ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN AN ERA OF
ACCOUNTABILITY: THE ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL PRINCIPAL PERSPECTIVE

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Recent school reform movements have demanded high levels of
accountability from districts and from individual schools. The accountability was
measured in terms of student achievement. Current research linked student
achievement to teacher professional development. Evidence also suggested that the
quality of teacher professional development was impacted by the structure and culture
of the school. The research in organizational learning linked professional
development to the creation of learning communities that supported shared decision-
making, a supportive environment for experimentation, collaboration among peers
and supportive leadership. The school principal was identified as a key component in
the creation of learning communities. The purpose of this study was to uncover the
practices that elementary school principals utilized that balanced the demands of
accountability with the creation of supportive learning environments.

This study utilized a multi-case study of schools identified as having supportive environments for professional learning. This analysis of data found that principals engaged in an initial assessment of the school's performance, the instructional practices and the social context of the school based on their personal belief systems. This included a look at the existing leadership patterns, the structures of decision-making and the staff's perceived need for change. In addition to this assessment, the principals began to establish and vision for the school and they restructured the decision-making processes. The principals also began to "re-culture" the school by promoting professional learning, collaboration and teacher decision-making.

This study found that the impact of *No Child Left Behind* was to narrow the focus of teacher professional development to the areas assessed by state testing and to frame teacher decision-making around the analysis of data. The implementation of *No Child Left Behind* had little effect on the structures and cultures of the schools studied.

The identification of the practices principals used to support professional learning was significant because accountability and student achievement impact virtually every school in the country. The study added to our knowledge about the effects of accountability, leadership and the development of environments that support learning.

SUPPORTING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN AN ERA OF

ACCOUNTABILITY: THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

PERSPECTIVE

by

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The pursuit of a dissertation is fundamentally a self-indulgence with an expanding sphere of connections and relationships that demonstrate support, encouragement and patience. It is my hope that my indulgence will have some positive impact beyond my own professional growth. This study has expanded my horizons and, I believe, made me a better principal. I hope to share what I've learned with others.

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Introduction

Throughout American history there have been calls to reform schools. These

reform efforts have revolved around broad cultural shifts such as the industrialization

of the 19th century, the influx of immigrants in the early 20th century, the

technological revolution and the rise of a global economy in the late 20th century.

Reforms of the last two decades have focused on effective schools, school

improvement and a standards-based accountability. Knapp and Ferguson (1998)

summarized and categorized the efforts to reform schools over the last two decades

into two broad camps: a macro state reform perspective and a micro teacher

professional development perspective.

The macro perspective was expressed in terms of system accountability,

standards for achievement and teacher certification. This movement followed the

publication of *A Nation at Risk*, the Department of Education's rallying cry that

blamed American public schools for the nation's diminished capacity to compete in a

global market. This reform movement focused on high standards for student

achievement and held schools and districts accountable for the perceived failures of

American students. Embedded in this approach was an assumption that schools

controlled the variables that produce student achievement. The latest such reform

movement, categorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-

110, § 115 Stat. 1426 (2002), held states and schools accountable for the academic

growth of each child. Schools were subjected to sanctions, revised improvement plans and restructuring in the event that they failed to meet the standards.

The micro perspective of school reform was expressed in terms of internal school variables such as collaborative teacher professional development and the development of learning communities. The basis of this theory was that student achievement was related to teacher and school effectiveness (Hawley & Valli, 1999). Teacher effectiveness was enhanced by the types of learning opportunities available to teachers and by the structure of the school organization.

There was evidence that the two approaches to school reform were melding to create a more coherent policy environment (Knapp & Ferguson, 1998). State-wide reform movements such as the program in Kentucky included an extensive professional development component. School-based reform movements such as *Success for All* and the *Coalition of Essential Schools* called for the establishment of professional learning communities (Lieberman & Miller, 2002). Other researchers (Dufour & Eaker, 1998) addressed the structural and organizational components of schools to allow for more resources to be devoted to teacher professional development. While not explicitly suggesting a type of professional learning, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* included requirements for teacher certification and preparation.

Regardless of the approach to school reform, improving student achievement remained the central focus. While research suggested that several variables affected student achievement, examining and improving the teaching and learning processes

remained the core tasks of school districts and individual schools. When examining

the research on the factors that affected student achievement, Rosenholtz (1989)

concluded:

> In virtually every instance in which researchers have examined the factors that account for student performance, teachers prove to have a greater impact than program. This is true for average students and the exceptional students, for normal classrooms and special classrooms. There is an enormous amount of evidence that teachers have a significant impact on efforts to change schools and on the nature of students' experience, whatever the formal policies and curricula of a school or classroom might be. (p. 3)

Considerable evidence existed that linked the improvement of teaching and

learning to the type of professional development that teachers received (Guskey,

2000). Hawley and Valli (1999) stated that there was a growing consensus that "calls

for providing collegial opportunities to learn that are linked to solving authentic

problems defined by the gaps between goals for student achievement and actual

student performance" (p. 127). Most significant to this study, Joyce and Showers

(1995) linked professional development to increases in student achievement data.

Joyce and Showers believed that the link was dependent on professional development

that was collaborative and focused on solving problems related to student

performance

Reform movements that promoted increased professional development and the

establishment of professional learning communities did not always address the

complexity of providing the climate and creating the culture necessary for this

development to occur. Simply providing resources for additional planning

opportunities did not directly translate into a collaborative model of professional

development. While the lack of planning time remained a critical obstacle to creating professional learning communities, evidence suggested that efforts to improve professional development must also address the norms and beliefs in the schools. In his work on reform movements, Smylie (1995) found that school reform movements must address issues of (a) teacher collaboration, (b) governance, (c) organizational support, (d) the opportunity for job embedded learning, (e) accessibility to sources of learning outside of the school, and (f) the principal's role in structuring these factors. Studies also suggested that school reformers must make an effort to understand the characteristics of professional development and adult learning in order to build the climate and structure to support these initiatives (Alexander & Murphy, 1998).

Linda Darling-Hammond (1996) argued that for all children to learn, educators needed to improve the teaching and learning process and "understand what schools must do to organize themselves to support such teaching and learning" (p.193). Darling-Hammond believed that the development of the core task of teaching and learning resided at the school level. Other research specifically cited principal leadership and its effect on the climate and culture of a school and the nature and effectiveness of teacher professional learning. "Principals have substantial influence on the development, nature and function of teacher social relations, teacher learning, and change" (Smylie & Hart, 1999, p. 421).

While evidence indicated that school principals played a key role in implementing a culture of collaboration, reorganizing a school to create a climate for collaborative professional development was no small task (Smylie, 1995). The

reorganization demanded changes in leadership, structure, culture and focus, all within the context of the individual school. This was problematic for a number of reasons. First, principals were faced with conflicting and ambiguous policy directives. Schools were asked to develop highly site-specific school improvement plans while being held accountable to district and state mandates. Second, some reform models assumed that a single approach was sufficient across different contexts. These "one-size-fits-all" models such as *Success for All* disregarded a school's culture when considering the instructional process (Marsh, 2000). Third, many reform models demanded a technical understanding of the prescribed approach that placed a heavy burden on a principal's time and cognitive energy (Elmore, Ableman & Fuhrman, 1996). Finally, many principals did not understand the key concept of dispersed leadership that was a necessary component of a collaborative learning community (Ogawa, Crowson & Goldring, 1999).

The current movement towards greater accountability for student achievement placed added pressures on principals. Federal, state and district mandates created a sense of urgency to conform to assessment formats and reporting processes (McNeil, 2000). Curricular changes that responded to new standards for achievement required staff development and training. Principals found themselves trying to balance the often-conflicting demands of district mandates with the internal climate of the schools as they worked towards promoting an environment conducive to collaborative professional learning.

Given these challenges, the question arose: How do principals balance

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conflicting demands while still creating an atmosphere that permitted effective collaborative professional learning, which had been shown to positively affect student achievement? Four related bodies of research provided insights that helped answer this question: (a) organizational learning, (b) the school improvement process, (c) principal leadership, and (d) teacher professional development. However, these bodies of research did not fully address the effect that the heightened demand for system accountability had on a principal's ability to promote professional learning in their buildings. This study addressed this knowledge gap.

The literature that looked most closely at the changing and ambiguous demands on schools and school principals in combination with school climate was the work done in organizational learning. Organizational learning looked at the accumulated experiences that affected both the behavior of those who work in the school and any attempts made at change. These accumulated experiences allowed the organization to learn and adapt to change.

While organizational learning encompassed a broad area of study, it included considerable research at the school level, defining the conditions that turn schools into learning communities. These conditions included a shared vision and purpose, a culture and structure that supported collaboration, and dispersed decision-making among the staff. The research suggested that with these learning community characteristics in place, effective collaborative professional development could exist.

Closely related to organizational learning is the work done on the school improvement process. The research on school improvement looked closely at the

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change process and the factors that contributed to the successful implementation of school reform. This research focused on process and the sequence of actions that school leaders employed to create the conditions identified as a learning community.

A third body of research that was relevant to this study addressed the specific role of leadership and its impact on developing learning communities. There was growing evidence that principal actions had a significant effect on the school's culture and teacher professional learning. Although there was conflicting research on the principal's effect on student outcomes, there was a great deal of evidence indicating that principals did affect teacher perceptions about professional learning and the climate of supported collaboration (Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994). The literature on principal leadership identified several characteristics that supported professional learning including role definition, instructional focus, decision-making, staff relations and problem solving.

A fourth body of research, the work done on teacher professional learning, supported a call for the establishment of learning communities and linked student achievement, school culture and leadership practices. A great deal of research conducted in the area of professional development found only an indirect link between teacher professional development and student achievement. However, most of the research on teacher professional development relied on teacher perceptions of the effectiveness of professional development and not on student performance. Joyce and Showers (1995), however, did link student achievement to teacher professional development when four basic components present. One of these components was the

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collaborative work of teachers to solve problems, support growth and analyze and evaluate student progress (p. 110). This type of teacher collaboration and how principals supported this element of professional development was a central component of this study.

In summary, a considerable body of evidence supported the theory that school reform that sought to increase student achievement was dependent on improved teaching and learning, both of which could be enhanced through the professional development of teachers. Furthermore, for professional development to be tied to student achievement, it should be collaborative and analytical in nature. Effective professional development could flourish in a school that offered the culture and structure of a learning community. The leadership of the principal was a critical component in allowing such a culture and structure to exist. However, a host of competing demands and organizational structures, including high-stakes accountability may inhibit this process. This study examined how principals balanced these demands and structures to create climates that promoted the type of collaborative professional development that may ultimately result in greater student achievement.

Background

As a principal, I believed that student achievement was directly linked to the type and quality of the professional development of teachers. I also realized that the professional development of teachers was dependent on the culture and climate of the school. Finally, the creation of a climate that supported professional development was

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very much my responsibility. Creating this climate depended on my ability to articulate a clear instructional vision that set high standards for student achievement and was data driven. I must also create an environment that fostered aggressive and comprehensive professional development based on the instructional vision. The key, however, as I have learned over the past 12 years as a principal, was that teacher professional development was most effective if it balanced the needs of the teachers and the goals of the school. There was no simple, one-size-fits-all method that worked for every, or even most, teachers.

My understanding of teacher professional development began to change as I tried to match teacher needs to our school goals. I found myself providing a variety of staff development formats in a haphazard and unsystematic way. I sent teachers to conferences when the conference caught their interest. I participated in informal and small group discussions about instruction, had individual conferences based on goals, observations or concerns, and posed rhetorical questions. Although these informal discussions focused on school initiatives, I found that the issues that engaged teachers the most were dependent on personal preference. I found myself enjoying conversations about instruction and gravitated to the teachers who also enjoyed those discussions. Eventually, the discussions about instruction became part of our school's culture. Teachers who enjoyed discussing instruction and abstract concepts dominated the School Improvement Team, a site-based governance committee. I also found that I sought these characteristics in people during interviews with potential new hires.

I began to discover that teachers sought professional improvement in different

ways and were motivated by different factors. While some teachers were excited about innovation and embraced the opportunity to try new techniques, others resisted change. Some needed to see models; others responded to abstract ideas to pursue an interest. Some pursued change with a passion; others needed to be coerced to implement new approach. While some teachers preferred to work individually, others sought collegiality when working through problems involving student performance.

Whole staff presentations were initially effective because the staff needed a common language and vision in order to implement new mandates from the state. Our staff development initiative began with an understanding of the state expectations and the identification of instructional strategies necessary to achieve success. However, as the school continued to add staff due to increased enrollment, the knowledge and skill level of the new staff members varied considerably. I implemented reflective journals as one means to extend and individualize the dialogue about instruction. I was impressed with the way some teachers used the journals to reflect on their practice. In other cases, the journal was a benign activity in which teachers wrote terse and unimaginative comments.

It became apparent to me that effective professional development meant more than just providing opportunities to learn. This realization coincided with a local and national movement in education to develop professional learning communities. I began to examine the practices and structures in my school and how they related to the current research in professional development. It occurred to me that our school must begin to create a climate of personal growth tying instructional practice to

student achievement. The school implemented major initiatives that included creation of study groups to look at student performance, curricular design and teacher practice. We sought opportunities for coaching, mentoring and we continued the use of reflective journals.

I believe that these efforts positively changed the culture of the school by making risk-taking and experimentation the norm. The level of discussion about instruction increased in frequency and depth, while student achievement increased, but I could not definitively link the two. I would like to think that there was a direct causal effect, but I could not rule out other factors such as the effects of the community, curricular changes or the quality of teaching.

As the process evolved, questions arose in my mind regarding the effectiveness of collaborative professional development in general, and study groups in particular. Were timing and school culture relevant variables? What were the structures that support teacher decision-making? How important was my role? What were the obstacles that block success? Could we do more to promote collaboration among teachers? Most importantly, did collaborative professional development improve student achievement?

This study began as an examination of the conflicting demands faced by principals who were asked to balance a call for collaborative professional learning with district mandated changes. I was curious about how principals structured their schools for teacher growth while the state and the district initiatives were handed down at a furious pace. To address these questions, this study looked at these issues

through the eyes of school-based principals who were charged with implementing the new initiatives. How did principals create a climate for professional development in their buildings, while balancing competing demands? This study sought to address my own questions about practice and to add to the current literature on learning communities, school improvement, and principal leadership. Finally, this study sought to determine how high-stakes accountability impacted principal practices.

Context

The context of the study was selected elementary schools in a large public school district in the Mid-Atlantic region. The district began an initiative in August 1999 of collaborative staff development. The initiative began with a presentation by Daniel Dufour to principals, teacher leaders and central office personnel on the topic of schools as learning communities. The follow-up to the presentation included seminars on job-embedded staff development and the creation of learning communities within the schools. The district improvement plan reflected this emphasis. Individual schools added collaborative staff development to their school improvement plans.

Two events occurred in 2002 to significantly impact the learning community initiatives of 1999. One event was the passage of *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*. This law created a need for a significant change in the state accountability program. The state accountability program, as it was constructed, included student assessments that did not meet the requirements for measuring *Adequate Yearly Progress*, a provision in the *NCLB Act*. The state designed and implemented a new

assessment program that made provisions to address *NCLB*. While the content standards in the state remained the same, proficiency levels were modified to comply with *NCLB*. Elementary schools in the selected district found that their School Improvement Plans became obsolete under the new assessment program and awaited direction from the state regarding new goals and targets for student achievement. The state proficiency levels were announced in 2003.

The appointment of a new Superintendent became the second significant event to affect schools in the district. In response to a perceived inadequacy in system performance, the new Superintendent created rigorous academic goals and required structural and curricular changes. These changes included a restructuring of the school schedule and the implementation of comprehensive math and reading programs. Schools immediately reacted to these directives. The Superintendent placed a sense of urgency on implementation, increasing the pressure on schools to adopt the changes. These changes included intensive district mandates for staff development.

Principals were charged with implementing the district directives while managing the culture and structures of their schools. The timing of this study was an opportunity to examine the actions of principals in a time of extreme and urgent change.

The Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to describe the leadership and actions of principals that promote professional learning in elementary schools under the context of high-stakes

accountability. These actions are embedded within the rich context of schools. To uncover phenomenon embedded in context, a research methodology must consider context. Therefore, a qualitative case study approach is warranted. However, to look for patterns in behavior, a multi-case study is suggested. In this fashion, patterns across cases can emerge.

Once a qualitative method is determined, the sample selection is important. In this study, a purposeful sample was selected. By using professional learning as a proxy for a professional learning community, supervisors responsible for overseeing elementary schools were asked to identify schools with high levels of professional learning. Each supervisor was asked to list five schools with high levels of professional development. The lists were compared to generate a list of three schools to participate in an in-depth study utilizing a multi-case study approach.

The case study relied on interview data, observations and a document review. A synthesis of the relevant research allowed for the creation of a guiding conceptual framework that suggested a process of actions that principals took to create environments that supported professional learning. The guiding conceptual framework served as a heuristic to create interview questions and to categorize data from the interviews and observations. Data was sorted and categorized using the guiding conceptual framework. However, new patterns emerged during a cross-case analysis.

The study sought to identify the processes and specific actions and strategies principals used to create climates that support professional development. In addition,

the study was interested in how high-stakes accountability affected the actions of principals and the overall climate and culture of the selected schools.

Statement of the Problem and Research Question

Schools must respond to the challenges of school reform. Calls for accountability demand rapid increases in student achievement for all students. There is evidence to suggest that teacher professional development is a key to improving student achievement and that quality professional development is dependent on the culture and structure of schools. Evidence also suggests that principals are a critical component to the establishment of an environment that supports professional learning. However, there is very little research in how principals support professional development under the threat of high-stakes accountability. The study seeks to uncover the practices that principals utilize to promote professional development in the face of high-stakes accountability.

The central question for this study is: How do principals in schools in which supervisors perceive that leadership supports the development of professional learning describe the practices they use to promote professional learning? Sub-questions include:

1. In schools with a high degree of supportive leadership, what does the principal perceive as effective practices that promote professional learning?

2. Do these practices suggest a process of principal actions that affect professional learning?

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3. How does high-skates accountability impact teacher professional learning?

Potential Significance

Much of the research on teacher professional development linked collaborative professional development to a teacher's sense of efficacy, pedagogical reasoning and understanding of curriculum (Rosenholtz, 1989; Ross, 1992; Miskel, McDonald & Bloom, 1983; Cousins, Ross, & Maynes, 1994). In their research, Joyce and Showers (1995) suggested that if teacher professional development included collaborative problem-solving and the analysis of student performance, student achievement was positively affected. However, there has been little research conducted as to the effect of the accountability reform movements on the implementation of collaborative professional development.

In the current climate of school reform, both the district and state mandated curricular and professional development choices. Schools must devote energy to addressing these mandates, providing less opportunity to use inquiry and creativity. In addition, both school structures and culture may inhibit collaboration. Limited planning time, limited resources, the demands of implementing a comprehensive curriculum and relative isolation may create obstacles for collaboration. Finally, school cultures dominated by a fear of experimentation, lack of administrative support, isolation and individualism prevent collaboration.

Evidence suggested that a principal's leadership could significantly affect the opportunities for collaboration and the promotion of effective professional

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development (Smylie & Hart, 1999). The challenge for each principal, then, was to balance the demands of the district and state while creating a culture that allowed for collaborative professional growth among teachers. This required an understanding of the change process, school structures, culture and the varying types of collaborative professional development. Essentially, the principal's actions affected the level of implementation of professional learning in the building. These actions included the principal's articulation of the vision and mission of the school, the understanding of the change process and the management of the culture and structure of the school.

While there was increasing evidence suggesting that the principal had a large role in creating an environment that supported collaborative professional learning, the impact of high-stakes accountability was unknown. This study contributed to the bodies of literature that intersected to define this study: organizational learning, school improvement, principal leadership and teacher professional learning.

In the area of organizational learning, the literature acknowledged that external variables played a role in the internal structures and culture of the school. However, by using the context of high-stakes accountability, this study identified the impact of the district's effect on the school and how principals responded to these effects. In addition, this study explored the creation of the conditions that supported professional learning.

Closely related to organizational learning was the research on school improvement. This study described the phases of school improvement and the factors that contributed to school effectiveness. These phases included the assessment,

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implementation and institutionalization of the school improvement process. In addition, this study looked at the strategies principals used to manage change.

In the area of leadership, principals described the practices they used to address the demands of district accountability and the promotion of professional learning in their buildings. This study identified principal characteristics that contributed to the creation of a supportive climate. In addition, practitioners may derive how perceived effective principals assessed school culture and how they respond with actions.

The literature review of professional learning focused on effective practices and the role of the principal in promoting professional learning. This study described the relationship between principal practices and effective professional learning under the context of high stakes accountability as perceived by the participants in the study. This study did not seek to describe a relationship between professional learning and student achievement in the current context.

An examination of the these bodies of literature and existing models led to the creations of a guiding conceptual framework that addressed principal practices that impacted the culture and climate of a school that fosters teacher professional learning under the context of high-stakes accountability. This framework allowed for the creation of data collection devices and provided categories for analysis.

In regards to policy, this study shed light on the principal's role in significant reform movements that involved fundamental changes in school structure and culture. This information could be used by district leaders and school-based leaders in making

decisions specifically about the content and processes of a teacher professional development in an era of district mandates initiatives. Implications and inferences about the principal's role in the implementation of fundamental reform and school improvement may also be derived. In addition, if current reform movements pay heed to the issue of teacher professional learning as suggested by Knapp and Ferguson (1998), suggestions for the assessment and analysis of the school's culture, structure and leadership may be considered as part of a new initiative's implementation. Finally, this study described the effects of high-stakes accountability on school culture and teacher professional development, suggesting possible changes in implementation.

Limitations

This study was limited by the nature and scope of the guiding conceptual framework, the selected sample and the methodology. The framework provided a set of conditions that must be present in schools to demonstrate organizational learning and included professional development strategies that supported teacher learning. The framework suggested a process of the assessment of the school performance and subsequent actions that impacted the school's climate and professional learning. Finally, the framework sought to uncover the district effects on the establishment of a climate that was supportive to professional learning. However, the framework was not comprehensive in identifying all of the potential variables that may impact principal practices (Yin, 1994; Creswell, 2003). In this study, the external force to be uncovered was the effect of the state and district accountability on the professional

learning in the schools. This study did not directly link district effects with professional learning. Instead, the study sought the perceptions of three principals as to how they promoted professional learning given the context of accountability.

The purposeful sample had limitations. The sample size was too small to make broad generalizations about the effects of accountability on principals who seek to promote professional learning. In addition, the selection of this particular school district may not be representative of school districts around the country due the significant changes in leadership, policy and curriculum. However, the demands of *No Child Left Behind* and the rush of states to meet those demandswa s a consistent challenge across the country.

Another limitation of the study was the timing of the case study. The district was under tremendous pressure to change practices beyond the demands of the state and federal mandates. Principals and schools were reacting to intense change in a relatively short time frame. The actions that a principal took may take a considerable amount of time to implement and to have a desirable impact on professional learning. Further study over a longer time period is suggested to investigate the full impact of the change process.

The methodology of a case study was also a limitation. A case study, by nature, accepted that there are possibly more variables than were considered by the study. The study was bounded by the sample selection and the data collection system. This study did not seek to fully explain all of the actions that occurred in a school. Instead, the lens was organizational learning and the school improvement process.

Despite these limitations, this study contributed to our understanding of how principals promote professional learning in a climate of high-stakes accountability. The urgency of the changes forced changes in principal actions. This study assessed the impact of urgent changes on professional learning.

Organizational of the Study

This study is organized around the traditional qualitative report. The problem is identified and contextualized in Chapter One. Chapter Two describes the relevant literature. Specifically, the literature review looks at organizational learning and the characteristics of learning communities. In addition, the literature review looks at the school improvement process and principal leadership. The characteristics of effective professional development are described. Finally, the effects of high-stakes accountability are described. Chapter Two ends with the development of a guiding conceptual framework that synthesizes the literature and suggests interview questions and serves as a heuristic to categorize data.

Chapter Three describes the methodology, the sample selection and the data collection. Chapter Three also includes a discussion of data analysis including coding and the emergence of patterns in a cross-case analysis.

Chapter Four includes the first level of data analysis through the use of narratives to describe the selected schools. The narratives are written in a chronology that describes the change process. Direct quotations are used as supporting evidence. Chapter Five describes the patterns across cases. Chapter Six includes a return to the research questions and a discussion about the implications of the study on the

literature, practice and policy.

Definition of Terms

Accountability: A state or national policy with a primary emphasis on measured

    student performance, the creation of complex standards by which schools can

    be compared and a creation of systems of rewards, consequences and

    intervention strategies as incentives for improvement. (Elmore, Abelmann &

    Fuhrman, 1996, p. 65)

Best practices: Instructional strategies proven to be effective. Best practices imply

    "particular instructional methods and techniques follow from the specific

    types of learning needed to achieve the desired results" (Wiggins & McTighe,

    1998, p. 162).

Collaborative professional development: "the collaborative work of teachers to solve

    problems, support growth and analyze and evaluate progress" (Joyce &

    Showers, 1995, p. 110).

Learning community: "a social organization consisting of cooperative relations

    among adults who share common purposes and where daily life for both

    adults and students is organized in ways which foster commitment among its

    members" (Bryk & Driscroll, 1988, p. 1).

Organizational learning: "groups of people with a common purpose, who continually

    examine and modify those purposes, and continuously develop more effective

    and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes" (Leithwood & Aikens,

    1995, p. 41).

Perceived need for change: the level agreement among people that a change is within

their or the organization's best interests. The need for change is determined

when "the staff decides that their needs or interests are not being met

sufficiently by an activity" (Busher, 2001, p. 77).

Principal leadership: actions taken by principals that are "aimed toward influencing

internal school processes that are directly linked to student learning. These

internal processes range from school policies and norms to the practices of

teachers" (Hallinger and Heck, 1996, p. 38).

