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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the Organizational Readiness Assessment Model, which was developed from research on the Arizona Pilot-Test Teacher Incentive Program: Career Ladders, a performance-based teacher reward system, is the purpose of this report. The model is composed of essential focus and support factors for educational improvement and success, which must be assessed by schools to determine their readiness to support the teacher incentive program. Data are collected through annual surveys of program participants, small group interviews, and a district profiling procedure. General findings indicate that diversity among school district organizations necessitates individual assessments and profiles, and that career ladder programs have generally had a positive effect on student achievement. Finally, the research points to the gap between theory and practical application. Diagrams illustrate the assessment model and profiles of district strengths and weaknesses. (LMI)

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DEVELOPING EQUITY & READINESS

IN SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONS:

Assessment, Profiling, Restructuring

& Redeployment of Resources

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REALITIES OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM,

CHANGE & IMPROVEMENT

* *Reform in education* has often taken a trial-and-error approach to change. This haphazard procedure has proven to be dangerous to those working within the jurisdiction of the system.

* *Change* must be based on knowledge and direction gained through in-depth *assessment of all essential interrelated elements of an organization*; otherwise, it will simply strengthen the weaknesses already in existence within the organization.

* *Improvement* must be accomplished with the planning and application of technological expertise which is at a level commensurate with the complex functions for which school organizations are responsible.

* Total school systems must be *ready* to be able to carry out the goals of teacher development and student achievement efficiently and effectively. This readiness can only be achieved through *accurate assessment and profiling of interrelated organizational components*, as well as development and implementation of long-range and systematic *evaluation and improvement plans* for the total system and its relevant functioning elements.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS ASSESSMENT MODEL:

Development and Application For Effective Schools

Overview. The Organizational Readiness Assessment Model was developed from five years of researching the Arizona Pilot-Test Teacher Incentive Program: Career Ladders. In 1985, the Arizona Legislature established a five-year career ladder pilot program under the direction of the Joint Legislative Committee on Career Ladders (JLCCL). The purpose was to implement a program for rewarding teachers based on actual performance, rather than solely on years of experience and accumulated college credits. Research and evaluation of the program in the 14 presently participating districts is being conducted by the Center for Excellence in Education at NAU in cooperation with researchers from the U of A and ASU. A number of doctoral dissertations are also focusing on various aspects of program implementation.

Research & Evaluation Methodology. Data is collected and compiled annually for the purposes of policy development and legislative refinement. Formal reports are presented to the JLCCL, and results are also fed back to individual districts.

Concepts Crucial to Program Reform. The researchers have developed a model of essential organizational components which must be functioning at healthy levels for effective reform. They consist of *focus factors*, such as student achievement and teacher development & leadership. Critical *support factors* include such components as teacher & administrator evaluation; motivation; professional input & ownership; and program designs & structures. *Essential elements for educational improvement & success* are at the base of the model and include professional networks; state finance & funding; and legislative guidelines. These individual organizational components need to be assessed as to their current readiness to support an external teacher incentive program within the district. In doing so, each district must address the following issues: (1) Has there been adequate restructuring of all interrelated district components which impact teacher development & student learning? (2) Is teacher performance appropriately assessed? (3) Is the teacher evaluation system perceived as fair & objective?

Data Collection & Analysis. Program participants are asked to complete an annual survey which assesses their perceptions of the impact and appropriateness of the Career Ladder program in key organizational areas. They are also asked to identify program strengths and weaknesses in the form of open-ended questions. Several studies have examined program impact using standardized achievement test scores. Small-group interviews have probed participants' perceptions, attitudes and emotional reactions to the effects of the program upon their academic, interpersonal and organizational activities. In addition, a "profiling" procedure has been developed which diagrammatically shows the current "level of operational health" of each organizational component, thereby indicating overall district readiness for program implementation.

