alkebu-lan Village find ways to raise more money
• Additional funding to hire more tutors so the classes can be smaller and center around the individual child’s need instead of the group’s need.

• Materials need to be updated to the extent that each child could have their own individual tablet or computer to work with and work at their own pace.

• More technology so the kids could have whatever the latest, cutting edge materials are.

• Keep the kids longer, perhaps to 7:30 pm during the weekdays so they could do more karate, more dance, and more homework.

• The government should increase funding for the program.

• The program should be expanded to include international studies to help kids diversify themselves and relate to others.

In addition to parents’ response to this question on “suggestions for program improvements”, five of the 7 members in the student focus group offered comments related to having “MORE” of one thing or another… especially more field trips incorporated in the program offering. Student participants gave the following remarks:

• More time, more days of the week and more Saturdays are needed.

• More fundraisers are needed to raise more money for Alkebu-lan Village to go on trips.

• More stuff for EVERYTHING!

• EVERYTHING!!! EVERYTHING!! …they can get to make it better.

The students’ primary focus for program improvements was on field trips, more days and fundraisers rather than on the academic components of reading and math. Continuing along this line of questioning, students were asked, “What did you enjoy or like most about the Alkebu-lan
Village SES program?” Again, students primarily commented about the non-academic experiences. In fact, academics were not mentioned at all. Students offered the following responses:

- I liked roller skating the best.
- I liked the pool table.
- I liked to go on field trips and making money.
- I liked going to Cedar Point and on the College Tour trips.
- I liked playing basketball.
- I liked the people. I liked the way they handled and helped the students.
- I liked dance class; both the Jamaican and African dance.

When the staff was presented with the question relative to suggestions for making the Alkebu-lan Village SES program more effective in improving students’ learning experiences, they responded with a continuum on the theme of “MORE”…..doing more. Staff responded with comments such as:

“Do the SES again, but with more money to make it more effective.” Three of the seven staff participants believed the program was excellent, but they thought that more time was needed to be devoted to the students. They thought that additional calendar time, extending the program from four to five, six, or seven months would provide more opportunities to work with students effectively. Other staff comments were:

- The SES program should be done every Saturday, but more funds would be needed.
- Kids need more time.
In addition to parents, students and staff participant response to the question relative to suggestions for improving student learning, the administrator participant echoed the “MORE” theme offered the following comment:

More help, as it relates to teachers understanding that … Yes, you are going to have to go beyond the call of duty, opposed to saying “I did my job…” And after going through a workshop, we were able to get them (tutors) to understand…. If you were here for a paycheck, or what we call the “canism”: … getting here as late as you can, sitting on your can… and trying to leave as early as you can… you were at the wrong place.

The administrator offered a commentary on improving the program. He/she indicated that

Once we got the [right] match, we were able to get them (teachers and tutors) to understand the importance of the three C’s: the Competency, the Commitment, and the Consciousness of working with the students that we were serving. So, once we were able to perfect delivery of those skills, I think it became easy.

The administrator was adamant about the need for more money as well as providing quality professional development programs in academics and socialization for tutors and staff to help the students who were attending failing schools. He/she continued:

More money. The money is always important, as it relates to looking at what teachers were being paid in terms of being a fair day’s work, because we’re always over-worked and under paid. So, I think, once again, that teachers should be treated fairly and continue to be regularly trained in the same respect as in terms of academic and other social healers. For instance, as it relates in terms of being “community” academic ministers, and as it relates to just having a skilled and professional trade engagements for improving student learning experiences in the Alkebu-lan Village SES program.

Tutors also were asked to offer suggestions they had to make the Alkebu-lan Village SES program more effective for improving students’ learning experiences. This focus group of participants was asked to share their thoughts on this question item. The following list highlights those things that were cited as suggestions for making the Alkebu-lan Village SES program more effective:
• Parent workshops would be beneficial. In addition, a student needs survey completed in the first week of tutoring would be helpful.

• More technology in the computer lab and course curriculum given to parents before beginning tutoring program would be good.

• Having Village Night twice a month, as opposed to once monthly and divide the program into academics and socialization.

• The budget is an issue and the program needs to be run year-round.