School improvement process: "a strategy for educational change that focuses on

student achievement by modifying classroom practice and adapting the

management arrangements within the school to support teaching and learning"

Hopkins, 2001, p. 2).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The examination of practices used by principals to promote teacher professional learning touches upon broad but inter-related areas of study including the work done on organizational learning, the school improvement process, principal leadership and teacher professional development. In addition, research on the effects of accountability is just starting to influence policy makers and school reformers. This study will use a model based on organizational learning and the school improvement process as the core bodies of work. The research on organizational learning is broad and extends beyond the scope of this study, but it does not fully cover the role of principal leadership, the effects of accountability and the characteristics of effective teacher professional development. The research on the school improvement process contributes to the development of a model because it suggests a sequence process to improving schools. By examining the literature in these areas, a guiding conceptual framework can be developed that integrates the relevant bodies of literature. Data collection tools and a format for data analysis can then be derived from the new framework.

Organizational Learning

The competing demands of school reform required that we analyze a school's ability to adapt, change and respond to exogenous and internal pressures. Schools must develop an ability to address these demands. Edmondson and Moingeon (1996) argued: "organizations facing uncertain, changing or ambiguous market conditions need to be able to learn" (p. 7). In his book, *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge (1990)

described the concept of organizational learning as an organization's ability to tap

people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels of an organization. Argyris

(1996) explained:

> No managerial theory, no matter how comprehensive, is likely to cover the complexity of the context in which the implementation is occurring. There will always be gaps and there will always be gap filling. Organizational learning is critical to detecting and filling the gaps. (p.1)

Schools that adopted the concept of organizational learning and took the

necessary steps to build climates that embraced change could be called learning

organizations. Leithwood and Aikens (1995) defined a learning organization as:

> a group of people pursuing common purposes (and individual purposes as well) with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes. (p. 41)

Learning organizations in schools.

By structuring as a learning organization, a school was better equipped to

address the changing landscape. Leithwood and Louis (1998) applied the concept of

learning organizations to schools:

> In a learning organization, change and improvement occur because the individuals and the groups inside the school are able to acquire, analyze, understand and plan around information that arises from the environment and from internal monitoring. Emphasizing the school as a complex social system, rather than as a collection of structures and procedures, can help to focus our attention on the heart of the school - the teaching and learning process. (p. 18)

Louis and Kruse (1998) found that when schools were structured as learning

organizations a dense network of collaboration emerged as evidenced by increased

shared planning time and informal interdependent teaching roles like team-teaching.

Teachers became more reflective in their practice. The structures of problem-solving teams, decision-making teams and a climate of inquiry supported the tenants of a learning organization. A learning organization valued individually held knowledge, and created knowledge through self-appraisal, reflection and dialogue organized towards a goal of student achievement. The process of learning occurred in meaningful contexts. There was an emphasis on consensus and systematic learning.

Organizational learning implied more than superficial structural changes. In the era of school reform, it was commonplace to implement structural reforms like site-based decision-making, teaming, block scheduling, year round schools, prescribed curricula and assessment programs. However, the literature did not support a strong link between structural changes and the changes in school culture that promoted a collaborative model of professional development (Guskey & Peterson, 1996; Fullan, 1993). However, Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) found that the depth of staff complexity, planning time and empowerment had a positive effect on a school's sense of organizational learning. They suggested that teachers should have a more narrow focus on curriculum and greater responsibility in managing content pedagogy. In addition, opportunities for site-based management and shared decision-making contributed to organizational learning.

Peterson and Deal (1998) believed that a school's culture reflected the unique nature of the organization that develops over time. School reforms that sought to change the cultural norms in a school were more successful when the reforms capitalized on this unique nature of schools (Griffin & Barnes, 1984). There was

growing evidence that deep structural changes in the organization were necessary to allow for fundamental changes in teaching and learning. In reviews of school restructuring Fuhrman (1993) found:

> There must be consistent and coherent support for the teaching and learning activities, which constitute the technical core of a school's activities. When changes to the core technology are made, there needs to be an appropriate redesign in structure, culture and polices should be revisited, if not substantially revised. (p. 4)

A model for organizational learning.

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1998) developed a model for identifying the conditions that impact organizational learning. After an extensive review of the literature, the authors identified five conditions that interact to explain how and why organizational learning occurs. These conditions include a stimulus for learning, organizational processes, exogenous conditions, internal school conditions and leadership. The interaction of these conditions produces school outcomes that affect student learning.

The stimulus for learning resulted from the prompting of a perceived need. A new policy demand or an identified problem led to a collective search for a solution. The stimuli were manifested through district policies, encouragement from administrators, demographic changes and individual teacher interest. In an era of accountability, the stimulus was a perception that student achievement of all students, or specified groups, was lagging behind an identified standard. In addition, the perceived need could be generated internally based on student data and observations.

The second condition necessary to foster a learning organization was the

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individual and collective processes of organizational learning which included: (a) the exchange of information through informal discussions (more likely in smaller schools), (b) trial and error approach to teaching, (c) experimentation, (d) opportunities for teachers to see other teachers teach, (e) opportunities for reflection, (f) systematic strategies for goal setting, (g) school improvement plans, (h) individual growth plans, and (i) well designed processes for implementing new ideas including evaluation of the implementation.

The third necessary condition to impact organizational learning encompassed the initiatives taken by actors outside of the school that directly affected the school. These actions may have had an intended target exogenous to the school, but the implementation affected the school nonetheless. Examples included directives from the Health Department, policies from the federal, state or local level or initiatives from the district. Of those listed, teachers cited district directives as most influential in the perception that the district supported organizational learning. Specifically, teachers believed that the district's culture, structures, strategies and policies impacted the level of shared decision-making and professional development in a school. District actions that impacted the school's learning included the availability of resources, clear communication and opportunities to participate in decision-making.

The fourth condition necessary that contributed to organizational learning included the initiatives taken by the school. These factors included the internal structures and climate of the school. Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach defined the factors:

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1. The mission and vision: The mission and vision must be clear, shared by most of the staff, perceived as meaningful and be pervasive in discussions among the staff;

2. The school's culture: School culture was a dominant feature cited by teachers. It included the level of collaborative and collegial relationships, respect for divergent ideas, willingness to take risks, honest and candid feedback, a commitment to continuous improvement and the shared celebrations of success;

3. The decision-making structures: Decision-making structures included formal and informal problem-solving teams and settings, team teaching, consensus building activities, the use of physical space/proximity, the clarification of short-term goals, the setting of professional goals, a reliance on current practices, sufficient resources (least dominant), and access to resources;

4. The strategies for change: The school's strategies for change included how the school sets goals, planned and gauged progress. Effective strategies included a clear and narrow instructional focus and the professional development that reflected this focus; and

5. The nature of school policies: This included policies and the allocation of resources. Policies must be conducive to professional learning and promote a collaborative culture. Teachers need access to available resources that promote professional learning within the school and to

resources in the greater community.

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach eventually revised their model to add a fifth condition to impact organizational learning. This condition was leadership. Leadership described how leaders identify and articulate a vision, foster the acceptance of group goals, and convey high performance expectations for teachers and students. Leaders must provide appropriate models (set an example), demonstrate involvement in all aspects of the school, and show respect for, and an interest in, students. Leaders must also provide individualized support and intellectual stimulation for the staff. Effective leaders built a productive school culture with a strong belief in collaboration, shared values and communication. Finally, leaders in a learning organization helped structure the school to enhance participation by allowing autonomy and they sought participation in decision-making.

Other researchers have supported the conditions enumerated by Leithwood and his colleagues. Joyce and Showers (1995) listed four norms that are essential for school improvement that reflect the culture and structure of a learning organization: (a) shared decision-making, (b) strong and active leadership within a democratic structure, (c) self-worth and affiliation as opposed to alienation, and (d) a belief in the high purpose of education.

Limitations of the model for organizational learning.

An analysis of the research related to organizational learning indicated that the framework created by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach fell short in describing specific characteristics and processes that promoted professional and organizational

learning. However, others have done substantial research to document these processes and actions. In their qualitative study on elementary schools implementing action research, Mitchell and Sackney (1998) found that learning in an organization goes through a cyclical and dynamic process. The first stage was the building of trust, the development of the process of reflection, and identifying current practices. During this stage teachers concentrated on their own perspectives without trying to understand their colleagues' point of view. In the second stage teachers began to analyze and integrate their learning. The teachers became more analytical and thoughtful, expressing and testing assumptions, and more willing to take a critical look at their own teaching. During the third stage teachers began applying and experimenting. They developed a concern for the opinions of others and their reflection became more evaluative in nature, until a common understanding emerged. Mitchell and Sackney pointed out that not all teachers went through the stages at the same time and many of the stages were iterative.

Trust.

Special attention must be given to the concept of developing trust and collegiality within a staff. The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University instituted a paradigm for staff development called the Critical Friends Groups (Dunne & Honts, 1998). Critical Friends Groups (CFGs) were study groups within a school that examined a particular issue. The authors identified several key variables that impacted the success of the CFGs. The first factor was internal group dynamics. To be successful there had to be a high level of trust. In some cases, the

trust was already high in the school. In other cases the trust had to be developed within the group. A second variable was administrative support. The most successful CFGs had principals who were actively involved in the CFGs. A lack of support or passive support was ineffective. Also ineffective were cases where participation in the CFG was forced and perceived as punitive. School culture was the third variable. In schools with traditional cultures of presentism, conservatism and individualism, the CFGs became marginalized and isolated. In schools where there was a culture of collegial work, CFGs thrived. Access to resources was the fourth variable. Effective CFGs had a broad range of resources that included information about specific instructional designs. The study of CFGs highlights the efficacy of the learning organization model.

 A focus on varying conditions.

 Despite the consistency in the research on the conditions that support professional learning, some researchers have found that professional learning can thrive under varying conditions. In a study of varying school learning communities, Westheimer (1999) found two schools with a high sense of professional development. However, one school focused on the teachers' individual rights, autonomy and responsibility to others while the other school focused on shared beliefs and values. These schools varied in terms of governance, decision-making, and interdependence. However, both schools possessed strong professional learning communities reflective of their circumstances. This study emphasized the highly contextualized nature of schools and the presence of some of the conditions identified by Leithwood and his

colleagues, but not all of the conditions interacting together.

Contrary evidence to organizational learning.

There is some confounding evidence against the establishment of a learning organization. In his review of the research on effective schools Mortimer (1994) suggested that control-oriented instructional leadership models were more closely related to student achievement than the capacity building models emphasized by the transformational leadership practices that resulted in learning organizations. The effective schools research (Lezotte, 1997) suggested a more control-oriented model. However, learning organizations may be more flexible in responding to the unique characteristics of schools and external demands. Leithwood and Louis (1998) stated:

> Organizational learning assumes that the initial conditions for effective learning must be established in schools through special efforts, frequently launched from outside the school. However, given the reasonable success of these efforts, organizational learning allows for a refinement in response to changes in goals and the circumstances in which those goals are to be achieved. At any point in time, schools could look different except in respect to the core conditions necessary to sustain and encourage organizational learning. (p. 4)

This contradiction suggested that reconciling the apparently competing structures of a control-oriented leadership model and a capacity-building model may involve a process in which the leadership first develops clear goals and structures but also develops the capacity for the organization to respond to changes. Strong centralized leadership precedes organizational learning.

From organizational learning to a learning community.

There are a great number of articles and rhetoric that used the terms learning organization and learning community interchangeably. It was easy to assume that

they were the same thing. However, a careful analysis of the research indicated that there was a subtle difference between a learning organization and a learning community.

Organizational learning suggested that conflicts and assumptions were brought to light for discussion. Diversity of opinion was valued. By constantly challenging assumptions and expressing diverse opinions, a disequilibrium occurred with the potential for conflict. Learning organizations sought to achieve a consensus around a central focus; in the current case of schools, this would be student achievement. This pluralistic approach to diverse opinions was a defining concept in the literature on organizational learning since the 1980s. However, the constant clash of diverse opinions could create instability in the organization (Leithwood & Louis, 1998). To provide stability, Leithwood and Louis suggested that it was necessary to create a learning community. This concept of cooperation and shared vision emerged in the late 1980s. This view still allowed for the diversity of opinion, but the goals and mission of the organization tended to be shared and pervasive throughout the organization.

Bryk and Driscroll (1988) defined a learning community as "a social organization consisting of cooperative relations among adults who share common purposes and where daily life for both adults and students is organized in ways which foster commitment among its members" (p. 1). The concept of community implied the stability of trust, mutual interdependence, and permanent personal investment, affiliation, and caring that promotes continuity and stability (Leithwood & Louis,

1998). The added components of collegiality, common purpose and commitment transformed a learning organization into a learning community (Sergiovanni, 1994). The difference between a learning organization and a learning community would be the increased level of commitment to collegiality and purpose. This added emphasis on collegiality would be reflected in the type of professional learning occurring in the school.

A learning community incorporated a strong emphasis on the professionalization of teachers' work through increasing teacher knowledge. A learning community was promoted through shared norms and values (Bryk, Lee & Holland 1993), a focus on student learning (Sergiovanni, 1994), de-privatization of practice (Leibermann, 1988), collaboration (Little, 1990), and reflective dialogue (Zeichner & Tabachink, 1991). Structures, such as discipline based discussions (McLaughlin, 1993) and discussion groups centered on meaningful shared issues (Sergiovanni, 1994) contributed to a sense of a learning community. In their work on professional learning communities and collaboration, Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) found a direct link between collaboration and a teacher's sense of responsibility for his/her students and a sense of participating in a learning community.

Collaboration in a learning community.

While collaboration was an important component, a learning community implied more than opportunities for collaboration. Hart, (1998) states:

> Collaboration, in and of itself, does not necessarily guarantee increased efficiency, effectiveness in schooling, or empowerment of students and families. At its best, collaboration facilitates the education of children and youth, enabling educators to have access to expanded knowledge, resources, and creative alternatives for action. (p. 90)

However, when the collaboration was framed around a shared vision and was focused on student achievement, as in a learning community, there were benefits to the opportunities for school reform, teacher attitudes and student achievement. Morhman (1994) found that the establishment of learning communities positively affected the school structure and culture. Goodell, Parker and Kahle (2000) found that teachers who participated in a systemic change program had positive feelings about making instructional changes and persisted when faced with challenges. Involvement in action research resulted in more reflective practitioners, more systematic problem solvers and more thoughtful decision-makers (Sparks & Simmons, 1989). Roberts and Wilson (1998) found that when teachers participated in assessment moderation (group collaboration on analyzing student work) several results occurred. They concluded that participation: (a) added significantly to teachers' skills for assessing students, (b) enhanced teachers' ability to evaluate and improve teaching, (c) significantly increased teachers' access to useful ideas, (d) enhanced the quality of learning for students, (e) improved teaching in non-project areas, and (f) supported beginning teachers.

In their work on professional learning communities and collaboration, Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) found a direct link between collaboration and a teacher's sense of responsibility for his/her students and a sense of participating in a learning community. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found a positive connection between the collaborative learning communities and student achievement. Smylie, Lazarus and Brownlee-Conyers (1996) found that teacher autonomy, which was contrary to the

interdependence of a learning community, had a negative impact on student achievement.

Potential problems with collaboration.

The complexity of school culture and teacher collaboration cannot be underestimated. Research indicated that the collaborative work might be ambitious or superficial. Conflicts among individuals could arise and micro-political battles could eschew (Little, 2002). A shared like-mindedness could be counterproductive to the organization. A collaborative professional learning community must respect the passions, interests and dissents of the individual. The structural conditions of time, space, responsibility, and dispersed leadership must be accompanied with openness for improvement, trust and respect and communication.

The research suggested that it was essential that a shared vision of teaching and learning permeate a collaborative environment. Conflicts in fundamental beliefs could lead to disappointment and disillusionment. For collaboration to be effective, it was important to seek issues or problems in which a shared vision or genuine interest was evident (Evans-Stout, 1998). Barott and Raybould (1998) stated, "Collaboration does not end conflicts or difficulties. Instead, it brings the difficulties to light and seeks to address them" (p. 28). However, a collaborative approach to vision could encroach on the "norm of autonomy", a teacher's sense of autonomy in the classroom, causing jealousy and resistance (Barott & Raybould, 1998; Johnson, 1998).

The creation of learning communities dispersed leadership among the staff.

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There was an implication that the dispersal of leadership extended beyond the teachers and principal to the greater community and to the students themselves. A learning community promoted learning at all levels. This empowerment of students to construct their own knowledge was the antithesis of the norm of order and control that permeated many schools (Johnson, 1998). A conflict in the relationship between the norms held by the teachers and the empowerment of students could inhibit the creation of a learning community.

Teacher workload and time were significant deterrents to collaboration. Collaboration required significant "face time". Time to meet could be increased by restructuring the school day and the duties assigned. Negotiated agreements, school hours and responsibilities may need to be adjusted. Workload issues may be resolved through lessening the teacher's responsibility with multiple content areas and the demands of teaching a wide variety of material. Creating "content specialists" created more work time and less workload.

Collaborative professional development required ample resource allocation. Resource allocation included access to materials and to experts who could enhance teacher practice. Resources could also support technology that created opportunities for collaboration such as telephone and e-mail access. There was evidence to suggest that implementing a collaborative professional learning community had a high start-up cost in both energy and the demands of coordination and communication (Johnson, 1998).

The structure of collaborative groups was an important consideration. There

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were several variables that impacted a group's effectiveness including: (a) deadlines, (b) the initial start-up attitude of the group, (c) the amount of authority the group can exercise, and (d) the content of the work. Teacher work groups should: (a) have some heterogeneity but not be too dissimilar (Pounder, 1998), (b) range in size from two to eight (Erb, 1995), (c) have access to collaborative task training (Clark & Clark, 1994), and (d) clear work requirements and constraints (Pounder, 1995).

   Culture in a learning community.

   There were several norms associated with a positive climate for professional learning communities. Warren (1982) found that successful schools had a high degree of collegiality, a sense of continuous improvement and analysis, evaluation and experimentation. Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) found the norms of supportive leadership, openness to innovation, respect, opportunities for instructional feedback and professional development contributed to a positive sense of a learning community. In contrast, schools without a fertile climate for a collaborative learning community displayed a culture of "teacher as artisan". These schools supported isolated individual work and problem-solving (Leithwood, 2002). The development of a learning community created the climate for the collaborative professional development of teachers which was positively linked to improving the teaching and learning process (Hawley & Valli, 1999).

   Evidence suggested that the establishment of collaborative structures changed the culture of a school (Mohrman, 1994). The establishment of teacher work teams (restructuring) and the realignment of responsibility, authority and accountability (re-

culturing) within the context of school learning environment were effective in changing the culture of the school culture. In turn, the school context (structure and culture) affected the implementation of professional development and the type of professional development that created the conditions of a learning community. The process is on-going and iterative.

The establishment of a learning community, then, exerted a positive influence on the teaching and learning process. The key factors in establishing a learning community were collaborative school cultures (Louis, Marks & Kruse, 1996) and strong leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998).

Teacher professional development in learning communities.

The improvement of the practice of teaching remained a key focus on learning communities. Hawley and Valli (1999) stated, "Organizations are ways of structuring, focusing and facilitating collective human behavior. The core technologies of an organization are central to the function of the organization. Teaching is the core technology of schools" (p. 29). West (2000) believed that "the focus for leadership in a learning community is the expansion of improvement capacity, a complex blend of structural and cultural development combined with evolving contextual and theoretical knowledge-base. Capacity change supports organizational and professional renewal" (p. 30).

Professional renewal was a significant component of increasing capacity within a learning community (Murphy, 1994). Blasé and Blasé (1999) found that professional development was a necessary part of a learning community. Principals in

a learning community provided opportunities for the staff to address emerging instructional needs. Principals provided for teacher input into design and content of the professional development. Optional teacher attendance, a sense of inquiry and active participation were characteristic of professional development in a learning community. Teachers had access to professional literature and opportunities to view demonstrations. Overall, there was a focus on implementation and the evaluation of practice that promoted the instructional goals and objectives of the school. Elmore (2000) found that the professional development in learning communities focused on the school learning goals.

Creating a learning community meant that the learning of every member of the community was enhanced. To enhance teacher learning, we must understand how adults learn and sustain learning and what teachers need to know to improve practice. "We need leaders who understand how children and adults learn and keep on learning, and who understand how to build communities of learners" (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 1). Blasé and Blasé (1999) suggested that principals could foster teacher professional development in a learning community by focusing on teacher reflection and the practice of teaching, and by allowing teachers the opportunity to address emerging instructional needs in a meaningful way. In addition, professional development should be collaborative, promote inquiry, allow for teacher input into the design and content and allow for practice and coaching.

Collaborative professional development was aligned with the dispersal of leadership within a learning community. It demanded a role change for the principal

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and the staff as the staff became more involved with the design and implementation of the professional development. The professional development was focused around the instructional goals of the schools. Staff relations were collegial and respectful. The professional development in a learning community was concerned with the professional growth of the individual within the context of the organizational structure.

   Community of practice.

   In contrast to the conception that learning organizations fostered diversity in instruction, researchers described schools in which the focus was narrowed to a few issues and energy was expended to address those issues in a collaborative and supportive environment. This environment was referred to as a community of practice. In his work on distributed leadership Copland (2003) described a community of practice in which there existed "the development of a culture within a school that embodies collaboration, trust, professional learning and reciprocal accountability" (p. 379). There were three conditions that must exist to create a community of practice: (a) the development of the culture took skill, (b) there must be a consensus of the problems facing the organization, and (b) there must be a rich expertise residing within the school. Communities of practice instituted a Cycle of Inquiry in which problems were identified and refined. Measurable goals were developed and a plan was devised and implemented. Data was then analyzed, suggesting new problems. Copland described levels of inquiry that could exist within a school (see Table 1).

Table 1

School Stages of Inquiry

Stage	Defining characteristic
Novice	Learning the value of data and learning. Experimenting with the inquiry process. Valuing and using data.
Intermediate	Inquiry shifts closer to teaching and learning. This may require changes to the core concerns. Managing data is the norm for decision-making.
Advanced	The inquiry process is an accepted, iterative process involving the whole school and connected the classroom level. Actively pursuing sustainability of the reform.

Note: Leadership of Inquiry: Building and Sustaining Capacity for School Improvement (p. 384).

The School Improvement Process

While the literature on organizational learning looked at the conditions that affected professional learning, the literature on school improvement looked at the processes involved in reforming schools. This research was concerned with the elements of change. Miles, Louis, Rosenblum, Ciploone and Farrar (1988) defined school improvement as "a systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (p. 3).

Harris (2002) identified the characteristics of effective school improvement that mirrored the conditions of a learning community: (a) a clear vision, (b) dispersed leadership, (c) a focus on students and learning, (d) teacher collaboration, and (e) a commitment to inquiry. The development of these characteristics followed a process that Fullan (1991) identified in three phases: the initiation phase, the implementation

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phase and the institutionalization phase.

Schein (1992) believed that the presence of a problem, a connection of the problem to the organization's purpose and the generation of possible solutions characterized the initiation stage. Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1996) suggested that the initiation phase was dependent on the condition of internal capacity for a school to change. They suggested that change agents needed to assess the readiness for change. Joyce (1990) believed that the initiation of school improvement required a catalyst that included an analysis of data and internal opportunities such as a leadership change or a self-reflection process. Gray & Wilcox, (1995) suggested that regardless of the source of change, teachers needed to be involved in, or as least informed about, the identification of the need for change to insure greater commitment.

Once the change was initiated, the school leader needed to secure change in the implementation phase (Fullan, 1991). This involved clarifying the purpose of the change, sharing control, applying pressure and support, obtaining evidence of success, and sustaining enthusiasm. Fullan (2001) believed that much of the success for the implementation phase rested on the will and skill of the school leader through relationship building.

The institutionalized phase of the school improvement process involved creating the structures and evaluation tools to sustain change. At this point, change was embedded into the school's fabric, making the new initiatives part of the daily functioning of the school (Harris, 2002). School leaders maintained the commitment to new initiatives by monitoring success, but also by monitoring potential overload.

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Fullan (2001) warned against too many change initiatives or changes that were superficial due to a limited capacity for energy and interest.

Strategic leadership.

The school improvement research cited the work done on organizational learning as necessary to secure and sustain change. These conditions included the building of teacher capacity, professional development and strategic leadership. Strategic leadership was closely aligned with transformational leadership (Davies & Davies, 2004). Strategic leaders translated strategy into action by aligning people within an organization. Tichy and Sharman (1993) described a process that had three components. The components were an awakening, an envisioning and a re-architecturing. Awakening implied the identification and articulation of problems. Envisioning involved the expression of a dissatisfaction or restlessness with the status quo (Davies, 2003). Re-architecturing implied a restructuring of the organization. Camburn, Rowan and Taylor described a similar process of "configuration and activation" (2003, p. 350). Configuration was the creation of an organizational structure and activation referred to the social processes that encouraged distributed leadership and instructional capacity. Camburn, Rowan and Taylor suggested that the instructional leadership of teachers could be developed through staff development.

The activation of this process included an alignment of people within the organization. This occurred through the encouragement to commit to shared values (Boal & Bryson, 1988). Evidence indicated that this commitment occurred through strategic conversation and dialogue and involved intellectual stimulation and

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inspiration (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Boal and Hooijberg stated that strategic leaders displayed interpersonal skills such as empathy, motivation and communication (2001, p. 532). Bennett (2000) further described the personal characteristics of strategic leaders to include the personal values of integrity, social justice, humanity, respect, loyalty and morality. In addition, Bennett identified strength and courage as necessary to counter adversaries and a passion to proceed with visionary projects (2000, p. 4). Whittington stated that strategic leaders needed "an enduring sense of purpose and a continuous sense of motivation" (2001, p. 43).

Principal Leadership

The central question in this study is what do principals do to support professional learning in an era of accountability. The literature review will now look at the research on leadership behaviors and the actions that principals take to support professional learning.