Summary of Program Results. The following are the major findings:

1. School district organizations show extreme diversity with respect to current capabilities to implement such reform efforts successfully & efficiently. They differ dramatically in their needs for outside assistance in making improvements and capacity to demonstrate accountability for program goals.

2. A comprehensive restructuring of the total school district organization may be necessary in order to integrate the components which critically impact teacher development & related student achievement. Each district needs to be assessed & profiled to determine its current readiness level.

3. Successfully restructured districts have increased their impact on student learning potentials by more than 150% after CL implementation. Their impact on student achievement is over 225% greater than that of non-CL districts in the state.

4. A critical barrier to successful educational reform is the difficulty of "Transfer of Knowledge" into policy. That is, we need to know: "What level of thinking is used by educational & legislative decision makers in developing and implementing policy for improving schools?"

5. There are great concerns expressed by teachers about factors affecting morale within school systems. Perceptions of isolation & authoritarian control are especially evident. Negative influences operating within schools have affected organizational climate, psychological environment and internal communication procedures.

*Dr. Richard D. Packard, Director, The Arizona Career Ladder Research & Evaluation Project, February, 1990
*Dr. Mary I. Dereshiwsky, Statistical Research Specialist

Developing Educational Equity

& System Readiness

> To become effective organizations which have the greatest impact on positive teacher development and student achievement, districts must recognize the necessity of *developing total school system readiness.*

- Districts are extremely unequal (*between school systems*) in their organizational capabilities and resources to impact student learning potentials.

- Organizational components (*within school systems*) exhibit varying capabilities and levels of resources to impact school goals. One inappropriately functioning component or negative factor can anchor and drag the others down or keep them from attaining the institutional goals.

Assessing and Profiling Organizational Readiness

for Educational Accountability

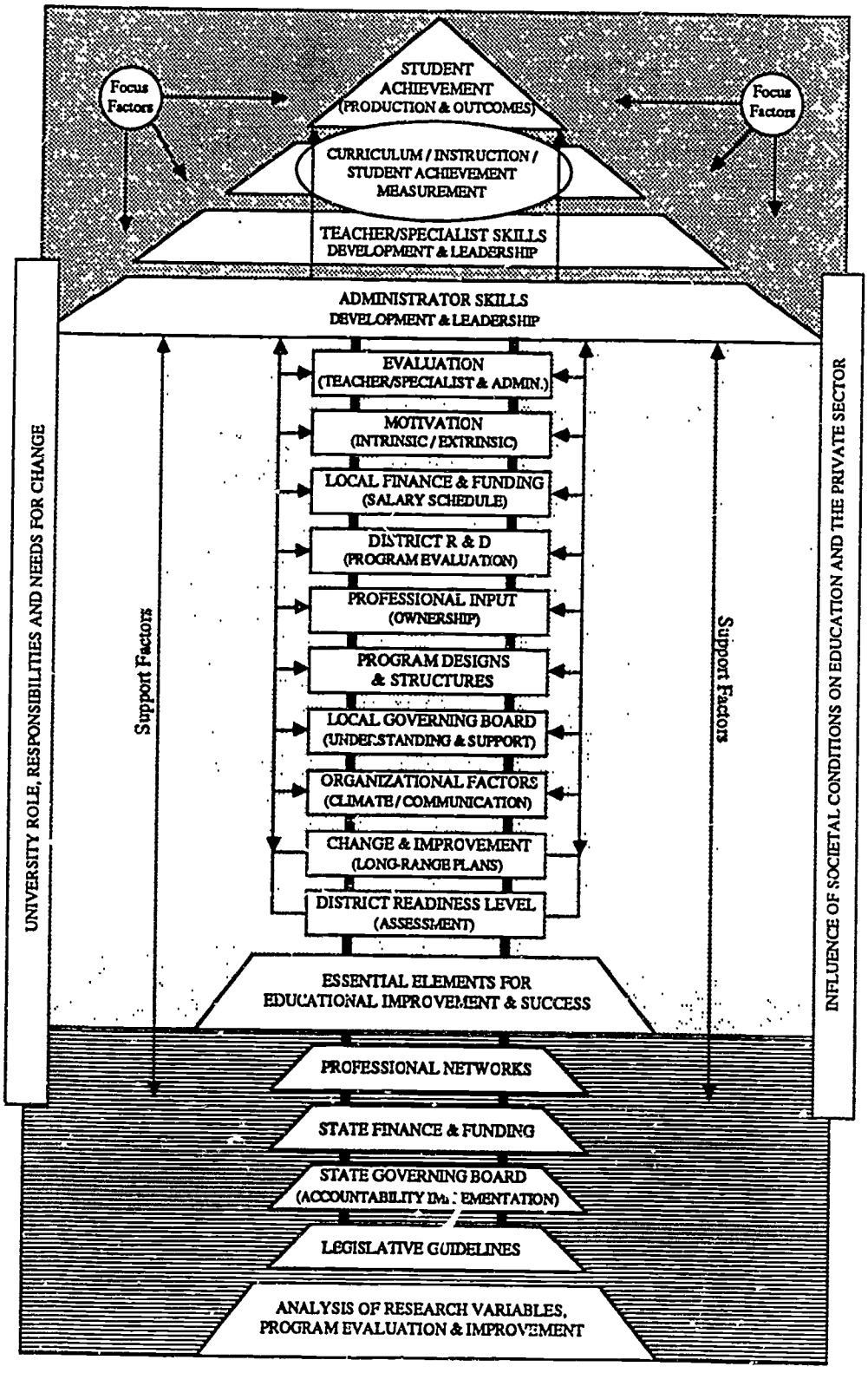
> *Accountability* for effective school operations is determined through assessing, profiling and improving the total organization and its components which impact school goals.