• Alkebu-lan Village needs to be promoted through radio, cable networks to expose it throughout the Metropolitan Detroit area. I consider the program to be wonderful.

One tutor could not think of anything that Alkebu-lan Village could do to improve student learning, as he/she thought the program was good in general. This participant put it this way, “Alkebu-lan Village should ‘keep on keeping on’ providing services for the community, because it is essential.” Other tutors talked about program incentives, parent motivation, and other parent/student offerings and follow-ups. As one tutor put it, “While Alkebu-lan Village offers incentives to students, the program should also provide incentives to motivate the parents.” This tutor participant also thought that completing a needs assessment when enrolling the student could help the program reach both the student and the families as a whole.

Additional suggestions were made by tutors related to the following: real life situations, transition plans, jobs, and other class type offerings. Some tutors describe it in the following words:

• The program is great, I would like to see transition plans for students they move from school to real life situations. I also think that Alkebu-lan Village should link with large companies such as General Motors, Chrysler, IBM,
Apple Computers, etc. to help students earn training certificates. When students complete training programs (e.g. IBM), they can leave high school and obtain entry level jobs with corporations. These training programs could be incentives for kids to improve their academic skills and have something to which they could aspire. Even though Alkebu-lan Village offers college tours, many students are not going to college.

- The Village should consider offering art classes in the program to show kids how to draw.
- Music lessons could be an addition to the program.
- I also think that the Village should help the high school students get ready for reality and real life jobs by offering more employment experiences.
- While Alkebu-lan Village has African drums and music programs, adding visual arts would be helpful. The students could visualize art in different areas.
- Piano lessons one-on-one or small groups also would be beneficial for the students at the Village.

Another tutor thought Alkebu-lan Village would be more effective with a strong tracking component that would follow students’ progress and provide additional support after they leave the program. This tutor further suggested that the tracking component could chart the progress and success of the students, and this would attract more students to the program. In addition, this feature could attract more investors and possibly encourage corporate partnerships.

Other tutor comments are as follows:
I think that determining the students’ learning styles would be helpful. If tutors were aware of the learning styles of individual students, the tutor could be more effective in providing instruction.

Adding an additional computer lab because computers are a whole new world for the students.

Another plan would be to have a career day once a month for all students… to give them ideas about different jobs that are available.

Alkebu-lan Village should increase their alliance with the remaining schools in the district. While kids are drawn from these schools many of the teachers and administrators are unaware of the full scope of programs offered at the Village.

Summary

The results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis on the effects of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program provided evidence that all stakeholders (students, parents, tutors, staff, and administrator) thought the program was effective in accomplishing its goals of providing academic tutoring and social support for students attending school in a district that was considered to be failing. The students who were included in the study attended Alkebu-lan Village as part of an agreement with the urban school district. These students were in high school and received tutoring primarily in reading and mathematics. The students were tested prior to starting the tutoring program and again at the end of their programs. The average length of time spent in the tutoring program was 39.01 (SD = 6.85) hours, with a range from 2 to 74 hours, with students participating in a 10-week summer program. When the pretest and posttest scores for the WRAT reading test were compared, students significantly improved from a 6.27 (SD = 2.38) grade level to 7.79 (SD = 2.40) grade level. Similar results were obtained for the WRAT math
test, with scores increasing from 5.94 (SD = 1.92) at pretest to 7.38 (SD = 2.04) at posttest. These changes provided evidence that the students have benefited academically from their participation in the program.

Parents completed a short survey to measure their satisfaction with their children’s progress as a result of their participation in the Alkebu-lan Village program. Statistically significant correlations were found between their experiences with the program and their perceptions of their children’s direct and indirect academic experiences. No relationship was found between family income and the parents’ experiences with the program and the children’s direct and indirect academic experiences.

Each participant group (students, parent, tutors, and staff) was represented in separate focus groups. The administrator was interviewed separately, but was asked the same questions. All of the groups expressed overwhelming approval of the program, indicating that little needed to be changed to the academic and social aspects. Most of the suggestions for change were involved with transportation, which remained a problem, due to a lack of funding to purchase another van to transport the students from their homes to Alkebu-lan Village.