In the early part of the 1990s there was much rhetoric about the effects of leaders in general, and principals in particular, as to their impact on the creation of learning communities (Lezotte, 1997). However, in their analysis on the effects of principals on school outcomes, Hallinger and Heck (1996) discovered that the effects were small except in the establishment of school goals. The researchers stated: "Principal leadership that makes a difference is aimed toward influencing internal school processes that are directly linked to student learning. These internal processes range from school policies and norms to the practices of teachers" (p. 38). The conditions and characteristics of individual schools significantly affected the results.

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This conclusion, however, may be skewed due to the relatively unsophisticated research techniques utilized that did not account for all of the mitigating variables (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998).

Over the last few years, however, there was emerging evidence that principals did exert a greater influence than was suggested by meta-analysis done by Hallinger and Heck. Smylie and Hart (1999) found that principals had substantial influence on the development, nature, and function of teacher social relations, teacher learning, and change. Reynolds, Sammons, Stoll, Barber and Hillman (1996) found that principals also positively impacted the learning environment, structure and organization, information collection and decision-making. Principals also positively affected consensus and cooperation (Schreens, 1997), and school procedures that contributed to a learning community (Mortimer, 1994)

In their work on teacher quality of work life, Rosenblum, Louis and Rossmiller (1994) identified principal leadership behaviors that positively affected teacher perceptions in collaborative work environments. Five categories emerged from their work: role definition, instructional focus, decision-making structures, relations with staff and the management of self. Further work by Blasé and Blasé (1999) and Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) added two additional categories: promoting professional development of teachers and problem-solving ability.

Role definition.

Rosenblum, Louis and Rossmiller (1994) found that leaders with a positive effect on teacher work perceptions changed roles from technical managers to more of

a facilitator, or guide. There was less direction and more coaching. Murphy (1994) found that in learning communities, the principal roles changed to include more delegation of responsibility, recognition of teacher successes, and information regarding instructional innovations. Interestingly, Murphy found that as principals relinquished more instructional responsibility they became less involved instructionally and took on more managerial tasks. The difference between Murphy's study and the study conducted by Rosenblum and his colleagues could be a matter of perception. Murphy's study was a qualitative look at the perspective of principals and Rosenblum's study assessed teacher perspectives.

Crow (1998) looked at the changing roles in a collaborative environment in terms of an influence-relation model in which two key components arise: parity and reciprocity. Parity was defined as equal status among participants and reciprocity implied an active exchange in which participants perceived that they receive benefits, privileges and rewards for their efforts. Principals in collaborative environment established relationships of parity and reciprocity. This was in contrast to a more supervisory role.

Murphy (1994) cautioned that the change in principal role definition was hindered by an overwhelming workload, difficult working conditions, conflicting expectations and increased accountability. In addition, principals struggled with the process of abandonment, the process of releasing responsibility and power to others in the face of increasing accountability.

Instructional focus.

Instructional focus was a critical component to the development of a learning community. Effective principals articulated a clear vision of instruction based on student outcomes (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). The vision allowed for creative structures emerge, encouraged participation (Rosenblum, Louis, & Rossmiller, 1994) and was shared among the staff (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). West (2000) believed that a shared vision had more power than shared aims (goals). A vision effectively communicated the purpose of the school. The effective leader in a learning community then managed symbols that represented key elements in the vision (Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994) and modeled those behaviors (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). This established personal credibility (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Teacher professionalism was part of the vision.

The improvement of teaching and learning remained the central focus in a learning community. Instructional support was focused towards the school's goals (Reynolds, Sammons, Stoll, Barber & Hillman, 1996). Principals implemented the tenets of effective school improvement, encouraged the development of instructional goals and created structures to collectively assess of those goals (Blasé & Blasé, 1999).

Principal decision-making.

In a learning community, leadership was decentralized and dispersed among the staff (Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994). Murphy (1994) referred to the principal's position as leadership from the middle as opposed to a top-down approach. Decision-making was collaborative and there was a high level of

participation. Responsibilities and accountability were shared through an open discussion. Decision-making teams and problem-solving groups were organized to create a culture of inquiry (Louis & Kruse, 1998). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001), in their recommended standards for leading learning communities, suggested that principals seek leadership contributions from multiple sources. Elmore (2000) suggested that principals distribute leadership depending on the interest, aptitude and skills of the people who make up the organization. Principals actively nurtured the leadership of teachers (Crow, 1998). There was some discussion in the literature of dispersing leadership to the greater community; however, it was mostly confined to a greater accountability to inform the community of the changes within the school (Murphy, 1994). Overall, there was an extension of leadership in learning communities.

Day and Harris (2003) identified four dimensions of leadership dispersed among teachers. The first involved translating the tenets of school improvement to classroom instruction. The second involved a sense of participative decision-making. The third dimension of teacher leadership was the sharing of expertise and information. The fourth dimension involved the mutual learning that occurs through close relationships. Harris (2003) identified the actions school leaders could take to foster dispersed leadership. Time must be allocated to plan and discuss issues. In addition, there must be diverse opportunities for learning. Finally, teachers must have the opportunities to develop confidence in taking leadership roles. Gronn (2002) suggested that there were two ways that school leaders could disperse leadership:

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additive or holistic Additive dispersal implied that structures were created to disperse

leadership among everyone with little thought to the social interactions inherent in the

tasks. Holistic dispersal of leadership gave attention to the interdependence and social

interactions involved in task identification and completion. Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl,

Watson, Levin, and Fullan (2004) found a holistic dispersal of leadership to be more

productive.

Dispersing leadership in an age of accountability has proven to be difficult. In

his study of principal perceptions, Alexander (1992) found:

> The principals verbalized that they have been charged with bringing about
> organizational transformation in their schools by empowering others to decide
> how this will be done. Yet these same principals also reported that, in their
> view, the responsibility for the success or failure of these decisions has not
> been shared (p. 14).

Crow (1998) suggested that principals must actively negotiate the accountability

demands. Nevertheless, the weight of accountability remained a significant issue to

be resolved by building principals.

Relations with staff.

As principals moved towards the establishment of learning communities the

relationship with staff changed from a role of supporting teachers in their tasks to a

shared leadership in which teachers and principals were on a level plain in terms of

decision-making, responsibility and accountability (Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller,

1994). Respect for teacher decision-making and experimentation remained high in a

learning community. Blasé and Blasé (1999) found an increase in discussions with

teachers, both formal and informal, regarding the instructional process. In addition,

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principals encouraged teacher reflection. A respect for the opinions of others and

seeking out divergent opinions also increased (West, 2000). Principals must cultivate

a dense network of relationships among the staff (Murphy, 1994; Louis & Kruse,

1998). In large schools, principals must create structures to facilitate communication.

Management of self.

Learning communities encouraged learning at all levels, including the

principal level. Principals traditionally relied on conventional wisdom and personal

experience. In learning communities, principals managed their own professional

growth (Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994). Principals became learners

themselves. Barth (1990) summarized that the principal no longer needed be the

headmaster pretending to know all. The more crucial role was head learner, engaging

in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse– experiencing, displaying,

modeling and celebrating what it was expected that teachers and pupils themselves

would do.

Principals must adapt, learn and reflect on their actions to suit the context.

Murphy (1994) believed that principals were hindered in the development of learning

communities by a reliance on status quo solutions and a reluctance to move beyond

prior experience. Because learning organizations assumed continual change, principal

leadership repertoires and styles needed to adapt as well (West, 2000). Principals

must also be willing to apply new strategies to difficult problems. There must be an

effort to "break the rules" to achieve positive school reform (MacBeath &

MacDonald, 2000).

The problem-solving process.

As principals changed their roles, authority positions, relationships with staff and personal management to foster learning communities in their schools, a set of skills emerged that promoted this type of environment. The research on principal problem-solving was closely aligned with the behaviors necessary to promote learning communities.

The research on principal problem-solving developed within the domain of educational leadership over the last three decades. This perspective derived from the work on the technical core of teaching and content problem-solving (Leinhardt, 1992), the study of teacher thinking (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989) and strategic decision-making (Schwenk, 1988). This perspective addressed issues of desired and effective expert practice and concluded that educational leadership was complex and contingent on a wide range of contextual circumstances (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

Much of the research on problem-solving involved well-structured problems where the information needed was available and courses of action were clear. There was very little research in the area of ill-structured problem-solving involving school administrators. There were studies, however, that distinguished expert and novice behaviors. Leithwood and Steinbach looked at this literature and summarized seven differences between expert and novices:

1. Experts regulated their problem-solving processes.

2. Experts possessed more information.

3. Experts represented problems by using more abstract categories based on broad principles.

4. Experts possessed more complex goals.

5. Experts devoted more time to planning, were more opportunistic and accessed a greater variety of approaches.

6. Experts had a repertoire of automated responses.

7. Experts were sensitive to task demands and social contexts (p. 41).

These differences were based primarily on well-structured problem research. However, in a study of principals' responses to ill-structured problems, Leithwood and Steinbach found qualitative differences between expert and typical principals (see Table 2).

In a careful analysis of the difference between expert and typical principals, Leithwood and Steinbach found that expert principals viewed problems in a larger context of goals and understood the inter-relatedness of goals. Novice principals saw goals as isolated. In addition, experts devoted energy to a collaborative consensus of what the goals should be. Novice principals determined the goal first and then sought consensus. Experts appeared to take less of a personal stake in a preconceived solution as opposed to a strong commitment to set goal.

In the area of constraints, experts accurately anticipated and planned for constraints and did not view obstacles as major stumbling blocks. Smith and Andrews (1989), in their qualitative case study, found that effective principals turned problems into opportunities. This was based on a personal philosophy and a way of perceiving

Table 2

Expert and Novice Principal Problem Solving

Component	Expert	Typical
Problem Interpretation a. Basis of priority	Focus on school and academic growth	Focus on personal consequences
b. perceived difficulty	Difficult problems are manageable	Difficult problems are frightening and stressful
c. ways to understand	Collect information	Make assumptions
d. use of anecdotes	Directly relevant to the problem	Recounts previous difficult experiences
Goals for Problem-solving	Concerned with implications for student and program growth	Focus on staff oriented goals
Principles	Considers more principles in decision-making	Principle not mentioned
Constraints	Indicate few constraints and focuses on dealing with them	Sees constraints as obstacles
Solution processes	Uses detailed planning and consultation, identifies detailed steps in the solution process and stresses the importance of information collection	Less time to planning and consultation
Affect	Calm and confident	Fearful

Note. From "Expert problem solving: Evidence from school and district leaders," by K. Leithwood and R. Steinbach, 1995, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, p. 51.

problems as opportunities for growth and positive change.

Experts sought collaboration in the solution process. Clear information was distributed to all staff members and the principal checked for understanding. Experts were open to new information and ideas and were prepared to change their own views in light of the new information. A key element of collaboration was the synthesizing and clarifying of information during group discussions. There was evidence that experts planned for group interactions and encouraged discussions. There was also a strong emphasis on group consensus.

The use of consensus, collaboration, goal focus, clear and frequent communication and a willingness to listen to the opinions of others were characteristics of principals in learning communities. Bukowitz and Williams (1999) found that effective principals generated high levels of student achievement by mining the intellectual and knowledge-based assets of the teachers in a school. Leithwood and Steinbach added the perspective of the framing of obstacles as opportunities to the school setting. The literature on change and learning organizations (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Senge, 1990) saw the ability to reframe problems as opportunities as an important role of the organization. The key point was that the establishment of a learning community did not preclude the role of principal leadership, but expanded leadership beyond the principal. A principal's leadership, however, was still crucial.

Transformational leadership.

Closely aligned with the creation of learning communities and problem-

solving ability was the concept of transformational leadership. The study of leadership evolved from personality trait theory to leader behavior to a more situational leadership depending on task-related and people-centered behaviors. The study of leadership for the past decade has focused on the relationship between leadership style and the culture of the organization (Murphy, 1991). This last phase was distinguished as either transactional or transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership was based on exchange theory. This theory was based on an organizational culture of strong central control. The maintenance of the system was the goal of transactional leadership. There was an emphasis on system structures, efficiency and effectiveness. The role of the transactional leader was to align the teachers' goals with the system's goals. Transactional leadership, however, was less likely to achieve cultural changes (Stoll & Fink, 1996).

Transformational leadership, however, placed the leader in the middle of the organization, rather than at the top (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Leadership was dispersed among the staff. The school leaders facilitated change through problem solving, conceptual thinking (Hallinger, Leithwood & Murphy, 1993), reflection (Sergiovanni, 1991) and creating learning communities (Fullan, 1993).

In a climate of school reform, transformational leadership was more congruent with changes in school culture (West, 2000) as opposed to changes in structures or curriculum. Transformational leadership was concerned with the relationship between people and building their capacities so that the organization's goals could be achieved. Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) identified the components of

transformational leadership as: (a) an identification of a value laden vision that fosters commitment and continual improvement, (b) an acceptance of group goals that fosters group collaboration and common goals, (c) providing individualized support that fosters a respect for the individual, (d) intellectual stimulation designed to challenge and refine assumptions about instruction and current practices, (e) providing an appropriate model that promotes the group values and enhances teacher efficacy, and (f) expectations of high performance on the part of the staff and students in the school (p. 257-258).

The school improvement movement called for changes in school culture. The school culture that was most conducive to school improvement was one of a dispersed governance system where teachers share in the leadership, high collaboration, high expectations for all students, a consensus of values and a secure environment (West, 2000, p. 38). A transformational approach increased teacher leadership and collaboration.

Evidence indicated that successful principals restructured the working environment before actual changes in the culture occur (Marsh 2000). The restructuring and re-culturing occurred sequentially. Principals established work groups, aligned responsibility, authority and accountability and created the structures for the work groups to perform their tasks before the new culture emerged. In addition to structuring teams, Cuban (2004) found that effective principals also set high expectations for curriculum and instructional practices.

The skills of transformational leadership, problem-solving and the creation of

a learning community shared the same processes. Through the dispersal of leadership and shared responsibility and the creation of a climate of continuous improvement (transformational leadership), a collaborative and opportunistic approach to problem-solving and a culture of collaboration and professional teacher development emerged. The principal created the structures and culture that allowed for teacher leadership and growth to address school-based problems.

Teacher Professional Development

The literature review now turns to the elements of teacher professional development that are present in a learning community. Professional development in a learning community begins with a culture of investigation and analysis. Teachers continually question the content to be taught, the instructional strategies utilized and the veracity of the student assessments. This analysis occurs within the context of practice, as teacher hone their skills through reflection and critiques.

Current practices.

Despite research suggesting new approaches to professional development, there has been very little change in how teachers are trained. "The traditional approach to teacher staff development involves a transfer model of teaching, wherein "an expert" informs teachers about methods mandated for classroom implementation" (Hamilton & Richardson, 1995). This traditional approach did not consider the research on how adults learn. In addition, school systems have been inconsistent in focus regarding the content of staff development. "The greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation,

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overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations" (Fullan, 1991). Ball and Cohen (1999) stated that current professional development was intellectually superficial, disconnected, fragmented and non-cumulative. They further stated that there was no comprehensive perspective on professional learning because of the ambiguity about the core technology.

Staff development was usually considered as the last part of an implementation plan. In effect, staff development was considered much like any other expenditure of resources: how much will it cost, how much space and facility is required, how much needs to be learned and how much time is required. However, professional development lacked resources for significant improvement (Ball & Cohen, 1999).

Many researchers called for fundamental changes in professional development. These changes were suggested within the context of organizational change focused around student achievement. Sparks and Hirsh (1997) called for a model with major shifts in emphasis: (a) away from individual development and towards individual and organizational development, (b) away from adult needs and towards a focus on student needs and learning outcomes, (c) away from remote training to job embedded learning, (d) away from the transmission of knowledge towards the study of the teaching and learning process, and (e) away from staff developers who train to a model of consultation and planning.

In concert with Sparks and Hirsh, Winn and Mitchell (1991) suggested that teachers needed a staff development process that mirrored good instruction for

children, a process that included theory presentation, demonstration, guided practice, classroom practice, feedback and coaching. These elements, with the exception of theory presentation, were generally missing from staff development in today's schools.

The link to student achievement.

In today's world of accountability and standards, student achievement was the prescribed outcome. However, professional development was not always linked directly to student achievement (Guskey, 2000). Joyce and Showers (1995) distinguished proximal (directly affects the students) with distal (at a distance from the learner). In a look at staff development initiatives Joyce and Showers generated the following conclusion:

> The student as learner is the key. The closer an innovation is to the interactive process that helps the learner manage learning better, the greater the effects will be. The choice, then, is innovations that directly touch the child. Reciprocally, the farther the innovation is from the environment where teachers and learners interact, the slower and lesser will be the effects, if there are any. (p. 47)

In looking at proximal relationships, the authors believed that staff development should focus on the content of teaching that directly improved student learning such as best practices, effective models of teaching, information processing models, effective curricula and personal characteristics of effective teachers.

Joyce and Showers found a greater link to student achievement with the traditional staff development procedures as outlined above. However, even though teacher training in content and pedagogy may have a proximal effect on student learning, Joyce and showers believed that collaborative professional development was

a necessary component for the continued growth of teachers and the development of effective teaching strategies.

Reflection.

When considering teacher professional development, attention must be given to the central aspects of effective teaching: reflection, reasoning and personal characteristics. In a learning community, reflection was a critical component to individual teacher improvement. Teacher reasoning was enhanced through the collaborative structures present in the school. The personal characteristics of a teacher also determined how the professional development should be structured to enhance professional growth.

Killion and Todnem (1991) stated that effective teachers demonstrated reflective, rational and conscious decision-making. Reflective practice required that teachers justify their decisions in authentic settings. It involved the identification of a problem, the formulation and implementation of alternative strategies and on-going evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness. Killion and Todnem identified three categories of reflection: reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action, and reflection-for-action. Reflection-on-action occurred after teaching. Reflection-in-action occurred during teaching. Reflection-for-action was proactive in nature and was the desired outcome of the first two types of reflection. All three types were necessary although the relative importance of each varied with the experience of the teacher and the context of the instruction (Reagan, Case & Brubacher, 2000).

Reflective teaching involved more than just problem solving and reasoning. In

their work on reflective teaching Sparks-Lanager and Colton (1991) synthesized the

research into three broad categories: the cognitive element (understanding), the

critical element (assessing) and the narrative element (discourse). The cognitive

element encompassed subject and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987). The

critical element of reflective thinking was concerned with analyzing the practice and

the narrative element was concerned with the interchange of ideas in a collaborative

environment.

Kincheloe, Slattery and Steinberg (2000) described the teacher's role in

reflective practice. They saw teachers as:

> self-directed agents, sophisticated thinkers and active researchers in ever-changing, often ambiguous contexts. It encourages teachers to construct their own views of their practice; it encourages them to question the constructs of others and to avoid acting in response to the officially certified knowledge base. It encourages teachers to discover along the path towards harmony the asymmetries and contradictions between critical conceptions of justice and the untidy world of learners and schools. (p. 268)

Ball and Cohen (1999) believed that effective teaching demanded a pedagogy

of investigation, emphasizing questioning investigations, analysis and criticism with

discourse. However, one problem in this area was that teachers did not share a

common language about practice and were reticent to articulate their behaviors. A

common language would lead to greater discourse and a pedagogy of investigation:

> Continuing thoughtful discourse among learners and teachers is an essential element of any serious education, because it is the chief vehicle for analysis, criticism, and communication of ideas, practices, and values. In the education of professionals, discourse serves additional purposes, which are related to building and sustaining a community of practitioners who collectively seek human and social improvement. The discourse of teacher education should also help to build collegiality within the profession and create a set or relations rooted in shared intentions and challenges. Such discourse should focus on deliberation about and development of standards for practice and on

the improvement of teaching and learning. (p. 13)

Focus on student learning.

Professional development in a learning community must be meaningful and tied to student achievement (Murphy, 1994). It must focus on the implementation and evaluation of the instructional program (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). Pace and Leibert (1987) found that there was a significant gain in the teachers' understanding of reading comprehension under a sustained involvement in a professional development seminar. The authors attributed this gain to: (a) the routinization and practice of instructional principles, (b) a rich conceptual understanding of the concept (Shulman, 1987), (c) a theoretical framework (Joyce and Showers, 1995; Pace & Leibert, 1987; & Sanacore, 2000), and (d) a shared language (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Hawley and Valli (1999) suggested that the analysis of the differences between the standards of student learning and student performance "will define what educators need – rather than want – to learn, make professional development student centered, and increase public confidence in the use resources for professional development" (p. 139).

Teacher input.

In individually guided professional development, individuals selected their own goals and activities. The steps involved included the identification of individual needs, the development of a plan of action, participation in the activities and an assessment of the activities. The use of personal histories, journals and portfolios contributed to an individualized program. Individual professional development portfolios facilitated learning, improved professional practice and documented results

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(Dietz, 1995). Whitworth (1999) discovered positive teacher feelings when there was selection from a professional development menu. While individually guided professional development plans did not necessarily include collaborative efforts, it did focus on the goals of continual learning and an emphasis on goals (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998).

Collaborative inquiry.

Collaborative problem-solving and a sense of inquiry were components of a learning community. Involvement in action research resulted in more reflective practitioners, more systematic problem solvers and more thoughtful decision-makers (Sparks & Simmons, 1989). Action research required thoughtful inquiry into student needs and the teaching practice. Action research was developed in a climate of experimentation. Ball and Cohen (1999) suggested that teachers who used knowledge to improve practice learned how to operate experimentally in response to students and situations.

Study groups were collaborative groups of educators that focused on a particular issue for study. The major functions of study groups were to facilitate implementation of a curricular or instructional innovation, collaboratively plan for school improvement or to study research on teaching and learning. Clair (1998) and Pfaff (2000) examined teacher study groups (TSG) and found that participating teachers developed an increased sense of collaboration and a deeper understanding of student needs.

Joyce and Showers (1995) found that regularly structured interactions

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between or among peers over substantive content was essential for professional

nourishment. Coached teachers practiced new strategies more frequently, utilized the

new learning more appropriately, exhibited longer retention, and exhibited a clearer

cognition of the purpose of the new learning. Blase and Blase (1999) found that

coaching increased teacher confidence, motivation, self-esteem and personal

reflection. Research indicated that coaching developed a sense of collegiality (Delany

& Arrendondo, 1998; Kerrins, 1990). Wallace (1998) found that peer coaching

increased a sense of collegiality and a reflection on practice, but without a structured

format, there was little specific feedback. Wallace, however, warned against a

mandatory coaching arrangement that was contrived or contrary to the culture of the

school.

The Annenberg School suggested that student work be assessed in

collaborative teams using tuning protocols, or interactive rubrics. Roberts and Wilson

(1998) found that when teachers participated in assessment moderation (group

collaboration on analyzing student work) several results occurred. Participation: (a)

added significantly to teachers' skills for assessing students, (b) enhanced teachers'

ability to evaluate and improve teaching, (c) significantly increased teachers' access

to useful ideas, (d) enhanced the quality of learning for students, (e) improved

teaching in non-project areas, and (f) supported beginning teachers.

Summary of professional learning.

In summary, professional development in a learning community should

address the tenets of student and adult learning (Alexander & Murphy, 1998), the

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knowledge bases on the instructional craft (Shulman, 1987) and focus on student

learning (Guskey, 2000; Joyce and Showers, 1995). The processes to achieve these

goals required the creation of a community based on inquiry. Collegial relationships,

personal goals and a climate of discourse about the teaching process must permeate

the culture (Ball & Cohen, 1999). To create this climate Blasé and Blasé (1999)

suggested that principals must build an atmosphere of democracy and a culture of

learning, learn about school improvement and effective staff development, provide

opportunities for action research, and collectively assess the effects of instruction.

The processes utilized include organizing study groups, developing peer coaching,

providing time for the study of teaching and learning, encouraging commitment and

the study of innovations.

To create a climate to support professional learning, principals must

understand the factors that contribute to organizational learning, the school

improvement process, a culture of inquiry and student and adult learning. Principals

must utilize their leadership and problem-solving skills to overcome the obstacles and

create opportunities. This must be done in the context of diminishing resources,

multiple and ambiguous goals, a culture of autonomy and independence and

increasing accountability. Much of the responsibility for shaping the context of

schools lies with the principal. As Keller (1998) stated, "Across the country, there's

not a hotter seat in all of education than the one in the principal's office" (p. 25).

Accountability

Recent school reform movements have called for high standards for student

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achievement and the need for accountability. While the term accountability has been

used loosely by educators, politicians and the lay public, there was an assumption that

accountability had two consequences: an alignment of public aspirations and school

purposes and the improved performance of students (Leithwood & Earl, 2000).

Elmore, Abelmann and Fuhrman (1996) identified three major components to

educational accountability: (a) a primary emphasis on measured student performance,

(b) the creation of complex standards by which schools can be compared and a

creation of systems of rewards, consequences, and (c) intervention strategies as

incentives for improvement. Adams and Kirst (1999) listed four attributes that frame

accountability: (a) who is responsible, (b) who is entitled to the accountability, (c)

what is to be accounted, and (d) what are the incentives to compel the agents?

Wagner (1987) added an additional attribute of the level of accountability.

Under the context of *No Child Left Behind,* the level of accountability in the

district was the individual school. Data was reported on a school level. However, the

district shared the responsibility for providing the necessary resources to assist

schools. *No Child Left Behind* required every student to make *Adequate Yearly*

Progress (AYP). The level of reporting AYP was at the school level and was defined

as the number of students who were proficient or highly proficient. However, the

federal act allowed states to determine what proficiency means.

The obligation of responsibility to make AYP shifted between the school

district, individual schools and teachers. In the district selected for this study, the

responsibility was shared between the district and individual schools. Teacher

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organizations argued that accountability should not rest primarily with teachers, as their influence may be indirect or shared with other factors. Nevertheless, data could be disaggregated down to the classroom level.

Under the umbrella of standards, academic achievement remained preeminent. However, teachers were accountable for the use of best practices. The state developed content standards for accountability. The district selected for this study required assessment measures such as the *Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills* (CTBS) and the *Stanford 10* in addition to the state testing. Schools were accountable to subgroups as identified by race, special education, English as a second language and Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs) status.