* The first step toward development of organizational readiness is to determine how each of the interrelated components of the school system is integrated and targeted on school goals. Each support and focus factor must be operating in a healthy way and functioning at a level which will support the total organization and reason for its existence.

* Before major change and restructuring can successfully be accomplished (the planning phase), the total school system and curricular programs must be *evaluated*, resulting in informed decisions for *redeployment of resources.* Objective and valid information is necessary to achieve readiness levels which can successfully allow implementation of complex and comprehensive reform programs.

* Effective *restructuring* of school districts is accomplished through *assessment, profiling* and *integration* of all interrelated components. Each support and focus factor which shows weaknesses should be promptly corrected through application of *improvement models* which meet local needs.

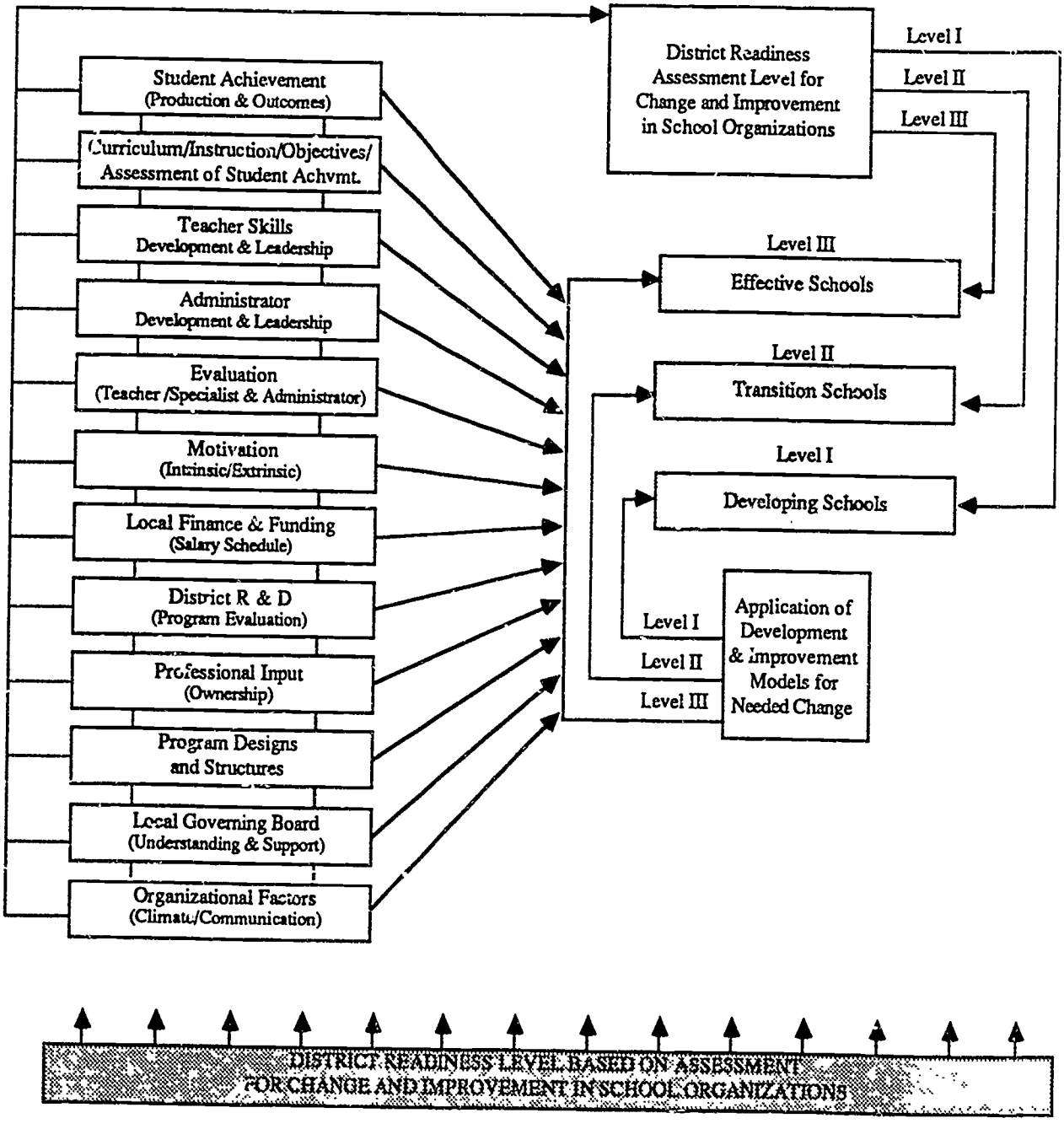
THE ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS
ASSESSMENT MODEL