The participants thought the program should receive additional funding from some source, but were uncertain as to where the funding should be obtained. The students were happy with the schedule on Saturdays (arrive, eat breakfast, be tutored in small groups, eat lunch, and then participate in athletics, social programs, or shop in the school store). Parents thought that the mix of academic and nonacademic opportunities was helpful for their children. The tutors generally were happy with the program, but would have liked to have had smaller group sizes so they could have provided additional one-on-one help for struggling students.
Recommendations for the program were to expand the program to allow for additional students to attend, get more funding for the program, and improve the transportation services. Based on the findings of the study, Alkebu-lan Village appears to have provided effective SES for students of a failing school district. Chapter 5 presents the interpretation of these findings along with implications for practitioners, and recommendations for further research.


Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to examine parent, administrator, and staff satisfaction with supplemental educational services (SES) provided at a small, nonprofit, community-based, African-centered program (Alkebu-lan Village) that focused on improving English language arts and mathematics achievement among at-risk high school students.

The students attending Alkebu-lan Village appear to be resilient in pursuing academic success. The term resilience has been used to label three different types of phenomena: (a) individuals who have experienced traumatic events but have been able to recover well; (b) persons who belong to high-risk groups, but who have more favorable outcomes than expected; and (c) persons who show positive adaptation despite life stressors (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990). The students attending Alkebu-lan Village are examples of the second phenomena, they are not expected to do well, but in spite of their challenges manage to succeed as shown by their growth in reading and mathematics during their participation in the SES.

Henrich and Burch (2011) noted that many of these failing schools were in school districts that lacked in-house capabilities to apply the rigorous approaches needed to evaluate the impact of SES programs relative to student achievement and other metrics properly. Research indicated that States should consider three key areas when evaluating a SES provider’s outcome (Center for Innovation and Improvement, 2006). These areas include:

1. **Effectiveness**: did the provider increase student achievement in reading/language arts and math?

2. **Customer satisfaction**: are parents of students who receive SES satisfied?
3. **Service delivery and compliance:** did the provider comply with applicable state and
district laws and contractual procedures associated with the delivery of SES?

Detailed metrics on participant satisfaction (i.e., parent, student, administrator, staff, etc.)
traditionally have been used to demonstrate the degree to which a program has been successful.
Despite research suggestions, few states have collected substantial data on participant
satisfaction with their child’s SES experience. However, data on available participant satisfaction
has provided support that parents were generally satisfied with their children’s programs.

In its “Summary Report on the Evaluation of Supplemental Education Services” the
Public Policy Associates (2008) reported that 82.4% of the participating SES parents expressed
satisfaction with the tutoring received by their children. A consensus exists among the general
public that an intervention providing free, extra academic assistance to struggling students is
needed. After-school programs have been shown to be an effective manner of accelerating
student achievement, particularly among students considered to be “at-risk” due to
socioeconomic and academic factors, including: poverty, lack of parental support, and reduced
opportunities to learn (Frymier & Gansneder, 1989; McAdoo & Crawford, 1988; McGillis,
1996).

Parents’ experiences with the program were correlated with their perceptions of their
child’s direct and indirect academic experiences and family income. Statistically significant
correlations were found between parents’ experiences with the program and direct and indirect
academic experiences for their children. No relationship was found between parents’ experiences
with the program and their family income levels. Parent satisfaction with the program was
correlated with their race/ethnicity. No statistically significant differences were found for
parents’ experiences, and their perceptions of their children’s direct and indirect academic
experiences. Parents’ experiences were generally positive and their perceptions provided support that their children were benefiting from their participation in the SES program at Alkebu-lan Village.

**Focus Group Conclusions**

Each focus group was asked the same basic set of questions dealing with five core areas: strengths of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program, weaknesses of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program, most and least helpful components of the program, and suggested improvements. Parents were also asked to state their views on talking with their student’s tutors. Similar responses were given by all focus groups in regards to the strength of Alkebu-lan’s SES program. Responses stressed the importance of a developed holistic sense of community. All focus group members knew each other by name. The strength of a respectful familial bond was also highlighted, with the adults treating the students as if they were their own children and students addressing the adults by mama and baba. Overall, social, emotional, and academic support were mentioned as strengths of the program.