A reward and consequence system was developed to compel schools to improve student performance. Comparative school data was publicly reported. In addition, schools could be designated as in need of school improvement or as a failing school. A failing school could be subjected to a state take-over. *No Child Left Behind* allowed for parents to opt out of failing schools. The suspension of funding was also a potential consequence.

Standards-based accountability was not indigenous to a single state. As the accountability reform movements swept the nation more research was shedding light on the effects of such programs. The research on the success of high-stakes accountability on student achievement has been mixed. Some schools have improved and others have not (Lake, Hill, O'Toole, & Ceillio, 1999). In addition, Fuhrman (1999) identified several issues related to high-stakes accountability including how

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student performance was measured, the effects of rewards and sanctions on teachers and the shifting of consequences as political pressures came to bear on local policies.

Proponents of accountability systems argued that accountability measures prepared students for the challenges of the ever-changing world (Sirotnik & Kimball, 1999) and ensured greater equity (Murnane, 2000). Others argued that standards stifled good teaching (Bushweller, 1997; McNeil, 2000) and could unnecessarily harm individual students (Kohn, 1999). Meier (2000) saw high-stakes accountability as a threat to the democratic principles that serve as a basis for American schools. In addition, Meier suggested that cheating could result from the threat of high-stakes testing. Nevertheless, the reality of high-stakes accountability confronted teachers and principals, alike.

The effects of accountability on professional learning.

Hudson and Williamson (2001) believed that greater accountability created an emphasis on short-term responses to improve scores, rather than longer-term efforts to improve teaching and learning. Teachers perceived that high-stakes accountability systems narrowed the curriculum, limited opportunities available to students and demanded a focus on what was tested. Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton and Kleiner (2000) argued that schools faced with the pressures of high-stakes accountability "shifted the burden" from sustained learning to "quick-fix" solutions that provided short-term gains. The authors suggested that "quick-fix" solutions do not work over time and shifted resources away from the practices that demonstrated fundamental long-term gains.

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Singh and McMillan (2002), however, discovered that schools with demonstrated success in high-stakes accountability systems shared common characteristics. In their qualitative study on high performing schools in Virginia, the researchers found evidence of a shared commitment to improve among the staff, collaboration and decentralization of responsibility and decision-making. Successful staff development relied on presentations from teachers within the school and a focus on specific needs of the school. This focus included a collaborative analysis of student work and the identification of problems and solutions specific to students. These observations were consistent with the structures and culture of a learning organization.

In a review of the literature on accountability, Pedulla (2003) found that educators had positive feelings about accountability measures if they were perceived as relevant to their work and promoted desirable outcomes. In a study of teacher perceptions regarding an accountability program, Leithwood, Steinbach and Jantzi (2002) found that if the accountability measures were perceived as political or not aligned with teacher values, educators had negative feelings. In addition, teachers had negative feelings if there were limits on teacher discretion and decision-making, ambiguous goals, inadequate resources and unrealistic timelines. Teacher acceptance of accountability reform movements depended on the goals of the movement, the ability to build teacher capacity and a context that allowed teachers the time and resources to implement the program.

The effects of accountability on principal practice.

As was evident in the research on organizational learning and leadership, the role of the principal in an era of accountability was crucial. Two types of research on the role of principals were emerging: the identification of practices that principals use in schools that were successful and interviews with principals about their perceptions of dealing with accountability measures.

The identification of effective principal practices in an era of accountability was consistent with the work done in organizational learning. The Association of Washington School Principals (1998) listed seven key responsibilities for principals that are supported by research: (a) promoting a safe and orderly environment, (b) sustaining a school culture of continuous improvement, (c) implementing data-driven plans for improving student achievement, (d) implementing standards-based assessments, (e) monitoring school improvement plans, (f) managing human and financial resources to accomplish achievement goals, and (g) communicating with groups internally and externally to promote student learning.

In addition, research supported the principal's role in establishing a vision (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1995) and developing effective internal communication (Kruse & Louis, 1993). Joyce and Calhoun (1999) called for principals to create responsible parties, a collective inquiry process that shared governance among the staff and community. The purpose of this endeavor was to extend inquiry based on testing hypotheses rather than accepting available solutions. Lipton and Melamede (1997) suggested that principals encourage dialogue among the

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staff, with an emphasis on listening, suspending judgment and seeking common understanding.

A second body of research that was just emerging focused on principal perspectives about their role with accountability. Hudson and Williamson (2001) found that principals reported that they tried to be "buffers" between the accountability system and the staff. Effective principals focused on teaching and learning and not necessarily to teaching to the test. Hudson and Williamson also found that principals were sensitive to the unique context of their schools in terms of their reliance on test scores and celebrations. In addition, effective principals focused on broader goals than just student achievement as measured by state assessments. Principals focused on concepts like caring and justice and relied on a variety of data collection sources to make decisions. In regards to school leader concerns about *No Child Left Behind*, Farkas, Johnson and Duffett (2004) found that principals believed the law relied too much on testing, and the consequences and sanctions were unfair.

The Development of a Guiding Conceptual Framework for the Proposed Study

This study sought to determine what practices principals use to develop professional learning in their schools under circumstances of high-stakes accountability. Previous work in this area focused on one of three methods: (a) the use of survey and interview data to determine what conditions are present in effective schools, (b) qualitative studies in the school improvement process, and (c) principal interviews to determine how they reacted to accountability measures. The first type of study relied on principal or teacher perceptions to describe effective professional

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learning or to identify the components of a learning community. Often cited researchers in this area were Kenneth Leithwood (1995, 1998, 2002), Karen Seashore Louis (1996, 1998) and Linda Darling-Hammond (1996). This type of research fell under the domain of organizational learning and made great strides in describing organizational behavior and the actions of participants in the organization. Theorists, pundits and researchers in the school reform movement commonly cited the research on organizational learning as critical to creating environments conducive to student learning and teacher professional development. The guiding conceptual framework used for this study was adapted from this body of work.

The second type of research relevant to this study was the school improvement model. This body of worked relied on the tenets of organizational learning, but included a process approach. Researchers such as Michael Fullan (1991, 1993, 2001), Alma Harris (2002, 2003) and Camburn, Rowan and Taylor (2003) suggested that the school improvement model followed phases of initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. School leaders configured the context and activated processes to create change.

A third body of study just beginning to emerge was the qualitative research on principal perceptions about the effects of accountability. This work was represented by the work of Hudson and McMillan (2001). Principals shared their perceptions of the effects of accountability. Principal responses tended to be affective in nature about buffering the staff from external demands and keeping teaching at the forefront of the school's vision and mission. While the principal interviews focused on

accountability, they did not necessarily describe how principals maintained professional learning.

To fully explore the practices that principals utilize to create and maintain environments that support teacher professional learning, I have found that no one model suggested in the literature was complete. A useful framework must include constructs from organizational learning, the school improvement process, principal leadership, teacher professional learning and the effects of accountability. To investigate the issue of the impact of accountability on principal practices and the support of professional learning, I have created a guiding conceptual framework that captured the varied strategies that were suggested by research reviewed in this chapter. This guiding conceptual framework was based on an integration of the literature review and personal experience, creating a personal theory.

My personal theory was aligned with the research on organizational learning and principal leadership, suggesting that principals were a critical component to the development of an environment that supports professional learning and organizational growth. This support for professional growth followed a process in which principals assessed the performance of the school using hard and observational data. While considering district mandates and expectations the principal initiated actions that affected the environment of the school. Professional learning could then thrive in a supportive atmosphere. While there was little data to support this assertion, it was my belief that student achievement would be positively affected by a strong culture of teacher professional development.

The guiding conceptual framework developed for this study was based on a theoretical proposition, utilizing the research on the conditions that promote professional learning and my personal theory. The use of a guiding conceptual framework provided many advantages for this study. This type of study had the potential to suffer from the possibility of endless data. Therefore, the framework limited the boundaries of the study. Interview questions were derived from the conceptual components of the framework. In addition, the guiding conceptual framework served as a heuristic to categorize data. Evidence could be triangulated through multiple cases and analyzed seeking a convergence of data, and the emergence of patterns. By using the guiding conceptual framework as a heuristic, the study did not seek to prove the veracity to the framework, but to allow for new patterns to emerge.

Conceptually, the inter-related components are illustrated in Figure One. The unit of analysis was the school and the perception of the processes and actions was derived from the principal. There were two forces that impacted the school: district effects and the student demographics. The district effects in this framework included the policies and initiatives that were generated outside of the school but impacted the school directly. In addition, the district effects could include a stimulus for learning as articulated by a perceived need. District effects were drawn from the model of organizational learning developed by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1998). In this study, district effects included the high-stakes accountability program demanded by the state but it also included local district initiatives. This was significant as there was

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Figure 1. Guiding Conceptual Framework

The School

District Effects

The School's:

- Beliefs
- Culture
- Decision-making
- Planning

The Principal's Perspective

Teacher Professional Learning

The Principal's Practices and Strategies

The Principal's Assessment of the School Needs

Student Achievement

Student Demographics
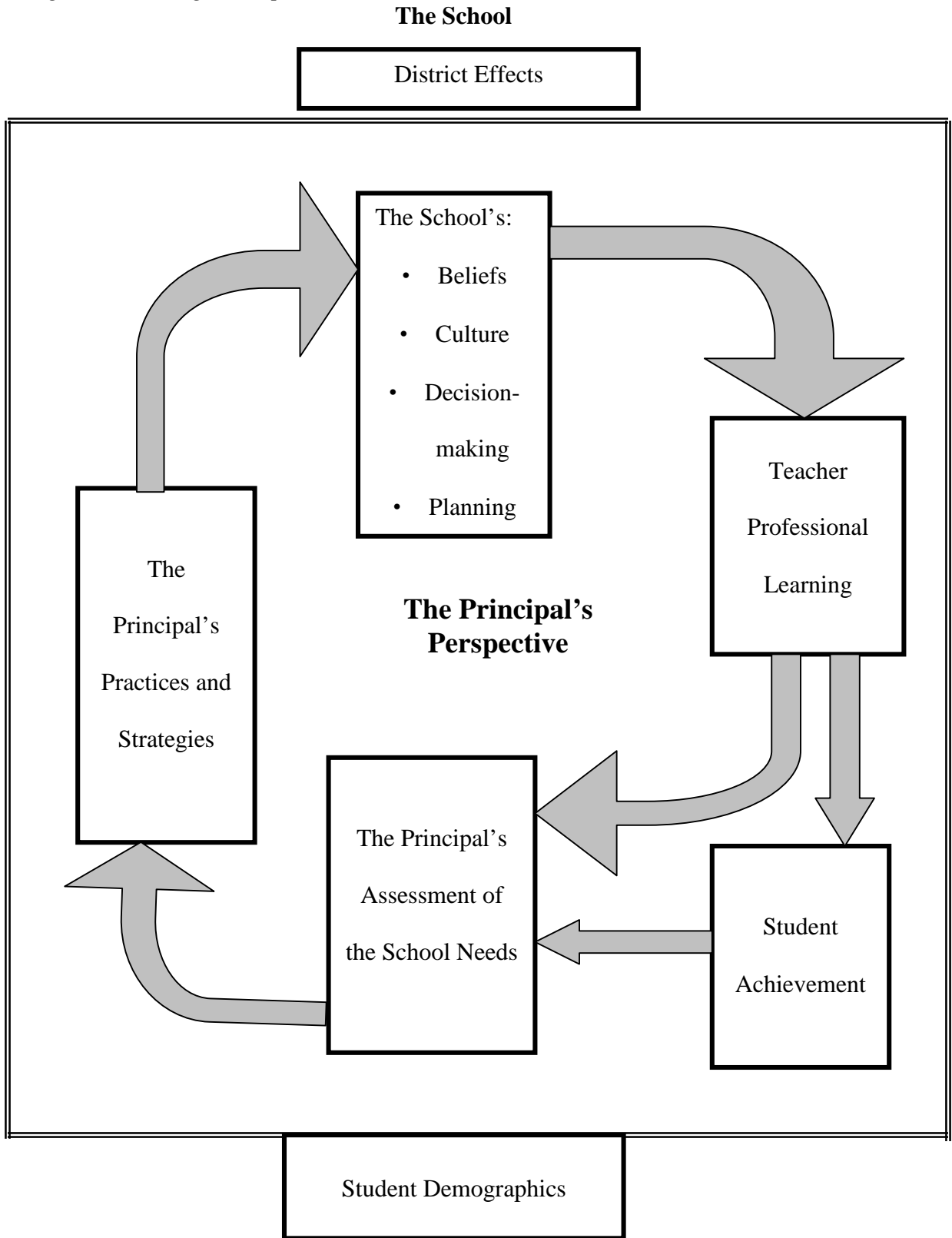
little research to link principal actions and the development of learning communities in schools with varying demographics.

The second force impacting the total school was the school demographics. In this study, I looked at student achievement and the socio-economic level of the school as measured by the percentage of students receiving free or reduced meals (FARMs). Subgroup participation included race, special education, and students who speak English as a second language. The guiding conceptual framework suggested that within the school the principal perceived that a process took place involving the assessment of the school's performance, specific actions and strategies that a principal takes and the subsequent effect on conditions that affected professional learning. The quality of the professional learning impacted student achievement and cycled back to create on-going assessments of the school's performance.

The literature on principal leadership (Murphy, 1994; Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998; West, 2000) supported the causal link between principal actions and the development of a climate that supports organizational learning and professional learning. This was reflected in my personal theory of the process that principals used to affect the conditions that, in turn, affected professional learning.

The conditions that affected professional learning in the guiding conceptual framework were constructs developed from the conditions that affected organizational learning identified by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1998) but also included the constructs of reflection (Sparks-Lanager & Colton, 1991; Killion &

Todnem, 1991; Ball & Cohen, 1999), and trust (Dunn & Honts, 1998). Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1998) identified the internal conditions of a school that supported professional learning to be the mission and vision, school culture, school structures and planning strategies evident in the school. Mission and vision were characterized to the extent that the vision was perceived as clear, shared, meaningful, and pervasive among the staff. School culture was characterized by the importance of professional growth and a focus on improving instruction for students. Key concepts included the levels of collaboration, respect for others, risk-taking, a celebration of successes and open discussions regarding student difficulties. School structures referred to the level of decision-making and shared authority within the school. Structures also included team teaching arrangements, shared planning, and formal and informal problem-solving groups. Planning strategies referred to the systematic manner in which school is run. This included planning processes, growth plans, a focus on a few key initiatives, and practices that encouraged collegiality.

In addition to the constructs of district effects and student demographics, the guiding conceptual framework used the constructs of principal practices, beliefs, culture, decision-making, planning and assessment. Table 3 illustrated the linkage between the constructs of the guiding conceptual framework and the literature reviewed in this chapter of the proposal. The constructs of principal practices, beliefs, culture, decision-making and planning were aligned respectively with the constructs of leadership, mission and vision, culture, structure and strategies in the model developed by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1998). The construct of assessment

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was aligned with the construct of principal decision-making developed by Leithwood and Steinbach (1995). This alignment allowed me to develop a questionnaire from previously developed instruments that had strong construct reliability (see Appendix B). However, I expanded the construct of culture to include the systematic use of teacher reflection and specific strategies for developing trust that was described in the literature reviewed in this chapter.

The guiding conceptual framework suggested that the conditions that affected organizational learning directly impacted professional learning (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998; Blase and Blase, 1999; Guskey, 2000). Teacher professional learning could impact student achievement (Joyce & Showers, 1995; Guskey, 2000). Principals then assessed the school's performance using student performance data and qualitative observations (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995) and adjusted their practices and strategies. The process was on-going and iterative.

The guiding conceptual framework allowed me to identify and categorize principal practices that affected school conditions and ultimately professional learning. It also allowed insight into the processes of how principals made decisions regarding their actions. Finally, the guiding conceptual framework identified how principals maintained or adjusted the process and their actions under the threat of accountability.

Table 3

Constructs of the Guiding Conceptual Framework and Their Sources

Guiding Conceptual Framework Constructs	Description	Corresponding Construct	*Source*
District Effects	The accountability measures and the district policies that impact the school.	District Effects	Elmore, Ableman, Fuhrman, 1996; Pedulla, 2003; Leithwood, Steinbach & Jantzi, 2002
Principal Practices	The strategies, events, decision-making, and practices used by principals.	Principal decision-making, Leadership	Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Smylie & Hart, 1999.
Beliefs	The development, dissemination and adoption of the school's vision and mission.	Mission and Vision	Joyce & Showers, 1995; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998; Westheimer, 1999.
Culture	The level of trust, collaboration, commitment to professional improvement, opportunities for reflection, and experimentation in teaching.	School Culture	Sparks-Lanager & Colton, 1991; Killion & Todnem, 1991; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Dunne & Honts, 1998; Leithwood, & Louis, 1998; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998; Ball & Cohen, 1999.
Decision-making	The decision-making structures in the school.	School Structures	Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Westheimer, 1999; West, 2000.
Planning	The establishment of school goals and plans.	Strategies	Leithwood & Louis, 1998; Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998.
Assessment	The process used by principals of assessing the school's performance and needs that prove to be the catalyst of change.	Principal Decision-making	Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995; Smylie & Hart, 1999.

Summary

This study looked at the practices that principals used to support professional learning in an era of accountability. The research on organizational learning provided a model of the conditions that were necessary to sustain effective professional learning and organizational learning. The role of the principal emerged as a critical component. The research on leadership in general, and principal leadership in particular, supported the work in organizational learning. However, there was little evidence to identify specific actions that principals used to maintain a process of impacting school conditions that ultimately impacted teacher professional learning in an era of high-stakes accountability. This study identified the specific practices that principals used, how they solved problems and how they supported the culture of a school.

I have developed a guiding conceptual framework from an integration of the literature on organizational learning, the school improvement process, principal leadership and teacher professional development. In addition, personal experience contributed to the articulation of a process that principals used to create and maintain environments that were supportive to professional learning. The guiding conceptual framework suggested a methodology and allowed for the development of instruments to collect and analyze data. The study identified the effects of accountability and specifically at how principals perceived their role in promoting professional development.

Chapter Three: Design and Methodology

Approach

This study seeks to answer the question: how do principals support professional learning under the stress of accountability? This is an important and real-world phenomenon that has implications for school reform (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). The question is derived from a personal theory that principals make a difference the establishment of a climate that supports professional development, and in turn, quality professional development improves student achievement. From this personal theory and the use of a model of the conditions that foster organizational learning, I have developed a guiding conceptual framework to limit the investigation. The study adopts a post-positive approach, assuming that even with a scientific inquiry, we cannot be positive that we have captured the full range of variables that contribute to human behavior (Creswell, 2003). In this study, the variables are outside of the researcher's control, the real-life context (schools) and the boundaries of the phenomenon (principal practices that promote professional learning) are not clearly delineated, and the possibility exists that there are more variables than data points. Therefore, a case study approach is warranted (Yin, 1994).

A case study approach incorporates the tenets of qualitative research. A qualitative approach is appropriate because of the contextualized nature of the study. The study seeks to describe "naturally occurring and ordinary events that are in close proximity to a specific situation, over a sustained period, that locate the meanings that people place on the social world around them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10).

This study also seeks to provide insights into the description of conditions that promote professional learning by using multiple data collection techniques. This is a collective case study because it seeks to explore bounded systems over time through a detailed data collection involving multiple sources of data and several sites. The context of each setting is described in detail in terms of school structures and culture.

A case study approach is appropriate because of the contextual variables that are involved (Creswell, 1998). These variables include school culture, dispersed governance, staff trust, leadership, district effects, constraints (funding, time), and goal setting. In addition, a case study provides grounding techniques because "it identifies gaps in understanding and provides one means to interpret findings and help to delineate important variables for study and suggest relationships among them" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 49).

To address issues of generalizability and triangulation, this is a multi-case study. Generalizability is analytical. Multiple case studies strengthen the analytic generalization. They can replicate each other, producing corroboratory evidence from two or more cases. Because this study seeks to look at multiple cases with differing contexts, a multi-case study may produce contrasting results but for predictable reasons (Yin, 1994). Single case studies converge to a particular theoretical proposition. Multiple case studies generate certain predictable results contrasted with other cases.

The Operationalization of the Guiding Conceptual Framework

This study sought the principal's perception of the actions used to support

professional learning. This perception was ascertained by using a questionnaire in an interview format. The questionnaire reflected the constructs of the guiding conceptual framework. Because the constructs of the guiding conceptual framework closely aligned with the model of organizational learning developed by Leithwood and his colleagues (1998), I have relied on previously used instruments to generate questions for the interview.

Leithwood and his colleagues used both surveys and interview questionnaires in their research. The first survey, "Conditions Affecting Professional Learning" (1994), measured the constructs of district effects, mission and vision, school structures and strategies. The second survey, "The Leadership and Management of Schools: The Nature of Leadership" (1997), was developed by Leithwood and Jantzi and measured the components of leadership. Both surveys obtained strong reliability scores (see Appendix B). Leithwood and Jantzi developed a principal interview, "Organizational Learning: Principal Interview" (1994) that further operationalized the constructs and added questions that addressed specific actions that principals utilized, how the principals assessed perceived needs and the amount of professional learning the principals (see Appendices G, H and I).

The instruments, however, did not fully address components suggested by the research (see Appendix A for a listing of the operationalized items for each instrument). Missing from the instruments were questions related to the level of trust (Culture), the use of reflection (Culture) and the impact of accountability (District Effects). The newly created framework included these concepts and developed

questions and prompts to address these added constructs. I developed a new questionnaire, "Supporting Professional Learning: A Principal Interview", using "Organizational Learning: Principal Interview" but added questions derived from the two survey instruments and questions related to trust, reflection, principal actions and the impact of accountability (see Appendix F). The concepts of trust, reflection, professional learning and accountability were added to the existing constructs from the model developed by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1998).

The instruments listed above categorized the types of actions that principals used but they did not fully describe the process that principals used. The identification and description of these processes were central to this study. However, the open-ended nature of the questions and prompts generated data that provided insights into the processes principals used. Therefore, after the initial coding of the principal responses by categories of district effects, beliefs, culture, decision-making and planning, I employed a secondary coding strategy developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). This coding strategy sought to categorize principal actions by the following labels:

1. Context: general information regarding their perceptions of their particular school;

2. Assessment: how principals assess school performance in terms of student achievement and teacher professional learning;

3. Processes: what chain of events contribute to developing a supportive environment for professional learning;

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4. Activities: what specific activities promote professional learning;

5. Events: what regularly occurring events contribute to professional learning;

6. Strategies: what tactics and methods are used by principals; and

7. Relationships: how principals use relationships to support professional learning.

This coding scheme allowed me to look for the development of patterns across cases.

By using reliable instruments as a starting point for operationalizing the constructs, I created a questionnaire for the principal and teacher interviews. Because of the number of questions and prompts, I chose a long interview format for the interview (McCracken, 1988). The guiding conceptual framework served as a heuristic for the first level of coding. A cross-case analysis allowed for the emergence of patterns.

Prior to beginning this study, I sought permission from the Deputy Superintendent and the Coordinator of Testing of the selected district to proceed. Permission was granted in December 2003.

Design

The study was divided into four phases: (a) the selection of a purposeful sample, (b) data collection that included interviews, an observation and document reviews, (c) an analysis of each case, and (d) a cross-case analysis.

Phase One: The sample selection.

To find out what principals do to create supportive environments, we must

find principals who are known for this ability and ask them what they do. Because the study was interested in schools in which principals actively support professional learning, the selection of a particular school for study would be considered a positive development. To identify these principals, a supervisor nomination form was developed (see Appendix C). Three district supervisors who supervise 78 elementary school principals were asked to identify five schools in which the principals supported professional learning in their schools. This nomination process generated a list of fifteen schools.

To insure maximum variability, all of the schools in the district were ranked according to the following characteristics: (a) test scores on the 2003 State Assessment Index, (b) the percentage of students receiving Free or Reduced Lunch (FARMs), (c) the percentage of minority students, and (d) school size. The nominated schools were identified by their quartile placement in each category and compared against the district averages.

An interesting phenomenon occurred in the analysis of the nominated schools. The fifteen nominated schools over-represented the top quartile in state test scoring and the percentage of students not living in poverty. Race and school size were more equally distributed (see Table 4). Nine of the fifteen schools scored in the top quartile for the district and ten of the schools were noted by their lack of poverty as measured by the number of students participating in free and reduced lunch. In addition, there was a high correlation between the test scores and lack of poverty in the nominated schools. This was consistent with student achievement data in the state and across the

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Table 4

Representative Characteristics of the Nominated Schools

	Top quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	Fourth Quartile
State Assessment Scores	9	3	1	2
Percentage of Students not receiving FARMS	10	3	0	2
Percentage of White Students	6	4	2	3
School Size	6	2	3	3

country (Elmore, Ableman, & Fuhrman, 1996).

This distribution of schools made it difficult to select schools that varied in

test scores, race and levels of poverty. Therefore, the schools selected represented a

high-performing school (Stonegate), a low-performing school (Reynolds) and a

school that more closely matched the district averages in test scores and race

(Mayfair). The description of the schools is represented in Table 5.

The selected schools were contacted via email and each school agreed to participate

in the study. I followed up the email contact with a memo (see Appendix D), a copy

of the abstract for the study and a copy of the Consent Form.

Table 5

Selected Schools Compared to the District Averages

	Reynolds Elementary	Mayfair Elementary	Stonegate Elementary	District Median Score
State Assessment Scores (Percentage of Students scoring Proficient)	43.2	77.8	84.8	70
Percentage of Students Receiving FARMS	59	4	3	15
Percentage of White Students	48	87	93	80

Phase Two: Data collection.