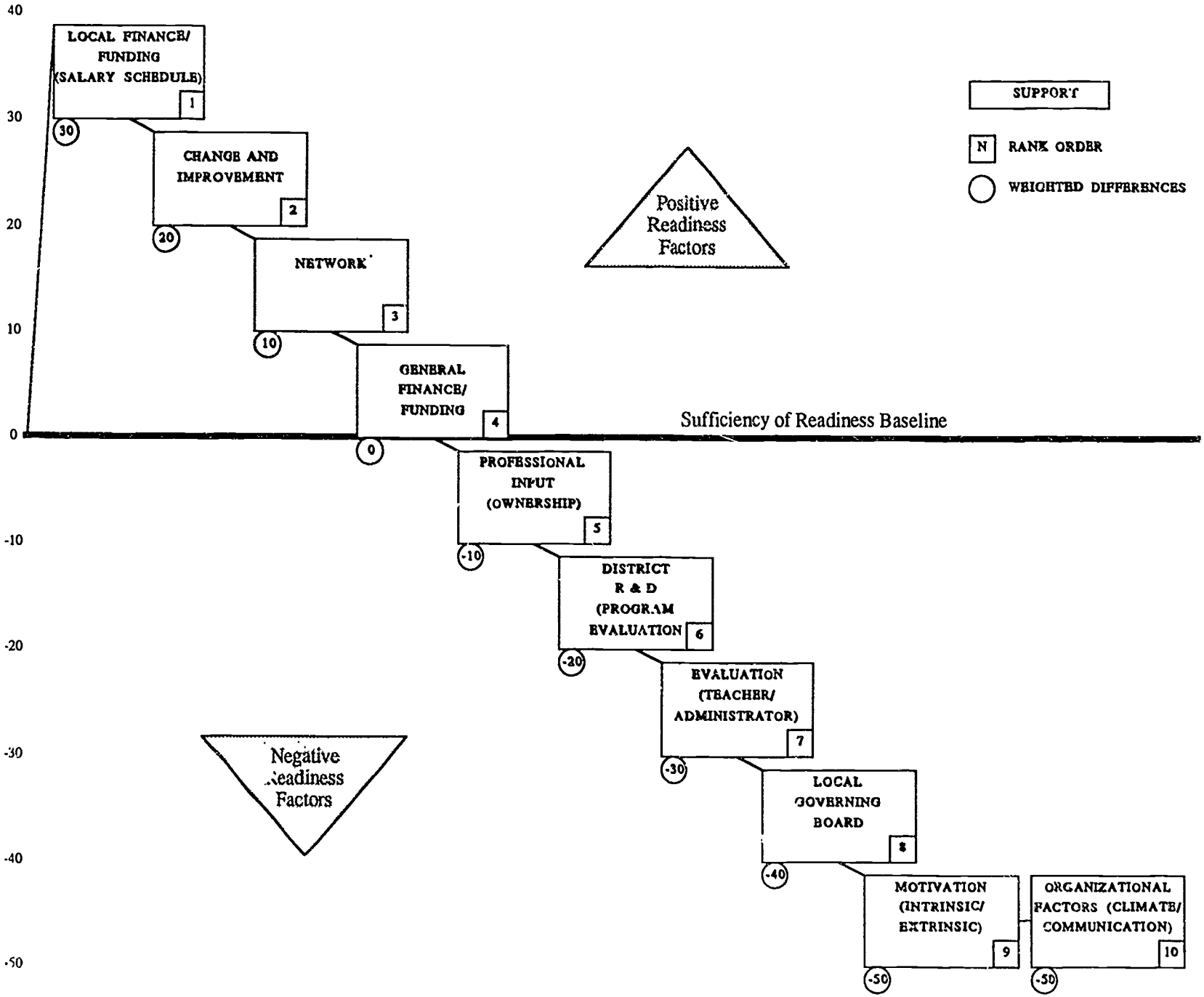
A Model of Interrelated Components of Program Support and Focus Factors for Effecting Change and Reform in Education

ESSENTIAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMPONENTS
FOR SYSTEM ACCOUNTABILITY:

District Assessment, Profiling, Restructuring
& Redeployment of Resources



DISTRICT READINESS PROFILE OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES



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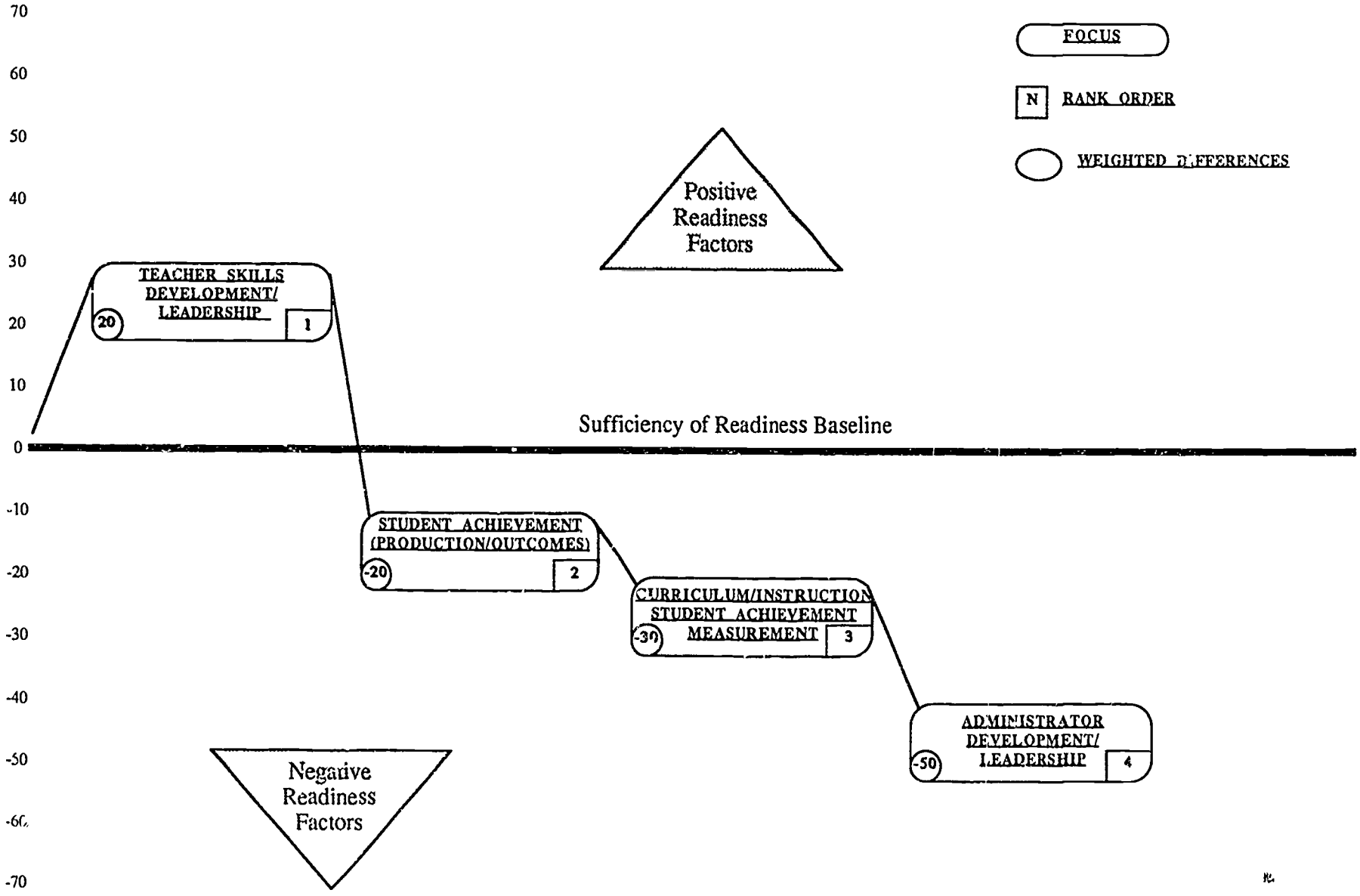

Essential Interrelated Characteristics of Effective Schools:

Focus Factors

> All internal and external organizational factors must be primarily focused on, and be held accountable for, student growth and learning. The focal point of student achievement depends on adequate support and development of the following factors:

* Student Development & Learning. Students are unequal in maturation, motivation and past experience. For student development, it is necessary to understand the *principles of human growth and learning*, such as the following: (1) students have differing social, emotional and academic readiness levels; (2) learning proceeds at different rates; (3) growth and learning is a sequential, continuous and orderly process; (4) development is cumulative and begins from where past experience and learning have left off.

* Measurement of Student Progress. For accountability in the *measurement and assessment of student progress*, it is necessary to identify specific amounts of pre- and post-gains. Teachers must be aware of the different levels at which students began their learning process, how far they have advanced and what specific content is next in the curricular/developmental sequence.