Most study/program participants had very little to say about program weaknesses. Any issues that did arise involved tardiness in program van pickup, but this was generally written off due to uncontrollable factors such as road conditions and traffic flow. An overarching theme was lack of program funding. The Alkebu-lan Village SES program received its funding from the school district, however, it was not seen as sufficient for operations. Three out of five focus groups voiced that the program would be able to have a larger impact if more funds were available. The student focus group cited lack of sufficient time as a program weakness. Students thought that the help provided was effective, but that more time would have helped them with their academic challenges. Lack of parental support was cited as a weakness by the tutor focus
group as the lessons (both formal and informal) taught at Alkebu-lan Village needed parental reinforcement once the students were at home and away from the Village environment. The parent focus group provided no responses regarding the weakness of the Alkebu-lan Village SES program.

The parent focus group overwhelmingly agreed that outside of increased funding for the program there were no other needed suggestions for the current tutorial model used. Student focus groups highlighted improvements for more non-academic activities (i.e., increased field trips, more days to participate in the program, fundraisers, etc.) than academically-based components such as reading and math. The staff focus group cited their ability to do more with the students as a suggested improvement. Responses ranged from raising more money to extending program time. Parents and administrator responses were also in agreement with staff responses.

**Inferences**

Whether at the early elementary or secondary level, SES programs are an intervention that can increase student achievement. Most students who are eligible and participating in the program come from backgrounds of broken familial and community structures that tend to exacerbate rather than alleviate academic challenges. A holistic environment supplementing the lack of positive and consistent academic and social support absent in these students’ lives can result in higher achievement and increased overall satisfaction by all stakeholders involved (i.e., students, parents, staff, community, etc.). With a community-based support system available for those who need it, stress is reduced for hard-working parents, classroom environments are less volatile, and students receive the help and support that they need to sustain them both in and
outside of the classroom making them better individuals contributing to a more productive society.

Alkebu-Lan Village represents a successful, holistic version of a preexisting Federal Student Support Services (SSS) program. The overall goal of SSS is to increase college retention and graduation rates among student participants. Federal Student Support Services require grant recipients to provide students with opportunities for academic development, assistance with basic college requirements, and motivation for students to go on to college successfully. (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Pursuant to mandates made in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), Alkebu-Lan Village provides many of the same services as SSS grant recipients, although it uses an “each one reach one, each one teach one” approach. This Village concept helps to ensure that the intellectual stewardship of the student participants reaches far beyond just academic growth. While students experienced increased academic progress while receiving SES services at Alkebu-Lan Village, this study should note that the tutoring was not solely responsible for the increased academic growth. Rather, the combination of both the tutoring and other nonacademic offerings built into the Alkebu-Lan Village curriculum contributed to students’ overall success. The supportive, family-like environment provided at Alkebu-Lan Village is key to the program’s operation and correlates closely with various academic perspectives aimed at resiliency.

Although there has been little consensus on a single definition of resiliency, scholars have defined resilience in several ways (Carle & Chassin, 2004). Resiliency is commonly explained by using a two-dimensional construct concerning the exposure of adversity and the positive adjustment outcomes of that adversity (Luther & Cicchetti, 2000). For the purposes of this study, the personal exposure of adversity faced by students was not of central focus to the researcher,
nor was an in-depth look at resilience theory. The findings of this study, however, suggested a strong correlation to both and more research is warranted when looking at resiliency theory and its link to federally supported student support services.

**Recommendations for Practice**

SES programs have been shown to be successful in improving students’ academic achievement. These programs have to do more than just provide additional instruction in the same manner that was presented in their public schools. They need to have a holistic program that incorporates food, academics, and socializing for the children. Two meals and snacks may be the most food some of these children receive on a weekend. The small group instruction is important to help them understand what is important to learn, especially in reading and mathematics. Being able to socialize and expend energy roller skating or playing basketball is equally important. Satisfaction with this program was evident with parents, students, tutors, and staff only talking about the positive components of the program.