Participation in the study involved interviews with the principal, assistant

principal (at Stonegate and Reynolds), Lead Teachers and the reading resource

teachers. Lead Teachers were positions appointed by the principal. In addition to the

Lead Teachers, the principals at Reynolds and Stonegate suggested additional

teachers to interview, including Title 1 resource teachers. In addition to the

interviews, documents relating to professional development and the school

improvement team were reviewed and one School Improvement Team meeting was

observed. Participants in the School Improvement Team meeting were asked for their

perceptions about how the meeting supported professional learning via an email

inquiry. The safety of the respondent will be assured.

The long interview utilized a questionnaire with open-ended questions (see

Appendix F). The questionnaire served as a prompt for discussion and provided

channels for explanations and elaborations. The interviews began with an introduction and a review of the study. The interviews were recorded electronically and saved to disk. In addition, I took hand-written notes. During the interviews, I interacted with the participants using a relaxed and informal tone. I listened for key terms, assumptions and I looked for inter-relationships, topic avoidance, deliberate distortions, misunderstandings and outright incomprehension. I repeated statements for clarification and I drew visuals to ask if they represented what the interviewee was saying. This was accomplished with a "calculated dimness" (McCracken, 1988, p. 40) in which I sought clarification on issues. The interviews were transcribed by an independent contractor. The transcriptions were then checked for accuracy against hand-written notes. The time frame for the interviews was from January 2004 until March 2004.

The observation of a School Improvement Meeting at each school was arranged after the completion of the interviews. The observations occurred in April and May 2004. Prior to the observation I was introduced to the staff and I briefly explained the study. I also distributed the Consent Forms. I took notes on the meeting but did not interact with the participants. Following the observation I collected the Consent Forms that included the participant's email address. Within the day of the observation I emailed the participants who returned Consent Forms, thanked them for their patience and asked a single question: How did today's meeting support the professional learning of the staff?

Documents were reviewed as corroborating evidence. This included School

Improvement minutes and agendas, the School Improvement Plan and memos

relating to professional development.

Data analysis of each case.

The data analysis of each case began immediately after each interview. I

reviewed notes and wrote summary memos of the interviews. Tapes were sent for

transcription. Once I received the written transcripts, I read them for accuracy and

compared the typed transcripts against my notes.

The initial coding system utilized codes based on the guiding conceptual

framework (see Table 6). Statements made in the interview were coded in a computer

software program (NVivo). However, as I coded statements, I began to generate a

more nuanced coding system. What began as seven initial codes quickly grew. I

realized that another process was needed to make sense of the volume of data.

Table 6

Initial Coding System

Construct	Code
District Effects	DE
Beliefs	B
School Culture	C
Reflection	R
Trust	T
Decision-making	DM
Planning	P

Since the first question of the interview asked for the recent changes that had occurred in the schools, the interviews took on a chronological and sequential perspective. I had devised a secondary coding strategy to look at process (see Table 7). I used process categories defined by Miles and Huberman (1994). This system became a more useful tool than the initial coding system. By writing the stories of the three schools first, I could then go back and look at the conditions that supported professional learning.

Data was coded until the categories became saturated. I cross-checked the transcripts for corroborating evidence within each case. As is true with a case study approach, new categories emerged. For example, the case analysis highlighted the importance of the initial assessment done by principals and the teachers' perceived need for change. These categories were not anticipated by the coding system.

Table 7

Coding for Principal Actions

Construct	Code
Context	C
Assessment	As
Processes	P
Activities	Ac
Events	E
Strategies	S

The triangulation of the data allowed for a convergence of the evidence

towards the theoretical propositions that principals took actions that supported and promoted professional learning. The theoretical propositions were verified in three ways:

1. Pattern matching. Did the evidence support the theory that principals created environments that supported professional learning?

2. Explanation building. Was there a set of causal links? Was there a convergence over a logical sequence of time? Were there rival or plausible explanations?

3. Time series analysis. When did the events occur? What were the chain of events?

Care was taken to insure that the conclusions were fully supported by the evidence. The rich quality of the transcripts required that the corroborating evidence was left intact by including the full context of the interviewee's statements. However, with the help of two critical friends (including one who had personal knowledge of the selected schools), evidence was edited for coherence and references that may prove damaging to the interviewees. This editing did not change the tone or intent of the interviewees' comments.

Cross-case analysis.

Once the stories of the three schools were outlined, patterns emerged across the schools. I looked for consistencies across the three schools using both coding systems that included the conditions that supported professional learning and the processes and strategies that principals used to create these supportive environments.

I also looked for evidence where the three schools differed in actions and context. The guiding conceptual framework served as a heuristic for the cross-case analysis. However, new patterns that were not anticipated emerged.

The cross-case analysis considered context when drawing conclusions. Explanations were provided when the evidence was not consistent across the three cases. The focus, however, was on consistent patterns across the three cases.

In the concluding chapter, conclusions were drawn based on the cross-case analysis. These conclusions were linked to current literature and suggested implications for policy and practice.

Tests for quality.

A case study approach must demonstrate quality. Quality was assured through an analysis of the validity and reliability of the design. The unit of analysis for this study was the school as an organization, which reflected the organizational literature. The case study included three schools that allowed for a literal replication (Yin, 1994). Construct validity was addressed by utilizing a framework in which the constructs were operationalized. In addition, the use of multiple sources of evidence allowed for triangulation. This evidence established a chain of events that promoted a climate that supported professional learning. Finally, by utilizing a knowledgeable critical friend to review the draft, validity was heightened.

Internal validity was enhanced by the use of pattern matching, explanation building, a time series analysis and a logical model (see Concept Map, Table 2). External validity was enhanced by a replication logic using three schools. Following a

case study protocol and using a coding system developed from the framework developed reliability.

The validity of this study rested on three main issues: (a) the logical link between student achievement and the creation of learning communities; (b) the validity of the methodology used to assess the indicators of a learning community; and (c) the generalizability of the conclusions based on the sample. Generalizability was limited to the conditions and context affecting the studied schools. However, the conditions faced by the schools in this study were reflective of the changes nationally because of the current reform movement precipitated by *No Child Left Behind*.

Tests of completeness.

The danger of a case study approach was that it can be endless in data collection and analysis. It was not the intent of this study to create an ethnography that fully described the context of each school. Instead, the use of the framework bounded the study. The multiple interviews served as the data collection sources and the evidence was categorized using a coding system developed from the framework (see Appendix A). Evidence was collected and analyzed until the evidence had decreasing relevancy. The intent, however, was to be exhaustive in evidence collection. In the analysis, rival explanations were examined. I attempted to seek alternative explanations to observed and reported phenomena.

Ethical issues.

Perhaps the greatest ethical issue in this study was voluntary participation and the freedom to speak openly. Participants must feel safe that their perspectives would

not be used in any way to evaluate their schools. The approval of the district's central office was a critical component to this study. In the final report, schools were obscured by the use of pseudonyms. I paid particular attention to references that would identify the schools. All schools will receive a copy of the report, again with no school or principal identified by name.

A second ethical issue was the bias of the researcher. I had an intuitive sense that collaborative professional development would prove to be an elusive reform and achievable only under certain conditions. It was imperative that I remained transparent in my biases and speculation.

Summary of the Methodology

To investigate the practices principals use to create environments that support professional learning, a multi-case study was designed. The cases were selected through a supervisor nomination survey. Three selected cases represented differences in student performance and demographics, yet each case was identified by the perception that professional learning was supported. The case studies featured interviews of principals and selected teachers, an observation of a meeting, a follow-up written question and a document review. Data was collected and analyzed using a guiding conceptual framework that was developed from an integration of my own personal theory and the literature on organizational learning, school improvement, principal leadership and teacher professional learning. The analysis consisted of two stages of coding and the discovery of patterns and themes. Conclusions identified the practices principals used in the face of accountability to create environments that

support teacher learning.

Chapter 4 – Findings – The Case Studies

The schools selected for this study were nominated by supervisors as schools in which principals support professional learning. The schools selected represent variability across three criteria: state test scores, race and the percentage of students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch (FARMS).

The case studies begin with a description the demographics of the three schools selected. Then, the case studies tell the story of each school, chronicling the events and practices utilized by principals that created change that resulted in the encouragement of teacher professional learning. The case studies rely mostly on interview data from key informants, but also include observational data and document reviews. At this first level of analysis, the case studies uncover the processes and practices used by principals and describe the effect of these practices. In addition, the case studies look at the effects of high-stakes accountability on the conditions that effect professional learning. All names used in the case studies are pseudonyms.

Demographics

Reynolds Elementary

Reynolds Elementary is located in an urban area of a small city. While the enrollment is average for the district (409 students), the school is 79% minority with 50% African-American and 26.4% Hispanic. Reynolds Elementary is uncharacteristic of the total district in regards to minority population and the number of students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (59% FARMS). Reynolds is

one of 19 schools in the district (77 total) that receive Title I funding, which is based on the poverty level of the school.

The principal of the school has been at Reynolds for seven years. She served as the assistant principal at Reynolds seventeen months prior to becoming the principal when the existing principal retired in mid-year. The greatest demographic change over the past seven years has been the steady increase in Hispanic students who do not speak English (from 45 students in 1998 to 108 students in 2003). Enrollment has remained constant. Scores on statewide assessments have remained stable over the past seven years and scores on nationally-normed tests have also remained stable.

Mayfair Elementary

Mayfair Elementary is located in a rural/suburban area in the district. It is an average sized school for the district (377 students). The number of minority students (13%) and students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (4%) is less than the county average. The principal has been at the school for seven years, replacing a retiring principal in mid-year. This was her first principalship.

The demographics of the school have remained relatively stable over the principal's seven-year tenure. However, there has been a large staff turnover due to a variety of reasons including moving out of state, retirement and transfers. Scores on statewide assessments showed dramatic increases seven years ago, but have stabilized in the past few years. Scores on nationally-normed tests have also remained stable over the past few years.

Stonegate Elementary

Stonegate Elementary in located in a rural and affluent area of the district. The school is large by district standards (631 students). There are very few students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (3%) and there are very few minority students (6.7%). The principal has been at Stonegate Elementary for six years. This is her first principalship.

The greatest change in demographics in the school has been the growth in student enrollment (18.7% increase in enrollment since 1997). This growth has allowed for the increase in staffing positions and has ultimately resulted in moving into a new school, replacing the older building. Scores on statewide assessments have remained relatively stable with a slight decrease over the past seven years and scores on nationally-normed tests have also demonstrated a slight decrease.

Case One - The Story of Reynolds Elementary

On a Friday afternoon in January, the staff is called together in the main office just after dismissal. The office cannot accommodate everyone and people crowd around the secretaries' desks and lean through the door. The principal called the staff together to relate information regarding a student who was in the hospital. The mood is somber and respectful as the principal, in a soft voice, relates the details of the child's condition. She then thanks the staff for their continued commitment. The warmth and respect are evident (observation, January 30, 2004).

On an afternoon in April, teachers enter the media center after school to participate in the School Improvement Team meeting. The entire staff is present

(about 40 staff members). After some joking and greetings, a teacher leads the staff in

a team-building exercise. The staff members have an 8 ½ by 11 inch paper pinned to

their backs. They then travel amongst themselves, writing phrases on the paper that

best describes the teacher or administrator. The phrases are positive and there is

much laughter. At one point, about 12 teachers have formed a "conga line" of praise.

This activity is followed by the presentation of an award to a teacher for

demonstrating exemplary service to students. Finally, the principal sets the agenda

for the meeting, divides the staff into four teams, each with a different task related to

professional development and planning for next year. The teams meet in separate

rooms and report back 40 minutes later (observation, April 19, 2004).

Overview

  This case study tells the story of Reynolds Elementary School. It is the story

of a school struggling with low test scores and poor student behavior. Utilizing a

focused and democratic approach, a new principal was able to guide the school

towards adoption of a school-wide student behavior plan and a plan to address low

reading scores. Through specific actions and interpersonal skills, the principal was

able to create a climate of support and teacher professional growth. This story is told

from the perspective of the principal, assistant principal and several resource and

classroom teachers. In addition, the entire staff had the opportunity to respond to a

written question. A profile of the interviewees is listed in Table 8.

Background

  Reynolds Elementary has traditionally served a community consisting of

middle class white families and African American families below the poverty level

Table 8

Interviewee Profiles for Reynolds Elementary

Title	Name	Years at Reynolds	Profile
Principal	Ms. Adkins	9	Was previously the Assistant Principal at Reynolds for 4 months.
Assistant Principal	Ms. Brown	2	Was previously a Reading Recovery Trainer in Title I.
Title I Reading Resource	Ms. Carter	8	Responsible for overseeing the reading program for at-risk learners.
District Reading Resource	Ms. Dalton	8	Currently the Reading Resource Teacher. Responsible for the district language arts program in the school. Was previously a Reading Recovery teacher.
Title I Math Resource	Ms. Egner	24	Works with all grades in math, focusing on the at-risk learners.
Lead Classroom Teacher	Ms. Fries	6	Intermediate classroom teacher at Reynolds for 6 years.
Lead Classroom Teacher	Ms. Green	5	Primary classroom teacher at Reynolds for 5 years.

and living in federally subsidized housing. Over the years, the school became

increasingly poor and minority, as white families sought private schools or

placements in schools with lower minority populations. Recently, the school has

experienced a large increase in Hispanic students.

Nine years ago a new principal and assistant principal were placed at the

school. The principal had served at Central Office prior to her appointment. She announced her retirement one year and five months into her tenure and the assistant principal, Ms. Adkins, was named principal. Despite the change in the principal, Reynolds Elementary had several teachers in leadership roles that provided some consistency. The leadership team consisted of several resource teachers, the assistant principal and the guidance counselor. Reynolds Elementary had several more resource teachers than is typical in the district because of their status as a Title I school.

Assessing the Problem of Student Behavior

Interview sources consistently stated that the overwhelming issue at the time of this transition was poor student behavior. One teacher, Ms. Carter, reported on the discipline in the school: "Oh, it was a disaster. There was no discipline." She went on to explain a possible reason of the poor student discipline: "I think people were trying to accommodate everybody in a lot of respects. I think (the former principal) was trying, I know she was, trying to accommodate the parents. We had a lot of administratively transferred students in here and she didn't say no. She took kids who were very disruptive."

When asked how she knew discipline was a problem, Ms. Dalton, a resource teacher, reported, "I was trying to work in the primary reading closet and I was working one on one and the children couldn't concentrate because of all the noise in the halls and bathrooms. If there were standards of behavior, every teacher was not adhering to them." Ms. Egner, another resource teacher, reported that a negative tone

was evident throughout the building.

In addition to the perception that discipline needed to be addressed under the previous principal, two different teachers saw staff morale and staff esteem as issues of that time. The sources of the low morale are not clear, although teachers speculated on three possible reasons: the perception of poor discipline practices, a relatively high turn-over of staff, and a perception that staff members were not treated fairly. One teacher, Ms. Green, recalled why she believed morale was low:

> I think a lot of it was left over from the previous principal. I just think from not knowing if the behavior in the building was going to get better. You didn't know if you were going to be able to work with all these new people and the people that had been here for such a long time.

Ms. Egner recalled the tone under the previous principal:

> I felt the need for building self-esteem with the staff as well as with the students. Some teachers felt like they weren't being treated fairly. Maybe they were being overlooked for positions that they should have had the opportunity to apply for within Reynolds Elementary and outside of the school.

These conditions were noted by Ms. Adkins, the principal, when she arrived at Reynolds. She recalled that she noticed low expectations for student behavior, a high number of discipline referrals and a high tension level in the building. She also noted that 27 teachers transferred out of Reynolds Elementary in the four years prior to her arrival, indicating that one possible reason was that teachers held negative perceptions of the school. She reported hearing, "Teachers at other schools were told, 'Don't go to Reynolds Elementary. It's not a place you want to work.'"

Devising a Plan

Teachers reported that the first action Ms. Adkins took when she assumed the

principalship was to address the issue of student misbehavior. Ms. Carter described a

staff meeting run by Ms. Adkins in which she elicited staff input into the problem of

student misbehavior:

> Well, when Ms. Adkins was appointed we had a huge staff meeting and she said we had to brainstorm what had to be done. What do you see at the school? She said, "What do you see?" to everyone on the faculty and everyone wrote everything down. We had all these ideas on the wall and then we had to prioritize and pick the top three things that had to be done first so you could have instruction. And every one of them came out to be that you had to have an environment where you could work. How were we going to do that?

The guidance counselor, who had knowledge of behavior management plans,

was selected by Ms. Adkins to present research on models of student behavior

management. After several staff meetings the staff agreed with a plan that combined

several models but was tailored to the school's needs. The principal, however, made it

very clear that this would be a school-wide initiative, involving all members of the

staff. Ms. Carter stated:

> At first everybody thought the classroom teachers were going to do this in the classrooms. But, that was not the case. The principal put her foot down and let us know that every person working in this school would be involved in the first 15 minutes of the school day with Second Step and No Put Downs (two behavior management programs). Every teacher like myself, special area teachers, resource teachers, everybody would be in classrooms talking the talk, walking the walk with the kids, doing the problem solving about the social skills.

Ms. Green echoed the total commitment by the staff, "We had to agree as a

school."

In regards to the final selection of the plan, there was some speculation that

the principal already had a plan in mind. One teacher suggested, "I mean Ms. Adkins

had a plan in her head and kind of just led us through this. You know, she's very good

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about that." This opinion was not confirmed by other interviews. However, it was clear that Ms. Adkins, by her own admission, wanted a school-wide plan to emerge from the staff meetings, but not that she had a particular plan in mind.

Despite some reported initial grumbling from staff members, the plan was adopted with full consensus. When asked why the plan was so readily accepted, the response from a teacher was that the need for a plan was so pervasive. Ms. Green reported, "Everybody was all for it. Everybody wanted change. Everybody knew that changes needed to be made and everybody was willing to do whatever they could to make the Reynolds Elementary more positive environment for themselves and for the students."

The Results of the Plan

All of the teachers interviewed reported that the implementation of the behavior plan was a success. This perception was based on a drop in office discipline referrals and suspensions. In addition, teachers described a change in the climate in the building. Ms. Carter described the change simply: "I mean you can't believe how different it is now." Ms. Dalton stated:

> We saw results. Personally, I had done some research on this for one of my graduate courses. I looked at the data that the counselor had about how many suspensions and referrals we were having, and the longer we were doing (these programs), the more the numbers went down. We had the hard numbers about the suspensions and referrals, but you could tell by walking down the hall.

She continued by describing how the school-wide behavior plan set expectations for student behavior:

> You could tell which kids were new to the building because it was obvious they didn't know the rules. They weren't aware of the strategies. You would

see the other kids informing them, "No, we don't do this. No, we don't say that." The affect was there, but we have the hard numbers too.

In addition to the improvement of the student behavior, teachers noted a change in the overall relationships among the adults. Ms. Fries reported, "I just think we all kind of clicked. In faculty meetings, we all got together. We were all interested in each other's families and how you're doing and I think it just kept carrying over." Ms. Fries indicated that new staff members were immediately exposed to this norm of adult relationships: "Anybody new who came in, well, this is how it is." When asked why this development of a close relationship among the adults occurred, one teacher responded, "I think it was Ms. Adkins. Her attitude is that we're a family. Families act a certain way and non-families act a certain way." Another teacher also commented that the principal's "warm and caring" style contributed to the climate.

Ms. Dalton, however, suggested that this development of close relationships was due to the combination of a documented successful program and the interpersonal style of the principal that contributed to the overall change in climate:

> You know as a principal that you are the instructional leader. You are also the one who promotes the culture the way you want it in the school. But, I think people only buy in when they're beginning to see that it's working.

This speculation would indicate that promoting positive interpersonal relationships required more than just encouraging a "family-like" atmosphere. There must be visible results too.

Maintenance of the Plan

After the development of the school-wide behavior management plan, the principal continued to keep student behavior management as a primary focus. This

was done through structural changes in the School Improvement Team. The principal

reported that the School Improvement Plan was divided into three committees that

reflected broad needs. The committees addressed reading, math and behavior

management (which was called the Climate Committee). Ms. Adkins then required

that the entire staff participate on one of the three committees. This kept student

management in the forefront of the school's planning.

In addition to the creation of the Climate Committee, the principal wanted the

staff to investigate the issues around the impact of poverty on student behavior and

performance. Ms. Adkins instituted a study group on poverty's effect on students.

Study groups are groups of teachers who investigate an issue by examining the

current literature and developing a reflective dialogue leading towards greater

insights. The study group at Reynolds chose a book entitled *A Framework:*

*Understanding and Working with Students and Adults in Poverty*by Ruby Payne. Ms.

Adkins described the impact of the study group:

> The study group on poverty eventually led to meeting Ruby Payne (the author
> of the book used in the study group). That was where we implemented the
> framework for understanding poverty. The framework for understanding
> poverty was tremendous in this school. It didn't answer or change a whole lot
> really but it made teachers and it made me aware of why kids did some of the
> things they did – coming from generational poverty.

The Development of Teacher Leadership

To ensure that the committees and the study group functioned effectively, Ms.

Adkins believed that teacher leadership needed to emerge. She began to develop

teacher leadership through the implementation of facilitative leadership. Facilitative

leadership is a design to distribute leadership responsibilities to members of the staff

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and to delineate and formalize communication. Ms. Adkins believed that facilitative

leadership allowed teachers to take leadership roles and a leadership team emerged.

To further develop teacher leadership, Ms. Adkins utilized a structure that was similar

to study groups called action research teams. The action research teams were similar

to the study group in the sense that an issue was investigated, but it included the

implementation and evaluation of a plan of action. The principal described the

structure:

> I used my action research groups to study programs after I had received
> facilitative leadership training. I taught some of my staff facilitative
> leadership. I tried to break them into two teams. I had one team for my
> reading intervention specialist, and one team for my math intervention
> specialist. These people had expressed a desire to go into leadership positions.
> I tried to create a leadership team as well.

The eventual results of these efforts created a management model that

involved a leadership team with specified responsibilities but also a whole staff

approach to decision-making and communication. Reynolds Elementary had several

teachers in resource roles that were perceived by the principal and the staff as

competent. However, prior to Ms. Adkins appointment, there was no formal structure

for decision-making or leadership. The relationships between the resource teachers

and the staff were personal and had developed informally. Ms. Adkins created

structure that involved all teachers but formalized the leadership positions on the

staff. She divided the School Improvement Team (made up of all teachers) into three

committees (Language Arts, Math, and Climate) to analyze data and to design

instructional models. Grade groups also made decisions instructionally. The

committees were chaired by resource teachers. Ms. Adkins would meet directly with

her leadership team but she regularly communicated to the whole staff directly in regards to vision and procedural issues.

Teachers would meet in grade group meetings and they would participate in the SIT committee meetings. The committees were chaired by members of the leadership team. However, school-based internal accountability flowed directly from the classroom teachers to the principal. Teachers would collect data and student work samples and turn them in directly to the principal although these data were discussed in both grade group and SIT committee meetings.

Addressing the Reading Scores

Within the context of the School Improvement Team Committee on Language Arts, the staff addressed the poor reading scores. The staff realized that the reading instruction was not meeting the needs of the students. Ms. Carter stated that the needs were driven by test scores and, "Well, the fact that most of the children couldn't do the work that they were being given and we needed a different way of teaching that would address everybody."

Ms. Dalton believed that the weaknesses in reading were first identified by the reading specialists in the school who were working directly with the weakest readers in an intervention program called Reading Recovery. The Reading Recovery teachers felt that their intervention program and the regular classroom instructional program were not in alignment. The communication between the Reading Recovery teachers and the classroom teachers and the techniques used appeared to be disjointed.

> We were in Reading Recovery. We were seeing that we could help kids to a
> certain point, but then when we were trying to communicate our results with
> the teachers, we wanted backup in the classroom. Reading Recovery can't

exist as a safety net unless there is good instruction for it to be the safety net for. That's why the Reading Recovery teachers spoke out. Half the time the classroom teachers didn't know what we were talking about. We would try to help them to see and we'd have them observe lessons, but they're sitting there with the whole class. We're taking out one kid at a time. And they're not seeing how the kinds of things that we're doing could benefit everybody. It was hard to get that idea across.

The Development of a Plan for Reading

The leadership team, made up of the principal, assistant principal and the resource teachers began to address the issue of poor reading scores by learning about alternative programs. They attended conferences and studied research articles. Within approximately the same timeframe, grant money through the Title I program became available, making the adoption of the new program feasible.

After looking at several programs, the leadership team selected a program called Literacy Collaborative. Literacy Collaborative was a staff development model based on coaching the instruction of literacy by using a guided reading approach. Interviews suggested that there were several reasons for this choice, but the principal's philosophy appeared to be the deciding factor. Ms. Carter acknowledged the principal's commitment to children but also to her emphasis on teacher professional development:

> The principal had obviously heard about that from another conference. Well, she always had a strong belief system that all our children can succeed. We have to find the vehicle that will make them successful. The principal wanted to go through staff development. Literacy Collaborative is a staff development model, not a program.

There were other reasons teachers cited to adopt the Literacy Collaborative. Reynolds Elementary was already using Reading Recovery. The Literacy

Collaborative model relied heavily on the tenets of Reading Recovery. Ms. Adkins

reported, "You had to have Reading Recovery in your building as a safety net for

Literacy Collaborative. That was one of the stipulations of the program." In addition,

Reading Recovery was strongly supported by the district Title I Office. Ms. Carter

reported that the Coordinator of Title I in the district "got wind of Literacy

Collaborative and wanted to know if we would buy in." The Coordinator supported

the school's application for the program with Central Office.

The principal agreed that the adoption of Literacy Collaborative was in

alignment with her belief that providing teachers with quality professional

development was the means to increase student achievement. She stated:

> The means to the end was that the Literacy Collaborative was not a
> curriculum unto itself. It wasn't a program that you could buy. It wasn't a
> quick fix. It was a staff development model. So, I think it did more for
> building teacher capacity to improve student achievement. So many people
> that I've worked with in the district told me I should be only working on
> student achievement. And, I agreed with them one hundred percent. But, I
> thought that you had to build the teacher capacity and then the teachers build
> the learning capacity of the students before you could get the student
> achievement.