* Curriculum & Objectives. A valid and reliable *curriculum* is required in order to meet state and local objectives for learning and on which to assess student progress.

* Instructional Resources & Application. Adequate *instructional materials, methodology and technology* is required to assist students in learning curricular content.

* Teacher Skills Development & Leadership. Teachers must have the support of adequate *inservice programs* and incentives for development of classroom teaching skills, and provision of *leadership opportunities* focused on the instructional program.

* Administrator Skills Development & Leadership. Administrators must have the support of adequate *leadership development and incentive programs.*

Essential Interrelated Characteristics
of Effective Schools:

Support Factors

* Evaluation of Personnel Performance. Evaluation of administrator and teacher performance requires *valid and reliable criteria* which fairly and objectively differentiate skills and leadership related to enhancing the school's instructional program and impacting student learning.

* Motivation: Extrinsic/Intrinsic. Teachers are extrinsically motivated if they receive *adequate compensation* to focus their energies on the professional duties involved in the teaching/learning process. In addition, they need to be recognized for their level of teaching skills and leadership based on a fair and objective evaluation system They are intrinsically motivated through being able to work in a *cooperative and supportive environment* which allows for individuality, trust and respect, creativity, skill development and input and leadership in improving the learning environment.

* Finance, Funding & The Salary Schedule. Local financial commitment should be adequate for recruiting and maintaining a highly qualified and motivated teaching staff. Salary schedules should reflect a differentiation of staff based on performance. However, increments which are too large can result in financial hardships or potential morale problems due to competitiveness and jealousies among teachers.

* Research & Development of District Program Impact. Districts must establish a locally based research and development operation which assists in planning, studying and documenting progress in changing and improving all the essential interrelated support and focus elements within the organization which impact on student learning. A major function of the R & D unit is to assist in establishing internally, or securing from outside sources, the necessary technical and technological support to assess and improve district developmental needs.

* Professional Participation, Input and Ownership. In order for districts to develop a highly effective and efficient operation, all professional interests in the district must be knowledgeable about the essential elements which impact student achievement and included in supporting their improvement. Teachers must be centrally involved in the development, implementation and continuing evaluation of all programs which affect them (i.e., the teacher evaluation system) and the instructional program (i.e., establishment of the curriculum and objectives and student assessment programs).

* Program Designs and Structures. It is necessary to design and structure a total school organization so that an overall operational pattern is established which is focused on teacher development and student learning. School organizations require a long-range plan which provides for assessment, restructuring and redeployment of resources to meet desired educational goals and to demonstrate accountability for the public trust.

* Organizational Climate, Communication & Morale. Factors such as interpersonal communication, organizational climate and psychological environment are key to the successful operation of any essential interrelated component within school systems. Administrators, teachers, support staff and students must have a cooperative and supportive environment in order to reach individual potentials which, in turn, result in the most effective performance outcomes.

* The Local Governing Board. To become an effective school system, the local governing board needs to understand the essential elements of its school organization, how these factors positively impact student learning, and how to be most supportive in meeting educational goals. Boards which play control politics, and are under the undue influence of special interests, are extremely destructive to the development of a healthy organization and its focus on the proper purpose for existence.

* Conditions for Reform, Change and Improvement. Total school systems must be *ready* to carry out the goals of teacher development and student achievement efficiently and effectively. This readiness can only be achieved through *accurate assessment and profiling* of interrelated organizational components and development and implementation of a *long-range and systematic evaluation and improvement plan* for the total system and its relevant functioning elements.

Support of Outside Forces
Impacting Teacher Development & Student Achievement

> Outside forces impacting school organizations, such as legislation, policy guidelines, governing boards, universities and business and industry, must understand the needs and goals of school systems. In addition, they may need to restructure operations and redeploy resources to meet specific needs of the total interrelated components of school district systems.