More programs like the one at Alkebu-lan Village should be available for students in poor-performing schools to give them opportunities to grow academically. They need to have meaningful instruction from tutors who can present lessons from a different perspective than the public school teachers. Educators need to be aware of these types of programs that are available for their students. Parents need to ask their children’s teachers and administrators about sending their children for academic support at an SES external to the school.

**Limitations of the Study**

The primary limitation of this study is the lack of generalizability to all SES programs. Alkebu-lan Village is unique in the way that tutoring services are presented. The holistic program that integrates academic tutoring, meals, and social interactions are more than an
afterschool tutoring program that has students receiving small group instruction in the same environment as their school day. The teachers in these programs are the same, in contrast to Alkebu LAN Village, which has different tutors presenting remedial work in a different way. As a result, the findings of this study may not be similar to studies of other SES programs.

Another limitation of the study is the inclusion of only the high school students in the study. Children of all ages are included in the SES at Alkebu LAN Village, but limiting the study to the high school students was to study the effects of tutoring on the older children. Parents and staff may have different feelings about elementary and middle school students who represent a different population than the high school students. The types of tutoring used with elementary students are different from that given to high school students. The socialization programs are different because of the age differences. However, both groups are present in the building at the same time, they eat at the same time, and participate in the social programs. Because the younger children were not included in the study, the findings can only be related to high school aged students.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings of this study have provided overwhelming support for the SES program at Alkebu LAN Village. Additional research is needed to determine if SES programs are meeting their goal of providing academic support for students in failing urban schools. Future research should focus on studying a larger group of SES programs to determine their effectiveness in helping students become academically proficient, especially on standardized tests, such as the MEAP or WRAT.

A second recommendation is to examine the effects of participating in a SES program at elementary school to determine if children master reading and mathematics through the
additional support provided by tutors at the SES and if they maintain their abilities over time. Many programs help students initially, but then the improvement tapers off when the support is removed.

A longitudinal study needs to be conducted to determine the long-term effects of participation in an SES program on the academic achievement of students in failing schools. Research is needed to determine if additional support through small group or individual tutoring is enough to counter the instructional practices in failing schools.

Since this study tested the effects of the holistic nature of the SES program provided to high school students, further research to isolate the effects on student achievement for each of the program components would be instructive in designing SES type programs in the future.
Reference List


NoChildLeftBehind-Paper.PDF


SES_evaluation_guide.pdf


Appendix A

Approval from Eastern Michigan University Institutional Review Board
September 13, 2012

To: Cynthia Williams  
   Education Leadership and Counseling

Re: UHSRC #120807  
    Approval Date: September 13, 2012

Re: UHSRC #120807  
    Approval Date: September 13, 2012

Title: An Analysis of Parent, Student, and Staff Satisfaction with Supplemental Educational Services (SES) to Improve Student Achievement Among At-Risk High School Students in Failing School

The Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee (UHSRC) has completed their review of your project. I am pleased to advise you that your expedited research has been approved in accordance with federal regulations.

Renewals: Expedited protocols need to be renewed annually. If the project is continuing, please submit the Human Subjects Continuation Form prior to the approval expiration. If the project is completed, please submit the Human Subjects Study Completion Form (both forms are found on the UHSRC website).

Revisions: Expedited protocols do require revisions. If changes are made to a protocol, please submit a Human Subjects Minor Modification Form or new Human Subjects Approval Request Form (if major changes) for review (see UHSRC website for forms).

Problems: If issues should arise during the conduct of the research, such as unanticipated problems, adverse events, or any problem that may increase the risk to human subjects and change the category of review, notify the UHSRC office within 24 hours. Any complaints from participants regarding the risk and benefits of the project must be reported to the UHSRC.

Follow-up: If your expedited research project is not completed and closed after three years, the UHSRC office will require a new Human Subjects Approval Request Form prior to approving a continuation beyond three years.

Please use the UHSRC number listed above on any forms submitted that relate to this project, or on any correspondence with the UHSRC office.

Good luck in your research. If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 734-487-0042 or via e-mail at human.subjects@emich.edu. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Deb de Laski-Smith, Ph.D.  
Administrative Co-Chair  
University Human Subjects Review Committee