Selecting a Facilitator

Literacy Collaborative required two significant investments: a trained

facilitator and an intense amount of commitment from teachers. Since there were no

trained facilitators in the district, the school searched for training opportunities.

Although the training for Literacy Collaborative was managed by Ohio State

University, there was an opening at Texas Tech for the training of a facilitator. One of

the requirements was that the facilitator be certified as a Reading Recovery teacher.

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Even though there were trained Reading Recovery teachers on staff, the leadership team decided to select someone from outside of the school to receive the facilitator training. A member of the leadership team, Ms. Dalton, indicated that the facilitator must establish relationships with teachers that were different from the relationships currently existing in the school. She stated:

> We talked about who could be a good leader. We decided it couldn't be anyone from school because the coach had to advise and give suggestions. We thought, "Who in the school could do it?" We decided that nobody here would really be a good choice.

Ms. Adkins began her search for a facilitator by interviewing teachers from other schools. She also interviewed teachers who were new to Reynolds and had not established close relationships with teachers yet. Ms. Dalton described the process:

> So, Ms. Adkins talked to a lot of people from various schools. A lot of the teachers were new and there were actually a couple of new people to Reynolds who were interested in being the facilitator. Of course, they had to go through the interview process, but they knew Ms. Adkins was going to hire someone from outside the school.

Ms. Adkins eventually hired a teacher from outside of Reynolds. Ms. Dalton said the choice came down to experience, personality, and passion for the program. "The person selected had taught kindergarten and she won't back down and she had done a lot of research on Literacy Collaborative. She was just passionate about it."

Securing Commitment

One of the requirements of participating in the Literacy Collaborative was a signed commitment from 100% of the staff, even though only the teachers in grades kindergarten through second grade would actually participate in the program the first year of implementation. There were two significant components to the commitment;

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staff training and coaching. The training involved weekly after-school meetings, sometimes lasting 3 ½ hours. The training also involved a deep inquiry into teaching and a strong reflective analysis. In addition, the facilitator would spend a significant amount of time in each participating classroom, taking notes, coaching and providing feedback. Teachers were used to teaching without begin under the watchful eyes of a peer on a regular basis. This was a significant change in the level of privatization enjoyed by teachers.

Nevertheless, the staff committed to the program by a unanimous vote. Interview respondents are consistent in their view about why the staff committed, although there is evidence that the commitment had several layers. All respondents agreed that there was a pervasive view among the staff that the current reading program that they were using was not meeting the needs of the students. Ms. Green, a classroom teacher, reported that she knew there was a problem in reading, "because of the test scores." She added:

> Our national and state scores were very low. Our grids that we turn in each quarter for on, above, and below reading levels were primarily all low, so we knew we needed something to help get kids back on level reading.

Another teacher, Ms. Fries, indicated that the staff wanted to actively improve student learning. "I think the teachers were really interested in having the kids show improvement and having the kids learn as much as they can."

In addition to the perceived need to improve reading scores, the respondents indicated that they had faith in the principal's leadership. The principal commented on her perception of the staff's commitment to her:

> Well, this staff has been really good. One teacher paid me the highest

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compliment last year when we had to switch programs. She said, "We'd walk on glass for you." And, I think they would. That sounds trite but I simply asked them would they commit to it. I told them about the research that I had done, the data analysis that I had done and what I had found out about the program because wanted something that mirrored our population. I talked to principals who had gone through the collaborative, and they had found significant growth with the African American students and with Hispanic students. So I knew this was something that would work if the teachers would commit to their piece of it.

Teachers described their commitment to the principal and to the work done by the leadership team based on the perception of their beliefs, hard work and experience. Ms. Fries reported, very simply, "We committed to the Reynolds Elementary and we committed to Ms. Adkins." When asked why she would commit so readily, Ms. Fries reported, "I trusted Ms. Adkins. I just did." The trust was based on the teachers' perceptions that the principal and the leadership team had experience and knowledge and that the principal had a strong belief system. Ms. Fries added:

> The leadership team has been teaching for so long, they know. They have come along the ranks and know what works and what doesn't. Ms. Adkins believed in it. She'd done her research. She knew what would come in the long run, what our students would look like.

While 100% of the staff committed by vote, interview evidence suggested that not all the staff was enamored of the heavy workload demanded of the program. The program was instituted in phases, lessening the actual time commitment that teachers had to make initially. The first year of the program involved the training of the facilitator, so the invasiveness to the staff was minimal. After the training of the facilitator, only three grades were involved. The program was to expand to the upper grades over the course of several years. There is evidence that the principal moved supportive teachers to the affected grades to ensure that the program would be a

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success. Ms. Fries stated, "Well, she put all of the teachers that were cheerleaders, so to speak, in those grades. They wanted change and were willing to accept change. All of us were placed in kindergarten, first and second grades." The composition of the teachers in the involved grades appears to have contributed to the positive attitude about the changes. Many of the teachers involved were "young" and new to the school. The principal reported that she purposefully hired teachers who wanted to be part of the changes.

However, Ms. Green reported that of the 10 teachers who received the initial professional development, about two thirds were strong supporters and one third of the teachers complained. Ms. Green believed, however, that the complainers fell in line because of the "positive people". She added:

> The facilitator and the principal were very supportive and helpful to us. They kept telling us over and over how they understood that it was a lot of work and extra time that we had to put into it. But, they promised us that we would see a lot of positive results and gain. And they were right. We saw a lot of positive results and a lot of gain.

The principal recalled that there were a number of teachers who complained and were in some sense "nay sayers", however she also noted that while she did refer to these teachers as nay sayers, "Well, I said nay sayers and I shouldn't have said that in a sense. Nobody said no. Everyone had to sign before they would even bring the program training to us. They all signed for that." Ms. Adkins speculated why there were resistant teachers, "Nobody wanted the facilitator in her classroom. That's where I saw a little bit of the resistance. So the resistance came in the sense that they did not really want this person in their room." Ms. Adkins believed that the resistance

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waned when the teachers saw the relationship that developed between the facilitator

and the teachers. She said, "They saw what the facilitator had done and how much the

one kindergarten teacher respected her."

Despite this early success, Ms. Dalton had concerns about potential resistance

when the program moved into the intermediate grades. She stated:

> The year that literacy collaborative moved to the intermediate grades, I think
> we would have had big problems. That's where the resistant teachers were at
> that time. Some of them had made it clear that they weren't interested in going
> to class; they didn't need to learn anything else. We had a couple that would
> have made it difficult, but then, as things happened and we implemented a
> new program.

The implementation of the new district-mandated program in August 2002

effectively ended the Literacy Collaborative. The new program forced the staff

development to focus on implementation and curricular issues, rendering Literacy

Collaborative irrelevant.

Perceived Success

Despite the heavy workload and the opening of classroom instruction to a

coach, the implementation of the Literacy Collaborative was perceived as a success

by the teachers who participated in the coaching and training. The teachers and

principal credit the skill of the facilitator. These skills included consistency, praise

and thoughtful questioning. The principal reported:

> The facilitator earned access. It took a while. I think the strongest part of the
> literacy collaborative was the coaching piece. And teachers weren't used to
> coaching. After the first year, after she was trained, she still taught. The whole
> time she was here she taught half a day in the teachers' classrooms at every
> grade level. We switched grade level every year. So, she kept up her
> credibility with teachers. Her other job was to coach them on the eight pieces
> of the framework. She would go in and praise them for some of the things she
> saw them doing, maybe with guided writing or shared reading. Then, she

would ask, "What piece would you like to be coached on?" Rather than go in and say you're doing this and this wrong, she would go in and use the inquiry approach.

Ms. Carter concurred:

For the classroom teachers, it was the coaching. You could talk to any teacher and they will tell you the same thing. At the time, they hated it because it was always open-ended questions. "What do you think? How it should be?" The teachers would respond, "We don't know what it is, just tell us!" "What do you think?" So, we go through the training and we go through the classes and you go through your reflection piece and ask, "How did you see yourself. What was before? What do you see now?" It was a great experience.

Ms. Carter recalled that there was a change in teacher practice as a result of the coaching and training. "That was the best part of it. They could really see the starting point and after a year could see how much change was occurring in their teaching. The teachers were so much more analytical. They were more responsive to the kids."

When discussing the impact of Literacy Collaborative, the members of the leadership team who were interviewed cited the changes in teacher practice, but the teachers who were actually involved in the professional development cited the change in students. Ms. Green addressed the impact of Literacy Collaborative:

I would say the impact was positive. The kids were much more involved. The students knew that we all needed to work together. We need to get this writing project done. Everybody had a piece to do. At workshop, which we called centers in literacy collaborative, even though it was learning, it was fun learning. They got to do investigations and do science experiments kind of on their own. They got to listen to stories and still listen to something enjoyable and not feel like it was work. And, they love coming over to guided reading groups and having a small group and working with the teacher and then being able to take those books and put them in a browsing bag to take home.

When asked about if the reading program was effective for increasing student

achievement, Ms. Green stated, "By the second year you could see a difference. You could see by the second year, the kindergarten kids who had had that in the second grade. You could see the progress." However, when asked why this progress wasn't reflected in nationally-normed tests, Ms. Green said, "The test scores from literacy collaborative were definite, but not from (the nationally-normed test). I would say no, because they did not really correlate." When pressed about how she knew the students had made progress she replied, "The kids really liked the program. They liked the leveled guided reading books. They liked being involved in the writing."

Ms. Fries described how progress was assessed:

We saw a lot of positive results and a lot of gain though daily assessments. The assessments were teacher designed from Literacy Collaborative like running records, interactive writing and things like that. Actually, we were able to see the progress these students were making.

When asked if there was a relationship between the progress they noted and state testing, Ms. Fries stated:

No, not really, because the standardized tests are so general. They don't really accommodate the needs of every child. We have a large ESOL population. With those tests that they ask the ESOL students to do, it's just hard for our students to make connections to these standardized tests with their background. And then the standardized tests do not always go with the curriculum. We told ourselves we know these students are making progress. We see the progress every single day, but you chose to select the data that was closer to you and more personal.

Changes in Culture

Interviewees believed that the implementation of Literacy Collaborative began to have an effect on the entire culture of the school. This effect was noted in four identified areas: a focus on the individual child as a learner, the consistency of

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program, the analysis of teaching as evidenced by the depth and nature of the teacher talk in the building and the sense of professional development.

Instructionally, teachers reported that the Literacy Collaborative promoted a "child-centered approach". Teachers looked "at children individually and individual progress". This was promoted through the use of daily teacher-made assessments. Ms. Fries described the assessments as, "teacher-designed assessments like running records, doing interactive writing and things like that. Actually, we were able to see the progress these students were making."

Teachers also noted continuity in the program from class to class and from grade to grade. Ms. Green stated: "The students feel that the teachers have continuity. You need continuity. Our kids need to know that when they come to school the same thing happens every day. They want to know that the program is in place, that the goals are set, and that everybody in school is working on the same page, even though they were doing different things at different times." Ms. Adkins, the principal expanded on the increase in continuity of program:

> That's the best thing that I've every seen since I've been teaching. For the first time, I really thought that the kindergarten teacher knew what the pre-K teacher was doing, and that the first grade knew what the kindergarten teacher was doing.

Ms. Adkins also cited the increase in collaborative questioning between the grades.

> The teachers constantly questioned each other. They constantly worked as a collaborative group. When you talk about collaboration, the bond that these teachers formed was amazing. I've never seen a bond like it in my life; at Reynolds Elementary or any other school.

The principal also noted a cultural change in the level of teacher discussions

and knowledge:

> I saw the teacher talk. There was a tremendous change in that. I never went into the teachers' lounge that there wasn't good teacher talk going on. There was never, "What's wrong with Bobby." It was, "Bobby is having a problem with this. How can we fix this? What did you do in kindergarten? Is there anything that you can give me that you've tried when you done a guided reading lesson in first grade that might click with him? Did you use such and such? Did you do this? What might you use to help this particular child? Or, if this particular child is doing this, how might you address it in shared writing? Do you have any ideas?" They helped each other out more than I've ever seen teachers do.

Ms. Adkins indicated that the content of teacher knowledge transferred to the

hiring process. When she asked current teachers to join her for interviews she recalled

that the teachers would comment on the applicants.

> I think the thing that pointed this out to me was that when I do interviews I ask teachers to sit in on the interviews. As we interviewed teachers, they would say, "They didn't know about this and they didn't know about that. I can't believe they haven't done this." It was real powerful for me to see how in tune they were when I was interviewing somebody else.

Ms. Carter believed the culture created around the Literacy Collaborative was

most evident when the program ended. "I think that the lasting effect was that the

teachers realized after the Literacy Collaborative ended what they were missing. They

were missing the constant challenge from the coach. And, they missed having the

facilitator. It was a huge commitment." She went on to speculate that the professional

development aspect of the Literacy Collaborative was central to the teachers'

acceptance. "They would fuss about it, but they would do it because they want to

better themselves, academically and personally. The payoff was that you, as a teacher,

would grow. I mean your professional growth is phenomenal." Ms. Green believed

that the Literacy Collaborative made her a more effective teacher. "It has been invigorating because it has made me find new ways to challenge. For the past two years, I have had the high kids so it's made me more determined to be a more effective teacher for these kids."

District Changes in Curriculum

Literacy Collaborative came to an end in 2002 with the introduction of a district initiative to respond to a new state accountability program. The state accountability program was revised to reflect the demands of *No Child Left Behind* and the requirement to meet Adequate Yearly Progress. Schools with high populations of minority students and relatively low test scores were selected to participate in a district-wide initiative to implement standard programs in language arts and math. This initiative required the adoption of a single text and staff development in the implementation of the programs. The language arts program significantly differed from the program utilized by Literacy Collaborative. The new program was more scripted and required the use of certain texts in a certain order. Literacy Collaborative depended heavily on teacher decision-making and flexibility. Teachers were informed of the change two weeks before the opening of school. The school was required to implement the program as it was designed.

Ms. Adkins, the principal, described the impact of the change in curriculum in terms of increased scrutiny from the central office and the frustration of not being able to make changes to the program:

> The program certainly did change. I think this year we've been under a microscope and continue to be under a microscope because we were told to take a scripted program which was completely different from where my

teachers were making decisions and really in charge of developing programs and analyzing. It was like they did not have to do that anymore. A scripted program was put into their hands. We were told last year not to deviate one iota from the program. We had consultants come into the building and if we were deviating, our supervisor was told exactly what the deviation was and what we shouldn't be doing. The supervisor came out and told us not to do it anymore. There were some modifications we would have liked to have made to the program but we didn't dare make because we were told not to. If you tell me to do something that way and you're going to watch every thing that I do, I'm going to try to make sure that it's done the way it has to be done.

The staff reacted with a sense of loss to the implementation of the district-mandated program. One teacher stated that losing Literacy Collaborative was "devastating". Ms. Green believed that the Literacy Collaborative did not have enough time to make true changes in measurable student achievement.

> For a change to be really effective, you need five years to implement the program. We only had maybe two or three years of Literacy Collaborative and then we had to stop to do the new program. I don't feel like we had adequate time to really implement Literacy Collaborative to show the results on the state tests that we were looking for.

She went on to state her perception of the new program. "I feel like the new program has restricted me. I feel like the high kids are bored out of their minds. I'm bored. Teaching with the new program, I feel like I'm not meeting the needs of these students."

The staff did implement the program as directed and some teachers began to see progress in student performance over time. Ms. Fries reported:

> I was seeing no progress. At first, I was seeing total frustration, breakdown, just the gamut of not working. So, the consultant would come in and she would say, "Try this." I'd try that. It still just never worked. Then March came and all of a sudden it clicked. I don't know what it was. But, those low readers were able to read.

Despite the significant change in program, teachers reported that the culture

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of collaboration that had been established under the Literacy Collaborative remained in several areas. One resource teacher stated that she continued to use the coaching model during the implementation of the new program. Another administrator, Ms. Brown, who had been at Reynolds for less than two years, related that the emphasis on a caring environment and professional learning still existed.

> It truly is a dedicated staff. One of the things that I noticed when I came here is that the teachers are all friends and they work together and so coming to school for them is a social time as well as a professional time. We have many young teachers that are working in masters programs and furthering their education and Ms. Adkins definitely promotes this. I think she holds the teacher education in extremely high esteem and teachers recognize that. She's also encouraged teachers to go to graduate classes and she is willing in any way to help them with their professional goals.

Teachers believed that teacher judgment continued to be valued. Ms. Fries said, "Ms. Adkins tells us to use our best teacher judgment and so as far as the first grade team goes when we get together and talk, we say my kids aren't getting it. We're taking another day." The assistant principal stated, "What we're trying to do is get the teachers to use their best professional judgment in each situation."

There were, however, changes in some of the staff development activities. Ms. Adkins described how she wanted to return to study groups and action research teams:

> Well, I tried to keep the pieces that we had had before as far as the study groups and as far as the action research groups. I didn't want to let that go because I thought it was important. I still think teachers need to do those things with adult learning. I still think they need to know that research and data analysis are important but they still need to go to books. They still need to go to references and research things. Everybody was involved in either a study group or an action group.

However, the principal went on to say that the staff development demands of

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the new program precluded many of the activities that had been done in previous

years.

> That's why we didn't do the staff development with the new program as we
> had done staff development before. The first year of the new program, we had
> no choice. That first year, the staff development plan that I wrote over the
> summer before the new program came had to be pitched because every staff
> development opportunity we had we went to the new program training.

Ms. Adkins criticized the quality of the training for the new program by suggesting

that the presenters had little credibility with the staff.

> The training was led by a person standing up in front telling you how to do the
> program and never having taught the program. That's what they shared with
> us. It was from one extreme to the other and it was very hard because the 10
> teachers will tell you that the new program could not touch what they were
> already doing with Literacy Collaborative. The training couldn't touch it.

The Threat of Not Making AYP

The staff faced another setback at the start of their second year in

implementing the new program. The state scores were released and the school was in

danger of not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Several staff members

reported that the district supervisor told the staff they were "staring into the bowels of

AYP hell". The teachers indicated that this statement increased the tenseness on the

staff. Ms. Carter stated:

> It made everyone very tense. That is the general consensus if you poll
> everyone. This is the worst year we have ever been through. Not for kids, just
> with our staff. I think it has been affecting teacher health. It went downhill
> from that comment.

The Culture Re-emerges

Despite this inauspicious start to the school year, teachers believed that the

culture of congeniality and collaboration re-emerged. When asked why, Ms. Carter

said, "It's a very congenial group of people." Teachers began adjusting the program

to meet the needs of children. Ms. Fries reported that the teachers in her grade "began

to make up their own assessments because the program was not measuring what we

really need to do to help student performance." The principal acknowledged that she

allowed the staff to begin to exercise judgment in changing the program.

> I felt like I took more leeway this year. I don't know if I really should have. I
> took it because I needed to do what's good for kids. I can't do something that
> I don't think is good for kids. I just don't think what we were doing was the
> best thing.

In addition to coping with the new programs, the Reynolds Elementary also

established a partnership with a local university to become a Professional

Development School (PDS). This allowed for increased professional development

opportunities for the staff. In addition, there continued to be support for new

professional development opportunities. A resource teacher, Ms. Egner, reported that

the principal supported her professional development and her judgment in the

classroom:

> I feel that I have all the support I need. Ms. Adkins is very open. We do a lot
> of dialoging together, collaboration. If it's something new that I want to
> implement or I feel the need to have done, she is very supportive. She has
> never closed the door and said, "Absolutely not. According to the guidelines,
> this is what we have to do." As long as I'm not violating the guidelines, she
> has no problem with it. For example, even with team planning, I had talked
> with Ms. Adkins initially, because that is such a crucial piece and we had been
> lacking it last year. I said, "I'd like for you to sit in on as many team planning
> sessions as possible." I give her my schedule at the beginning of the week.
> You can rest assured that 99% of the time she is going to be visible in that
> team planning; supporting what it is I'm requesting the teachers to do. So, I
> can appreciate that.

An observation of a School Improvement Team meeting indicated that efforts

were in place to recreate the culture of professional learning that existed during

Literacy Collaborative. The subcommittee working on staff development focused on

techniques that had classroom implications. In addition, the subcommittee suggested

re-instituting study groups to provide themes to tie together practical instructional

techniques. Suggested possible themes for the study group included brain-based

research and cooperative learning. The entire discussion was led by teachers, with the

principal saying very little, except to support the committee's efforts. In addition to

the work of the committee on planning staff development, other committees looked at

the school schedule to maximize instructional time and the teacher handbook to

determine how best to support professional learning.

Responses from teachers to a written question indicated a feeling that the

principal was very supportive of professional learning. One teacher stated:

> I really like the fact that Ms. Adkins is giving us the opportunity to take
> control of our own staff development. We are constantly trying to have our
> own students "buy into" their own learning and to see the same mentality at
> work for the teachers is great.

Another stated, "Ms. Adkins wants professional learning to have an impact on as

much of the staff as possible in as meaningful a way as possible."

The principal, however, acknowledged that the level of professional

development today at Reynolds Elementary is less now than when they were

implementing Literacy Collaborative. She also worried that the continued

implementation of the new program would change the culture so much that it would

be hard to return to the teacher inquiry and judgment that was a hallmark of the

Literacy Collaborative. She stated:

We'll never have that again. Well, that's not true. If we can get back to where teachers want to spend the extra time, we can do that again. It's hard to go back again when you have given people, especially the people who want a life other than the one in this school, when you give them a text and you say this is scripted, go for it (referring to the current program). Then, to have them go back to making the decisions could be very difficult. I think my teachers would choose to go back – those who've participated in the Literacy Collaborative. I'm not sure about the ones who didn't have it.

Ms. Adkins did indicate that the new program provided some needed instructional support to some teachers who found Literacy Collaborative challenging. "For some teachers, the new program has been a Godsend. For some of my teachers who couldn't teach well, it gives them some kind of framework to teach within."

The Effects of No Child Left Behind

When asked about the effects of the state assessment program as demanded by *No Child Left Behind*, the principal stated that the staff was very focused on addressing the issues of the state testing program: data analysis, subgroup scores and prescriptive teaching. However, *No Child Left Behind* expected schools to be successful with students who have issues that may be difficult for a school to remedy. Ms. Adkins stated:

No Child Left Behind is not a new thing, from my perspective. We never intended to leave any kid behind. I think that we put so much emphasis on that. Who intended to leave a child behind? But, I think you have to look through different lenses. I'm sorry; it's different in generational poverty than it is in other schools. It's different. Are children all exactly the same? That's not true. That's not true in any place. And when they come through that door, they're not all positives. I think, I firmly believe in what we are told that every child deserves the same chance for learning. I absolutely believe that.

The fact that Reynolds Elementary has poor test scores on the state assessment relative to the state and district averages has created some additional stress on

teachers. A teacher described the level of stress:

> I would say the stress level on the teachers is different. I think that the state testing is making teachers more responsible and it's not always the teacher's fault that children aren't writing. They don't take into consideration that the students don't have a good life and are not able to do homework at home. In a different environment you have two parent families who say, "Let's do our homework together." So, I think it falls a lot on the teacher to be able make up what's lacking at home or in the neighborhood. I mean teachers are doing their best. They're following the curriculum. We're not going off and doing whatever we want to do. If children are not learning or understanding or not quite getting it, then something else is wrong or needs to be fixed.

She went on to say, however, that the accountability of *No Child Left Behind* has a positive effect. "I think to a point, NCLB is good. I think teachers need to be accountable for what they're teaching in the classroom. I think the other side of it is that teachers can't be responsible for everything."

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Case 2 - The Story of Mayfair Elementary

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Three first grade teachers enter the principal's office on an afternoon in January. "We have a proposal to change the reading program in first grade." The principal smiles warmly, accepts the written proposal and says, "Wonderful." She lays the proposal on her desk to read later. The teachers confide that they felt the principal would accept the proposed changes because they addressed the issues they knew she considered important. Their proposal reflected an analysis of deficiencies in the program based on assessment data. They had also collaborated with the Reading Specialist, who was aligned closely with the principal in matters of instruction. They were proud of their efforts and felt affirmed (observation, January 23, 2004).

On a bright and sunny morning in April, 19 teachers, a parent and the principal meet around a table for the monthly School Improvement Team meeting.

Colleagues are greeted warmly. The principal opens the meeting with recognition of

two teachers for their involvement in a student enrichment program. The meeting,

chaired by a teacher, then moves quickly between three themes: actions to improve

the instructional program, procedural information and praise for sustained efforts on

projects. Key instructional issues are raised, although not resolved. These issues

include modifications to the current reading program, the use of state reward money

to support staff development, plans for a full day of discussions on developing a plan

for the next year and an analysis of a recent standardized test. The tone is warm,

positive and supportive. When asked about their impressions of the meeting, teachers

described the meeting as "inviting and open", "comfortable", "well-informed",

"respect for others", and a "sense of collaboration". It is clear to the observer why

this school was nominated as a school that supports professional learning

(observation, April 20, 2004).

Overview

The story of Mayfair Elementary chronicles a school that underwent a

significant change in practice and climate with the appointment of a new principal.

Mayfair was a community school, staffed with some residents of the community,

including the principal. The school was insulated from changes in instruction and the

school improvement process that were commonplace in the district. Encountering

significant resistance, the newly appointed principal slowly began to change the

culture of the building by articulating clear expectations for instruction and holding

teachers accountable for classroom tone and staff development participation. Through

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changes in structure and the addition of key staff members who would eventually

assume leadership roles, Mayfair developed a climate of collaboration and

professional growth.

This story is told through the lens of the current principal and some teachers

who now serve in a leadership capacity at the school. In addition, all members of the

School Improvement Team had an opportunity to respond to a written question. A

profile of the interviewees is listed in Table 9.

Table 9

Interviewee Profiles for Mayfair Elementary

Title	Name	Years at Mayfair	Profile
Principal	Ms. Holmes	7	This was her first principalship. She had served as an Assistant Principal at another school. She was previously a classroom teacher and a Reading Resource teacher.
District Reading Resource	Ms. Isrig	4	Currently the Reading Resource Teacher. Responsible for the district language arts program in the school. Previously was a classroom teacher in another school.
Lead Classroom Teacher	Ms. Klein	4	Primary Lead Teacher. Currently a classroom teacher and SIT chair. Previously taught in another district in the state.
Lead Classroom Teacher	Ms. Jenkins	7	Intermediate Lead Teacher. Currently a classroom teacher. Had previously taught in another school in the district.

The Existing Culture

Prior to the appointment of Ms. Holmes, the school was led by a principal

who lived in the community. At the beginning of her tenure, Ms. Holmes' perception

was that the community was deeply immersed in the running of the school.

> Many of the teachers, secretaries, cafeteria workers, just about everybody,
> lived in the community. It was very incestual because you had to go to the
> church to get a job here. Former principals could hire anybody they wanted.
> The former principal hired a custodian from his church to be the computer lab
> technician. People who were hired either lived in the community or went to
> this church.

She believed that this contributed to a sense of isolation from changes in the district.

> There was not a lot of vision sharing, the setting of standards or an emphasis
> on improvement that you would see elsewhere. There was no sense of a team
> working together. They were happy as clams in their own little kingdoms.

Ms. Holmes perceived that the community was apparently very pleased with

this arrangement and the school was frequently compared to a small private school in

the area. The PTA was very involved in the running of the school, raising almost

$100,000 annually to provide activities for the students. The principal described the

community perceptions when she arrived.

> One mother said it well, "You know we are used to having our Princeton
> Academy (a local private school) here. And, why can't we spend our $90,000
> a year PTA budget on fancy visors for field day? Why does the new principal
> want us to spend it on textbooks?"

The principal went on to say she felt that the staff's focus was not on what is good for

children, but on maintaining the relationships with the community. She stated:

> I think that early on a message that I said over and over is every decision you
> make has to be in the best interest of kids whether it's social or programmatic.
> The staff told me they had built their own little kingdom here and everything's
> nice. This is a public Princeton Academy and we like it this way and leave us
> alone.

Despite the strong community presence, Mayfair Elementary was an anomaly in the district. When the district office compared the correlation between affluence and scores on state assessments, Mayfair's performance was much lower than would be predicted by their affluence. On the day her appointment was announced, the new principal was informed of the discrepancy in scores by Central Office personnel. Her charge was to resolve the discrepancy in scoring. She recalled:

> Before I came here both the Assistant Superintendent and the Area Supervisor told me that they had done a correlational study of the schools in the district between socio-economic levels and test scores. The correlation indicated two anomalies in the district: one anomaly was a low poverty school that did well and one was a fairly comfortable socio-economic school that didn't do so well. Mayfair is the school with the low scores and that's the school I was sent to manage.

First Assessment

Upon arriving at Mayfair, the reasons for deficit in scores were evident to the new principal through observations of the instructional program. She recalled:

> I knew what the data said but I was absolutely in turmoil over what I saw in classrooms. I felt like I had been in a different country. The Assistant Superintendent walked out of a classroom and told me that I had a major mountain to climb. She put her arm around her waist just like that and said, "I think I'm going to be ill."

The principal decided to set the tone immediately of the expectations for instruction. Using a staff development meeting three weeks into her tenure, the principal stated that she would use the time to assess the instruction in the building but that there were expectations that would be addressed immediately. "I said I needed to know things that are going in this building. To be real honest with you, there are some things going on in this building today that will change."

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The principal's assessment of the instructional program indicated that

expectations for student achievement were low, that virtually no new initiatives had

been implemented, the school improvement process was non-existent and there was a

culture of disrespect to children by a core group of teachers. She indicated that she

was unsure of how pervasive the negative tone was throughout the building. She

stated, "I didn't know how the teachers felt about people who were being really

horrible to kids." The principal went on to describe the lack of professional

development in the building prior to her arrival:

> As I remember it, one of the first faculty meetings that I had, I asked about the reading and language arts handbooks. They were still in shrink-wrap. So I knew I had to deal with that. I knew I had to deal with Dimensions of Learning (a model for instruction required by the district). It had never been distributed. It was still in a box.

She described the staff's level of understanding about the state assessment program.

"I was in such shock, because I could tell that the staff had never seen the state

scores. They didn't understand any of that."

Setting Expectations

The principal addressed the perceived problems early in her tenure by setting

the expectations for teacher behavior and practice, instituting some new initiatives

through the school improvement process and confronting teachers about their tone

with children. "I started to implement some things like school improvement teams.

There really wasn't one here." A resource teacher, Ms. Isrig, described the new

expectations. "Ms. Holmes said you will have three reading groups every day and use

junior novels. You will be pulling out vocabulary and this is how you will be doing

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it."

Ms. Holmes believed that these changes elicited some resistance. "I started by saying they need a rationale for the changes. But, I backed up because their favorite response was, 'Why do we need to change?'" Ms. Isrig explained the teachers' perspective:

> People were not accustomed to that the expectations. Bottom line, they were accustomed to doing whatever they felt like doing. So, when Ms. Holmes came in, apparently the teachers have never even seen the language arts handbook. She found them all in closets, unpacked the boxes, and did training and in-service for teachers on the language arts handbook. She told them how they were going to use the handbook and how it was going to support their instruction. So, the bar went from here to here (signaling with her hands) so you had many people, including the reading teacher, who really didn't know what to do. They were almost not able to keep up with the expectations.

The principal believed that reaction to the heightened expectations varied in one of three ways: open hostility, quiet support and some waiting to see the outcome. She described her perceptions:

> There were some angry, militant, aggressive teachers and then there were some that were actually very silent, really happy to see the changes; people that now that I have known them, are friends who are on the cutting edge of instruction and wanted to be there, wanted to do the right thing. And they were kind of glad, but they would never let me know it. And, then there was a group of people who were just going to be quiet and see what she's going to make us do. There was a mixture.

The open hostility was evident through teacher actions to incite the community and to make threats to the principal. Ms. Holmes reported:

> The internal resistance got worse before it got better. The real ring leader that the previous principal enabled to be a ring leader, was rude and absolutely out of control with what he was saying to the parents in the community. At the end of that first year he went into the teachers' lounge and said he would get an Uzi (machine gun) and take me out.

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The teacher was subsequently removed from his position by the Assistant

Superintendent.

The principal described some teachers as passive-aggressive. This stance was

evident in teachers not attending mandatory meetings or complying with the stated

expectations. The principal stated:

> I can remember the first time I wanted to explain a broad perspective of the state testing and where we stood and which groups of kids we needed to move. I can remember I thought I called everyone and let them know we're having a meeting and you expect people to show up. Right? On time! They had better be sitting down one minute before 7:15. Well, I looked around and one third of the people weren't there. So I said to the presenter, "I want you to go ahead and get started". I opened it up, "Good morning everybody. The purpose of today is . . . It's important for you to understand this." Everybody was kind of just looking through me. I could tell a lot just by their behavior that first day. So I got up and walked down the hall. There were some teachers doing things on chalkboards, etc. I would go up and say, "We're having a faculty meeting. I need you down here now." They thought it was a joke.

Ms. Isrig also described a passive-aggressive stance in the building that was

fueled by teachers with negative attitudes:

> Now the problem we encountered was a handful of people in the building who had negative personalities, overbearingly negative, and they set the tone for the building. Then, when Ms. Holmes would come through and say, you will have three reading groups a day, then it would be, "Certainly!" and nod their heads in agreement. But then they would be in the lunchroom saying, "Who does she think she is? She's not in there teaching those three reading groups." So, there was enough negativity and they were spread out enough that it just made things depressed.

The principal believed that a "wait and see how it turns out" mentality grew to

become quiet support. The principal believed that support grew because she was

addressing issues that had bothered people but there had been no forum to address the

issues.

In some ways, when you pay attention to things that everyone knows

professionally are wrong it raises morale because finally someone is going to do something about it. There were people who had moderate feelings and moderate expectations. They were rattled and nervous because you look like the Gestapo coming in but once we got past that and there were some people that I could make connections with and some people that I could trust, things began to settle.

The most hostile teachers and the most ineffective teachers were either administratively removed from the school with the support of Central Office or transferred to other schools voluntarily. The principal reported that the process was not resolved in a matter of weeks or months. In fact, the principal stated that she felt that the final vestiges of the old regime were extinguished after six years. Ms. Holmes stated, "I just got rid of my last (resistor)last year. And in some ways, I've told people that district supervisors did Mayfair a disservice because they enabled the negative tone to exist."

A teacher who is now part of the core leadership group reported that the tension between the principal and the resistors created low morale. This was evident four years ago when she arrived. Ms. Isrig stated:

> I could tell you that morale I felt was very low at that time. I've been here four and one half years. Morale was low. You had a handful of people running the school, so to speak. I mean they felt like they did and the community thought they did. I think what the principal was trying to do was regain control of the school in a positive light.

Creating a New Culture

As resistant teachers began to leave, the principal began hiring teachers who shared her vision for instruction and school culture. The principal utilized a long interview process that could last up to two hours. Ms. Holmes described how the new teachers impacted the school's culture. "There was a momentum that was built and it

wasn't a group of people; it was a sprinkling. The sprinkling became bigger." She

went on to say how she used the interview process to select teachers.

> After an hour or two hour interview. I tell them my two biggest beliefs. It boils down to two things. One is to be an absolute team player, team building, working with others, across teams and within a team and teaming with me. The other important one for me is I have to have somebody that is nice to kids and likes kids.

One teacher, Ms. Klein, explained what the principal was looking for in her

interview:

> Ms. Holmes told me later that she thought I was extremely willing to learn. I questioned a lot. I asked her, "What is this, explain this to me, how does this all work? What is this interactive writing thing?" She was willing. I asked lots of questions. She explained it all. We had, I want to say, almost a three hour interview. She said later on that I was willing to learn and that I showed the excitement. I came and observed. Then I came back and she said, "Would you like a job?" Just let me know. I actually took about a month and a half before I made my decision. She held on. I thought, you know what, this is great. She must have the confidence in me even though I felt like I bombed the interview. She had the confidence in me.

> In addition to trying to find people who were in alignment with her values,

evidence suggested that the principal also tried to match personalities to build teams.

Ms. Jenkins reported:

> From what Ms. Holmes told me, she was just trying to get some personalities that would work together. She had come to Mayfair Elementary six months before that and there were things going on that needed to change, not necessarily bad things, but things to make the school a better place such as using your language arts handbook and writing your outcomes on your board and things like that.

> The principal believed that the true turning point in the change in culture in

the school was the acquisition of two key staff members who became part of her

leadership team (the guidance counselor and the reading teacher). These two teachers

were able to support the principal's initiatives both informally and formally within their relationships with the staff.

> I think what happened behind the scenes before we got to the mission/value statement was there was a good period of time where I was in the front and I was telling people here's what we need to do, here's the bar, here's the standards. But now I also had two very competent people who were delivering the messages both formally within services and informally behind the scenes. So when there was a scuttle of why do we have to have a faculty meeting on box and whisker plots, these two people were there to say, "Well, it's really important to analyze your scores so that you know where you are."

The Development of the Mission and Vision

The process of developing the mission and vision involved the entire staff. Ms. Holmes said she wanted to involve the whole staff because, "I didn't want the outliers to say that the 'goody-two-shoes' wrote it. I didn't want people feeling like they could curtsy out of it. So, I had the whole staff do it." Eventually, the mission was developed through subcommittee work. However, the process of having the whole staff involved contributed to a shared belief. The principal stated that through the constant referencing of the mission, it became pervasive, informally and formally.

The development of the mission statement began the first year of Ms. Holmes' tenure. Ms. Holmes controlled most of the decision-making at the time but she began to give the staff an opportunity to structure the staff development. She stated:

> I didn't let the staff make a lot of decisions. I knew it had to work so I let them make decisions like: "Do you want to get together on Saturdays and get paid? Do you want to work at night and bring dinner? Do you want to spend faculty time? Let's talk about it, it's important, we need to work in groups, we need to work together."

The principal allowed the staff to begin collaboratively working on the mission and vision statement for the school. The entire staff met in the evenings to

flesh out the mission and vision for the school. The staff was divided into small

groups and they began by articulating and clarifying their values. While the writing of

a mission and vision is a common occurrence in schools, the principal believed that

the development of Mayfair Elementary's mission and vision became a powerful

activity because it pulled the staff together. The principal described her perception of

the creation of the mission and vision:

> The staff set the parameters. It worked out well for that group to do it in the
> evenings, usually three evenings. They brought in dinner. And then we had a
> smaller group work on refining the mission. We had it published, had it on
> book covers, binders, had it everywhere. I think most of the teachers believed
> that it was a necessary step you had to take.

Ms. Isrig had a slightly different perspective on the development of the

mission statement, but agreed that the exercise pulled the staff together. She believed

that the initial phases of the construction of the mission statement were characterized

by bickering and that low morale emerged as a central theme. Ms. Isrig reported:

> I could sense it. I felt that morale was very low at that time. I've been here
> four and one half years so Ms. Holmes had probably been here about three
> years because she came in December, prior to me. Morale was low.

Ms. Isrig believed that the final version of the mission statement addressed

culture issues more than it addressed instructional issues. In fact, the mission

statement directed the school to ensure a positive, safe, and effective learning

community. Ms. Isrig concluded:

> I really don't think it was primarily instruction based. I think when you looked
> at this, the academics were in there. And everyone agreed with that. But it was
> the things dealing with a nurturing, positive, and safe environment that were
> important. Positive was a key word.

The principal believed that the final version of the mission statement had an

impact on the staff perspective. Ms. Holmes stated:

> What happened was that I found even teachers would say, "You know what, we just wrote our vision. And if we really believe in the mission statement and these values why are we doing this?" And it kept coming back up and so it became a kind of living document. It was definitely something that was discussed at school improvement team meetings. A lot of discussion just casually and informally developed and so once it was written, and that took months, we came together and it very clearly said we all wrote it and it was our beliefs. There is a culture in this building and we all buy into it. That way nobody could wiggle their way out of it.

There was a tragic event just prior to the final adoption of the mission statement that may have had an impact on the staff and the staff's perceptions of the principal. The staff suffered a death of a faculty member. Ms. Isrig believed this event demonstrated another side of the principal to the entire staff. She reported:

> I think actually having that occur here and, you know that's interesting because I never really hear about it, but I think actually having that happen changed Ms. Holmes because I had only seen the "hard as nails side" of her. When I interviewed I saw warm, passionate and then when I got here it was like, this is it and this is how it's going to be, and it was just a night and day different personality. And when that scenario happened, I think it was the first time many people in the building saw that passionate side, saw her cry, saw her emotional. I think that touched people and I think that, sad as it is, that situation changed things a little bit for people. At least it changed their perception of her.

When asked if this event was necessary to change the culture of the school, the teacher said no, she didn't think so. She felt that the culture would have changed anyway with the turnover in staff.

Trust and Access

The creation of the mission statement allowed for the staff to rally around the concept of working together. However, two issues emerged from the completion of the mission statement: trust and access. Ms. Isrig reported:

Another thing that I think I can tell you that I think changed culture over the course of time, the longer that I'm here, the more trust that I develop with people in the building and they look at me as the door to Ms. Holmes.

Another teacher, Ms. Klein, stated, "We are able to talk openly and give our input without being afraid or intimidated."

There is evidence to suggest that one way teachers mitigated intimidation from the principal was to go through the Reading Resource teacher. The staff knew that the Reading Resource teacher and the principal were closely aligned instructionally. Ms. Isrig believes that she was able to develop trust with the staff and provided a conduit to the principal. She described the level of access teachers had to the principal through her.

I don't have all of her knowledge, but I'm getting there. The teachers know that they can come to me and they're going to get an answer that probably Ms. Holmes would be accepting of and she would be happy with, without that edge or questioning. I have a different personality than she does and I think I probably have a softer personality. So what I find is, over time, I have developed a relationship with most of them that they can come to me and they feel comfort and I think that has really changed things a lot too. It's eased things.

The Development of a Learning Community

With an articulated mission and vision, the creation of a leadership team that promoted trust and access and the hiring of teachers who shared her values, the principal assembled a core group of teachers that eventually began to reflect a professional learning community. In addition, even though one member of the original leadership team was promoted and moved to another school, new teachers assumed leadership roles. The principal then began to create structures for decision-making. A new decision-making structure emerged. Information regarding instruction

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was disseminated from the instructional leadership team consisting of the principal, the Reading Teacher and the Lead Teachers to the teachers. Sources of information included observational data, grade group information, data analysis done by the School Improvement Team, outside sources of information, teacher initiatives and content planning groups. This information was disseminated to the School Improvement Team, grade groups, collaborative teams or the whole staff, depending on its potential impact.

The principal purposefully created collaborative teams based on grade or content. She insisted on regular meetings and she reviewed agendas and minutes. In addition, she insisted that the teams focus on instructional issues. When asked about the decision-making structures and her monitoring of the process, the principal reported:

> Typically, the planning is done in individual grade level teams. Sometimes it's a collapsing of teams or it's a science content strand or a special education strand. They choose ahead of time what collaborative team they might want. And then that team has minutes that address the major areas of our SIT plan. They needed some training with this. Well, about four years ago, I got little notes saying, "Well, we planned the baby shower or we did this." No, I don't even want you talking about who hasn't paid for Weekly Reader."

The collaborative teams described problems and created proposals. They worked together to create the proposals and then routed the proposals by the Reading Teacher before taking it to the principal. This process ensured alignment between the proposal and the values of the principal. Grade groups had autonomy in implementing instructional strategies and they did not necessarily have to be aligned with other grades.

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Interview evidence, however, suggests that that there was little differentiation within a grade group. A teacher, Ms. Jenkins, described the climate:

> Each grade level seemed to be a team and people worked together. I didn't feel like I was a new teacher in my classroom by myself all the time doing my own language arts. If I had questions, the team all worked together. We were all on the same page.

Ms. Klein, however, indicated that the alignment between grades was not as strong:

> I'm not sure (about the preceding grade). We were so far apart from them that my low kids were not getting it down and were not making the connection. We were expecting them to know all these words and they really didn't have it. There was no structure or consistency from (the preceding grade) to here.

The School Improvement Team, however, was a place to align the grade groups. Ms. Klein stated:

> Ms. Holmes has Lead Teachers and she also has team leaders. Team leaders are one person from each grade group that she typically has weekly meetings and she will give us important dates and things that are going on. If we have a concern, we can share it at that time. If the issue is big she might talk about it at team but she would think it would be more purposeful at SIT.

The principal actively rotated responsibility for the collaborative planning teams. She described the rotation of responsibility:

> What I do with that position is I let people know up front it is not the most experienced or the brightest. I rotate that responsibility every year. Now, it's never a brand new teacher to my building, but I do that because what I want them to know what some of the major responsibilities are.

Ms. Klein commented, "The distribution of responsibilities among various SIT individuals and grade groups facilitates professional development, particularly regarding the development of organizational, communication and team building skills."

In addition to instructional alignment, public praise and acknowledgment were evident in the observed School Improvement Team (SIT) meeting. The principal and the chair of SIT included public praise formally (by including it in the agenda) and informally, by complimenting teachers for their efforts and accomplishments. One teacher commented that sharing celebrations contributed to her feeling that the school promoted her own professional learning. Ms. Isrig felt that the principal's praise had a positive effect on teachers:

> I think it's just her personality. I think it's the praise you get. It makes me feel good and affirmation. She values doing what's best for kids. She values good instruction. She values work ethic and positive attitude and I think the other teachers do too. So when they get that affirmation back from her, the teachers love that.

The Emergence of a Pervasive Belief System

There is evidence that a pervasive belief system developed on the staff. Ms. Jenkins reported, "Generally, we are all in consensus to the needs of the school. We work as a team with our students' best interests at heart." Ms. Klein stated, "The teachers at Mayfair Elementary have a genuine drive for developing an educational program that will challenge all students in our school to meet with success." Ms. Isrig believed that the shared values came from the way the principal interviewed and selected teachers who shared her values.

> When I sit in all her interviews with her and I look at what she's looking for, it's knowledge, but it's value-based. Is this a person that I can mold and train because I can give them the knowledge, but what I can't change is the personality. And, I can't change work ethic and she wants people that she can trust to do a good job.

She went on to say that the principal kept the belief system at the forefront: "I think

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you always know where she stands and it's always reiterated at meetings. You hear

that over and over again. When I meet with teachers I keep the values aligned for

what she is looking for."

The teachers perceived this belief system to be based on what is best for

students and for the professional growth of teachers. In response to a written question

regarding professional development at Mayfair Elementary, one teacher stated, "We

are fortunate to have a principal and a reading teacher who are always searching for

ways to better improve instruction and our school as a whole." Another stated, "She

recognizes our needs and searches for answers." A third teacher stated, "The

administrator consistently nurtures a high level of achievement among all community

members, and provides opportunities within the school schedule for professional

development, collaboration and planning."

Professional Development

While staff development is focused around school initiatives, there is evidence

that individual teachers can pursue their own interests professionally. Ms. Klein

recalled an anecdote:

> I think it's more personal interest. But we support one another. Now that I've
> finished my graduate program, Ms. Holmes said that one of the first grade
> teachers should talk to me about my program. It was enough to light a spark
> and that teacher then came to me and asked me about my program.

She went on to say that her growth is valued.

> You do have an opportunity to use what you learn. I don't think Ms. Holmes
> necessarily shows favor for what you're doing but I think she is aware that
> you're doing something and you can share it with staff members.

> A teacher stated, "The bottom line is we learn a lot from each other. We are

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thoroughly supported by our leadership, parents and other staff members.

Professional development is obviously high on the agenda each and every meeting."

The principal believed she learned how to find opportunities for collaboration

and professional development for people through her tutelage with another principal

when she was an assistant principal in another school. She stated:

> Many of the structures and opportunities I use I learned from Mr. Jones, my
> mentor principal. He had more people in his school than I do, but he said you
> have to give teachers that opportunity to grow. You have to give the flow back
> and forth. So, there were lots of opportunities in his building for cross-
> planning, and diagonal planning. He used different groups and different
> forums.

Ms. Holmes also recalled Mr. Jones' advice in dealing with teachers who may not be

on the cutting edge of instruction. She recalled him saying:

> Now there are people who are going to participate in the discussion about
> professional growth that you don't necessarily respect but you don't want
> them to know that. You're going to listen to them and you're going to take an
> interest in what they are doing.

The school's mission statement sought to create a learning environment for

everyone including staff and students. The idea of the school as a learning

community, both for the students and the teachers was evident in the interviews

because teachers felt they must stay current with instructional "best practices". They

believed that the principal has set that bar and the staff collaborated to reach her

expectations. "Best practices" could be identified by the leadership team, grade

groups or individuals. However, the principal stated that she and the reading teacher

generally relied on district in-services and presentations to identify best practices.

However, teachers were encouraged to attend conferences or graduate classes to add

their repertoire. In addition, both the teachers and leadership team actively assessed

student performance to identify areas of weakness and then move through discussion

to address those needs. Ms. Jenkins described the culture:

> Instruction was definitely more focused at Mayfair than at my previous
> school. Even now, seven years later when we have our SIT meetings, Ms.
> Holmes is always asking if there's something. Like do we feel there is a need
> for some kind of staff development and one example I can think of is a couple
> of years ago when the calendar math came out and it was just K-3 and then it
> moved to fourth and fifth grade.

Ms. Klein described the predominant belief in the school as:

> You're feeling kind of overwhelmed at first. Do I really know what I'm
> doing? Am I servicing these children? Am I doing every thing I can do to
> make them successful? I feel it, but I know next year I'm going to go, I could
> have done this last year and the guilt is going to kick in a little bit. But, I think
> every year you feel confident and you change things to meet the needs of your
> children. I'm going to have a whole different group and I'm probably going to
> have to change things.

Internal Accountability

While there was an encouragement for professional growth, the principal also

implemented internal systems for accountability. The accountability took four forms:

observations, student work samples, meeting minutes and teacher reflection

portfolios. The principal relied heavily on observational data. New initiatives were

identified by the School Improvement Team, the leadership team or the collaborative

teams. Those initiatives were then presented to the staff. The principal did follow-up

observations to assess the implementation of the initiatives. Student work samples

followed a similar pattern. A teacher recalled how the staff would provide student

work samples as evidence of instructional implementation on a monthly basis to the

principal. The principal made comments and suggestions in response to the work

samples. Collaborative team minutes indicated that teams were focusing on instructional issues. Ms. Holmes said she monitored the minutes to be sure that the groups stayed focused on instructional issues.

Reflection

Ms. Holmes required that teachers produce annual goals. Ms. Holmes then decided to ask the teachers to create a portfolio that served as evidence of the goal attainment. Eventually, teachers were asked to share their portfolios as examples to the staff. This reflection became part of a regular process to reflect and share. Ms. Isrig described the reflection process:

> With the portfolio, I think the first year that she did it we didn't share them. We simply had our portfolio and we turned it in to her and she looked it over when she was doing her rating. And, then she decided to have a whole faculty meeting devoted to sharing your portfolio. What she is good at doing too is planting little seeds and saying to me, this is what I want you to share when we have this faculty meeting, making sure that you have some people that share certain things.

Ms. Isrig went on to describe how teachers reacted to sharing the portfolios:

> Portfolios have raised the bar for people because people look and then they know they are responsible for that portfolio and responsible for sharing with the staff. Knowing that you're sharing that with your peer group, you see people striving to do their best. You will see them when it's time to write your professional goals thinking, "What is it I can do and how can I make that work with the portfolio?"

Ms. Isrig continued on to say that the portfolios have had an impact on instruction.

> It actually really does work. It has, I think, improved many things with instruction. But, looking at the reflections piece, initially when people did portfolios, we would simply put together all the artifacts. People do it and I find that it's so powerful. I'm one. I will look and say what went well, what did not go well and what will I change for next year?

Ms. Klein stated, "I like how we are able to make goals and plans for the future, but still remember to reflect upon and celebrate our accomplishments in other areas. This piece of reflection is vital when striving to take steps forward."

Ms. Jenkins believed that reflection was evident at the Mayfair Elementary because the principal made an effort to critique teacher performance and student work. She stated:

> I don't think at (my previous school) we had to be reflective as much. Not to say anything negative about my principal prior because everything there was always positive and wonderful. Whereas here, when you do something that Ms. Holmes doesn't like, you know about it and you get "see me" notes. You just want her to be happy with the job that you're doing. It's more critical here. I think Ms. Holmes is more critical, but not necessarily in a bad way.

The Effects of No Child Left Behind

While teachers were subjected to the internal accountability from the principal, neither the principal nor the teachers interviewed felt that the state and district accountability systems had a major impact on the professional learning in the building. If anything, they believed that the state and district standards had helped to narrow the focus of instruction. Accountability in regards to teacher professional learning was more school-based and not necessarily impacted by district or state demands. Ms. Klein stated, however, that she believed her efforts were supporting the state assessment program. She said:

> I see the accountability in that way. I feel like when I'm giving these unit tests I'm really exposing them to what the state assessment test is going to look like even in a couple of years. I feel like I am starting to feel more pressure than I felt in the past just because I see the picture. I see what it's going to look like.

Ms. Jenkins expressed concerns about the testing program for one of her students.

Well, I work closely with the student's special education teacher who tries to work with the students but I don't feel like I'm in a position where there's a lot I can do. I try to help this student, but I don't know what else I can do. And, along those same lines, we have these kids taking the state assessment test and some of them can't read it. How are they going to be successful on it? They just get discouraged and frustrated.

She went on to say:

It does give you a goal to shoot for, and I think it's great to have goals to shoot for, but I think you have to draw the line somewhere. I think these kids need more attention than a regular classroom teacher can give. They need more support.

Case 3 - The Story of Stonegate Elementary

The entire faculty is seated in groups around the media center, comprising five subcommittees. Each subcommittee has a chair, who has prepared an agenda for the discussion. A recorder takes notes to be turned in to the principal after the meeting. Central to each discussion is data collection and analysis. In one group, the Reading Resource teacher has produced a series of graphs on student fluency. In another group, math data is analyzed and instructional techniques are discussed. A third group speculates on the upcoming district changes in textbooks for science. The fourth group plans a field event as part of their task of managing school spirit and climate and the fifth group discusses social studies. The principal does not sit at any group but travels among the groups. She listens but does not interject. The tone is business-like and focused in all five groups.

One teacher addresses the whole staff to encourage them to participate in a staff development plan that centers on peer coaching and feedback. The principal states that reflection is a missing piece in the school's professional development and

suggests that this proposed model would address reflection. However, the staff

development model requires a commitment from 25 staff members in order to make it

site-based. Before 8:45 AM, 25 teachers have agreed to participate in the model,

committing to peer coaching and an after-school study group. The principal states

later that she was glad that the teachers who really needed the professional

development had committed to the program (observation, May 18, 2004).

Overview

The story of Stonegate Elementary is one in which a newly appointed

principal instituted structural changes and emphasized teacher professional learning

in a school that was traditionally a high performing school. Although the scores at

Stonegate did not change significantly, the case study will demonstrate that the

principal was able to create an environment in which data analysis and professional

growth became the norm. This was accomplished by first creating structural changes

in grouping practices and the school improvement process, and by then encouraging

teacher professional growth and decision-making. In addition, the principal was able

to maintain community support throughout the change process by assessing and

accommodating the community's needs and desires without compromising the

internal changes in the school.

This narrative is based on the interviews with the principal, the assistant

principal and three teachers. In addition, the entire staff was posed a written question

at the end of a School Improvement Team meeting. A profile of those interviewed in

located in Table 10.

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Background

Stonegate Elementary has historically been a high performing school in regards to test scores. Teacher interviews suggest that there was a perception among the staff that Stonegate had maintained a strong instructional program through the tenure of the last two principals. One teacher with a long tenure at the school, Ms. Roy, stated that the school has not changed significantly over the years: "I don't think it was much different than it is now. Basically the children are very happy here. Parents are very driven academically. I don't see that the population has changed a lot." Another teacher, Ms. Overton, reported, "I think that Stonegate Elementary has

Table 10:

Interviewee Profiles for Stonegate Elementary

Title	Name	Years at Stonegate	Profile
Principal	Ms. Likert	6	This was her first principalship. She had served as an Assistant Principal at another school. She was previously a classroom teacher.
Assistant Principal	Mr. Mains	4	Previously was a classroom teacher in another school.
Lead Classroom Teacher	Ms. Phelps	4	Primary Lead Teacher. Currently a classroom teacher. Previously taught in another school in the district.
Lead Classroom Teacher	Ms. Overton	4	Intermediate Lead Teacher. Currently a classroom teacher. Had previously taught and been an administrator in a school in another district.
Classroom Teacher	Ms. Roy	9	Previous taught at two other schools in the district.

always been ahead of the curve, has always cared about instruction, and wants to do what is research-based, what is action-based. Not same old thing but on the cutting edge of instruction."

The Initial Assessment

The current principal, Ms. Likert, replaced a retiring principal with a long tenure at the school six years ago. The new principal entered administration after a long teaching career (30 years) and experiences as an assistant principal in both affluent and impoverished schools. During her first year at Stonegate Elementary, the principal assessed the school's performance: "I spent the first year getting to know the staff, the strengths and weaknesses of the students." This assessment included an analysis of the data from state and national assessments. Ms. Likert went on to say:

> I looked at my scores and compared them to scores of schools with similar demographics. We were scoring in the 80th percentile. I felt like my school should be more in the high 90s. I also felt we should have had a higher number of children scoring in the advanced category.

The principal believed that to analyze the data effectively, she needed to involve teachers. This required a change in the structural decision-making processes that first year. Ms. Likert stated, "I formed subcommittees that first year. And from those subcommittees, the staff began to look at the data and compare with the state assessments." The subcommittees looked at the content areas of language arts, science, social studies and math.

Changes in the Student Population

Also during that first year, another change occurred. The school experienced an increase in enrollment due to new housing developments in the community. This

increase in enrollment eventually led to the construction of a large replacement school

that accommodated 600 students. The principal recalled how this growth impacted the

school:

> Stonegate was a small country school built for about 350 students. The first
> summer I was here I gained almost 70 new students. So, we started adding
> more portables (temporary classrooms) and the school grew. We began
> looking at the demographic change. We did have some change because we
> had students coming from different backgrounds. So we had a mix of students,
> which was unusual for this school.

In response to this demographic change, the principal created a climate

subcommittee. Ms. Likert wanted to create a climate that made the new students feel

like they were a part of the school. She added an additional subcommittee to look at

climate issues. "That's what I called the cultural arts committee. They really looked at

how to help the new kids assimilate. I charged them with planning spirit assemblies

and really look at doing some things that brought us together."

Because of the relative affluence of the student population, the principal also

felt that the students should be aware of communities outside of their own experience.

The cultural arts committee also became involved in "human relations projects". Ms.

Likert stated, "I felt very strongly that we needed to help another school so we

adopted an at-risk school as our sister school." She went on to say that see believed

that these types of activities brought the school together. "I wanted a cohesiveness

throughout the school."

Addressing Grouping Practices

When meeting with teachers and assessing the practices in the school, the

principal noted two traditional practices at the school that were contrary to her belief

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system. One concern was the way students were grouped in the classrooms and the other concern was the role of special education in relations to the regular education classes. In regarding to grouping practices, Stonegate grouped children homogeneously by ability. Students with a high ability tended to be grouped in one classroom and there was a perception in the community that certain teachers taught only the high students. In addition, the groupings tended to be fixed and did not change over the course of the year. Ms. Likert stated, "The first thing that teachers, at least from my perspective, wanted to do was to be able to start grouping. Put all of the top kids in this one group." The principal, however, was opposed to homogenous grouping in elementary school because she believed that tracking students created missed opportunities for students who had high potential but developed at different rates. Ms. Likert described her thinking:

> I am philosophically opposed to that. I have been for a long time. I've tried it and didn't like it because I feel our youngest learners are still growing. We were seeing children start out in the lowest group and end up in the top reading group, especially boys. They were just not ready developmentally, but then they take off. Why would I want them all year long assigned to Miss So and So when someone else has all the top kids? There would be no pace for them to go in a tracking system.

The principal's response to this concern was to start spreading the students across classes to create more heterogeneous groupings, but to also provide training in differentiated instruction that would allow teachers to teach students with a wider range of abilities. She stated:

> I want every teacher in this building trained to differentiate instruction so that when the child begins to excel, when the light bulb goes on, I want that child to have a variety of experiences and opportunities in the classroom.

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The principal also wanted more flexible grouping based on pre and post-test results. Flexible grouping, as opposed to fixed grouping, was a strategy in which teachers regularly regroup student within the classroom based on their attainment of skills. Ms. Likert recalled, "I wanted them pre-testing and post-testing the students and regrouping as necessary. We didn't have as much pre-testing and post-testing when I got her, but teachers are doing that now."

Special Education Grouping

A second concern of the principal was the delivery of special education services. Special education students were segregated from the regular education students in self-contained classes. The principal instituted a co-teaching model in which the special educator and the regular educator worked together to teach regular and special education students in the same setting. The principal described her experience with the co-teaching model:

> I was at another school as a teacher and we had seriously disabled special education kids come in and they were included in regular education classrooms. I was trained in co-teaching and I absolutely love it. The special education teacher and I would collaborate and she would teach and I would teach and it was just a wonderful experience.

When teachers returned the following year, the principal had dissolved the self-contained classroom and distributed the special education students into regular classrooms. However, just as with the change from homogeneous to heterogeneous grouping, the principal provided extensive staff development in the co-teaching model. Ms. Likert explained, "I began bringing in trainers and we trained them to co-teach and to differentiate instruction."

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The principal provided staff development in co-teaching to the entire staff. However, she hand-selected the teachers who would be involved in the co-teaching model. She wanted to pick people who would be receptive, but she also did not want to overload any one teacher with too many students with learning problems. Ms. Likert recalled:

> I selected the teachers that were the most receptive and I try to keep my special education kids in two out of the four classes in each grade. Anyway, I tried to pick two. I did not want all the special education kids in one class.

While the principal acknowledged some resistance from teachers to the changes, she believed the resistance was mitigated by two factors: the hand selection of receptive participants and the perception that the changes were effective and supported with resources. Ms. Likert recalled, "There was maybe a little resistance, but after a while they began to realize that extra support was in there. Now, it's not perfect but it's just great to see."

Community Concerns

These changes in grouping also generated concerns from parents. Parents had grown accustomed to the grouping practices prior to the principal's arrival. Teachers indicated that parents in the community wanted their children in the "top group" and discussed placement at community events. The principal recalled that some parents questioned why all of the "top kids" were not in the same class. In addition to wanting their students in the "top group" the parents also perceived that some teachers provided better activities than other teachers in a grade. The principal recalled:

> When I first arrived at Stonegate, I found that some grade level teachers were

operating "in their own little world." Some were taking great trips and doing super projects. Parents were requesting specific teachers because they wanted their child to do a certain activity. I even had one grade level that three teachers had a field day at school and one teacher stayed in her classroom for that day.

The principal was able to address the parental concern about all the top students in one class by explaining how the increased enrollment created a need to spread the top students across all of the classes. In addition, she indicated to he parents that the staff was now trained in differentiated instruction, which allowed each teacher to adapt instruction to meet the needs of all students. She recalled:

> I clustered a group of top kids in each classroom and I had parents who said to me, "Is my kid in the top, top group?" Now remember my population had grown. The truth of the matter is I had four top groups, but two were really here and two were there (motioning with her hands). Every now and then students would catch up to be in the highest groups. What I said to the parent is, "Oh, we have so many high-level students I couldn't group them all in one class. It would have been more than 25 so I didn't know how to select." So, I have enough to put a top group in every class. All of the teachers are trained in differentiated instruction, so they all can teach the top kids.

Even though the staff was trained in differentiated instruction, Ms. Likert felt that it was imperative for the teachers to collaborate so that, from the view of the parents, instruction looked similar from class to class. She stated, "I said that grade level teams must make decisions to do major activities as a team. It was not fair to children otherwise." To accomplish this level of continuity, the principal created formalized planning teams so that the major activities did look the same. In addition, the principal monitored the minutes for continuity. "I demanded that teachers plan together. In fact, I now have them turn in this calendar." She believed that this joint planning elicited community support. Ms. Likert said, "The grade group must present

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as a united front. This community is supportive as long as communication is up

front."

Ms. Roy, a classroom teacher, concurred with this need for joint planning to

accommodate the parental concerns:

> Yes, because we do have parents in some rooms that know exactly what's
> going on in the other four rooms. I've experienced it this year. They expect all
> second graders to have everything the same at the same time. We are very
> aware and the community is aware of what the classroom does. We don't want
> the perception that one teacher is stronger than another.

Another teacher, Ms. Phelps, indicated how important it was for the teachers

to work together to address parental scrutiny.

> The parents! I really feel like it's the parents. We are being held accountable
> for what we do for their children. And, we all know that and we all support
> each other so we're all going to help each other do the best job that we can.

Since the community had an expectation that instruction would "look the

same" within a grade, the principal was asked to explain how she could support

diversity in instruction. The principal indicated that teachers were very autonomous

within a grade, but, in part because of community pressure, she demanded that they

plan together. The principal did, however, allow for teacher individuality. She

explained:

> Individual teachers certainly could bring their own talents into the classroom.
> For example, one second grade teacher did a class quilt this year to donate.
> Instructional "risk taking" is encouraged. Grade groups and individual
> teachers bring ideas to the table. However, major instructional "risk taking" is
> done as a grade level.

All of the interviewees believed that the community was supportive of the

school. This support was the result of above mentioned collaboration, but it also

spoke to the principal's skill at assessing the community's needs and implementing

programs that the community thought were worthwhile. In conversations with

parents, Ms. Likert knew that the parents wanted to expand enrichment programs at

the school.

> I was able to expand the before and after school opportunities because it's difficult because our students get out at 3:40. So if you start driving to (a city in the district) to access gifted and talented programs, it's a long drive. So, my idea was to bring in some programs and expand the current programs.

The principal described how she addressed parental wishes:

> I think the parents have a lot of influence. The parents also meet. For example, with Hands on Science, the parents had seen this program presentation, and a parent came to me and said, "I want to do this." So, we worked together on it and she trained the next parent. It's no problem. It's the same with chess. I had a parent who wanted to do it.

Parent-led programs increased at Stonegate and eventually included Spanish, Hands

on Science, Chess Club, Touch Pebbles (literature discussion group) and Destination

Imagination (a competitive problem solving team).

The teachers perceived that the parents responded positively to the increased

opportunities for students. Ms. Roy related how the principal was able to maintain the

community's support through effective communication:

> I think that the parents feel very comfortable at Stonegate. But sometimes, they go down the wrong avenue. That happens anywhere. Ms. Likert is such an accommodating principal for the parents, which is great. She probably has to be because she wants a very successful school and parents are a team. The parents and the school want the same thing. We all want success for all students.

Structural Changes for Collaboration

The principal felt strongly about collaboration and instituted structural

changes in the teacher's workday to create opportunities for joint teacher planning.

The changes included the scheduling of the cultural arts classes to allow teachers in

the same grade a joint planning period. Ms. Likert also picked a morning, one day a

week, in which all of the teachers would be involved in meetings. The principal said,

"I redid their schedule. They wanted to come morning and that's fine. I don't care if

they come early or stay late. I changed it so we have a meeting from 7:45 till 9:00

every Tuesday morning."

The principal also designated the purpose of these meetings. One day a month

was dedicated to the school improvement process, one day was dedicated to

discussing students with learning issues and two days a month were dedicated to

professional development.

The principal described how the School Improvement Team worked:

From 7:45 till 8:15 we have our school improvement team committee
meeting. We have them before school. We review the milestones. Then at
8:15, all of the staff comes into the media and they break into their school
improvement team subcommittees.

She went on to describe the leadership of the SIT committees, "The chairperson of

each one of those subcommittees is on the SIT team. So the chairmen of the science,

social studies, and math are all SIT team members."

The purpose of these subcommittee meetings was to analyze the data and

suggest instructional changes. The assistant principal, Mr. Mains, described the

process of analyzing data by student and class and how the agendas are set:

We just distribute all the information teachers need on an individual basis. We
break it all down individually for each teacher. Whatever information we have
is clearly delineated for each teacher. There will be results to show where
students are and that sort of thing.

Mr. Mains added that the school improvement process included a discussion of

initiatives that were both school and district generated.

> There are subcommittees. Beyond the academic performance, we have initiatives that are a requirement of the school improvement plan that identify things that line up with the Superintendent's plan and our school goals but are not necessarily directly related to data analysis.

> One morning meeting a month is devoted to discussing individual student

issues through a process called EMT (Educational Management Team). The principal

described how she had to train the teachers in how to collaboratively work together to

address students with learning or behavior problems:

> I educated the staff on EMTs. I changed the way that operates. I had a hard time with EMT meetings because you had second grade teachers here and third grade teachers over there and people were having meetings all over but they were not talking to each other. So, I changed it. I have K, 1 and 2 meet from 7:45 till 8:15; then 3, 4, and 5 meets from 8:15 till 9:00 or vice versa. All the special educators are there. All of the reading teachers are there. All the administrators are there. They have their minutes and they have their agendas. If a problem comes up, they've got an expert right there in the room. It has solved EMT problems.

> In addition to scheduling the meetings, the Ms. Likert held teachers

accountable for what was discussed at the meetings. She reviewed a calendar of

meetings and provided feedback on the minutes she received. She believed that the

mandatory meetings encouraged collaboration. She described the accountability:

> Grade group chairpersons have to turn their calendar in to me. On it, I want to see when they've planned with their collaborative teacher, and when they've planned with the grade group. I look down at second grade and say, "When did you meet as a grade group? That's not the way I want you planning." This calendar has encouraged collaborative planning. They do not want to turn in this calendar without all the things on it. It has kind of encouraged everyone to plan together.

Professional Development

For teacher professional development, the principal utilized three directions. She arranged for staff presentations related to school improvement initiatives, she instituted study groups, and she encouraged teachers to pursue personal growth and interests. Staff initiatives included differentiated instruction and co-teaching. The principal reported that she used both whole staff and small group formats for presentations.

> I see your whole staff in-service as being very beneficial when you are introducing something like differentiated instruction or collaboration. But then, I see in-service breaking down very quickly to primary (K-2) and intermediate grades (3-5). For example, for technology, we do K-1, 2 and then 3, 4, 5. I really see it much more beneficial if you can do small group.

One staff initiative was to foster collaboration among the teachers. The staff worked on team building exercises with a resource teacher from the district. Team building activities developed an understanding and appreciation among adults. They also provided teachers with communication skills to allow them to work effectively in groups. The principal believed that the staff appreciated the team building exercises. She recalled:

> We did some team building in our first year. In fact, on our last recommendation from the school improvement minutes, the staff asked if we could do some more team building. Anyway, the district resource teacher came in and had team building exercises and she had questions and she had warm-ups. She had teams interact with each other. They learned how you respond to verbal and nonverbal cues.

One particular type of activity the principal instituted for staff development was the use of study groups. Study groups are small groups of teachers that investigate a topic, usually around a selected text. The first study group at Stonegate

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used the book, *Profesional Learning Communities at Work* , by Dufour and Eaker. The principal wanted to create a climate of a professional learning community and directed the study group to investigate the topic. The outcome of the study group was a blueprint for the creation of the school's mission and vision statements.

> We studied the first year. We went through the book on professional learning communities and that's how we did our mission statement. We did step by step. We worked with the whole staff and then I broke them into their committees. We went right through this book and followed their model. I really bought into using study groups.

In addition to school-based initiatives, the principal encouraged teachers to pursue individual interests and share their interests with the staff. Ms. Likert encouraged teachers to attend conferences and she found ways to cover the costs. Teachers were then responsible for sharing what they learned with the staff. Ms. Likert said:

> Many of the teachers are involved in going to professional conferences and they come back and report to their committees. I send one or two members to a state conference every year and they come back and talk about that to the total SIT. I try to do content conferences like when they have the social studies conferences.

Ms. Likert also encouraged teachers to pursue advanced certification. She indicated that she provided substitutes to give them time to study and prepare their assignments. She stated:

> I also attempt to encourage them to go for national certification. We have one teacher with National Board Certification and we have two more going for it at this time. I buy them that time, too. I really try to encourage them to pursue it.

Ms. Phelps, a classroom teacher, talked about sharing what she has learned to the staff, "I'm definitely not scared or embarrassed to present to the staff." She

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acknowledged, however, that not everyone may be interested in what she had to say.

She explained:

> Sometimes I can look at them and tell that they not really that interested in what I'm saying. I would say that half to most are very receptive and know that I'm there because I've been asked to be there and I want to share it. I'm not going to go off on tangents.

Ms. Overton, another teacher, liked the opportunity to share. She stated,

"What I like about our meetings is that we always get an opportunity to share

something we've done or to help someone."

The principal encouraged the subcommittees and grade group teams, as well

as individuals, to pursue interests. Ms. Phelps reported that Ms. Likert used her own

background knowledge to spur the interests of others:

> The neat thing with Ms. Likert is we have subcommittees. She'll stick an article in there for me and say read through this and talk to the committee about it. She always gives me an agenda and says, "Add anything you want to it, anything that you've gotten from your university courses." She's really good about giving us something to talk about that she's read. She does a lot of research.

Ms. Overton indicated that Ms. Likert liked to give individuals and

committees choices:

> A lot of the investigation is done by teams and through SIT and through our committees. She'll ask, "Who wants to do the math thing? Who wants to learn about technology? Who wants to learn about laptops?" She always has opportunities for us and then we pick and choose where we want to go and what we want to do. She presents us with quite a few opportunities.

Ms. Roy described how this focus on professional growth made her feel. She

said, "I feel different. I feel more educated. I feel I have a better grasp, not only on

math, but on the teaching practice."

Instructional Focus

　　At Stonegate Elementary, the mission called for students to achieve "personal

excellence". Interview data suggested that personal excellence was achieved through

enrichment programs, "best practices" and continuous learning. The evidence

suggested that there was more attention given to the high performing students at

Stonegate Elementary than in Reynolds or Mayfair. The principal at Stonegate stated

that there was a focus on the scores of the highest performers and there were

comparisons made with other high performing schools. Interview data indicated that

the implementation of enrichment programs was an important feature of the school.

These programs included a school musical and a stock market team that "invests"

play money. In addition to this focus on enrichment, there was a sense among

teachers that the instruction must be "cutting edge". Teachers were encouraged to

seek new strategies and programs and present to the staff. Teachers sensed that the

principal strongly encouraged the professional growth and the application of new

practices in the classroom. The principal purposefully distributed research articles to

the staff to spur interest. To be successful teaching at Stonegate, Ms. Overton stated,

"Teachers need to be stepping outside the box and the kids are pretty rich in

background and experiences. The students don't need a lot of the remediation. They

need a lot of enrichment." She went on to say:

> I also surround myself with people that truly are analyzing instruction and say
> we need to do this for our kids and not saying the students don't know. You
> never hear that around here. We ask, "What do we need to do?" You know,
> you're rolling up your sleeves. Let's get to work. We've got only so much
> time and what do we need to do and who do we want to do this? Who do we
> want to do this performance? It's great culture. I bring my own child here.

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A review of the School Improvement Team minutes indicated that data analysis was an important focus. Each subcommittee included data analysis in their agenda. The reading teacher compiled data on reading fluency and district assessments and submitted the data to the subcommittee for review. The math subcommittee looked closely at the end-of-unit district exams. The principal stated that the analysis of state assessment data led to changes in instruction and focus. In teacher interviews, data was mentioned as important and worthwhile. Ms. Roy stated, "We have numbers now. Before we didn't have numbers that we used to compare one school to another school. Twenty-five years ago I can't remember numbers." Ms. Phelps described the use of data in decision-making when she said, "A lot of it is very data driven. We do a lot of research and comparing between ourselves and the district and against schools that we feel are evenly matched."

Teacher Empowerment

When asked why a sense of collaboration and participation in professional learning had developed at Stonegate, the principal stated that there was an increase in a feeling of teacher empowerment. She indicated that she told the teachers that they would work as a team and that they would be trusted in their decision-making. Ms. Likert recalled:

> Well, when I spoke into the staff that first day, I said, "I've been in your shoes. I've taught 30 years. I'm here to tell you that I think I feel the teachers need to help the principal. We're a team. I need help. I need you to guide me. You're the experts." That was my first day's speech. It kind of came from the heart and I meant it. There had not been as much opportunity for teachers to take ownership before I got here.

> The principal also felt that the conditions were right to empower teachers to

take more leadership roles because the quality of teachers was high. Ms. Likert stated:

> The previous principal was an excellent principal. She left everything well
> organized. Don't get me wrong, but there was a difference leadership style. I
> guess I wanted teachers to step out and take more leadership role. What did I
> do differently? I don't know. I think it was fertile ground. I think there were
> excellent teachers here. The previous principal had hired some good teachers.

Teachers echoed that feeling of empowerment. Ms. Phelps stated:

> Ms. Likert listens to us and believes us. She doesn't say, prove it or show me.
> There's a wonderful trust there. I feel empowered here. I don't feel like I'm
> going to get my hands slapped if I try something or if I have an idea.

The assistant principal described the encouragement to take risks:

> We really encourage people to try new things, to be a risk taker, and to take a
> chance on something that is a worthy goal. We encourage it all the time and
> let people know they can do that and it's okay to fail.

Ms. Overton believed that Stonegate offered many opportunities to grow

professionally. She explained, "Stonegate has opportunities; opportunities to be on

committees, opportunities to share, opportunities to mentor, opportunities to enhance

instruction for others, opportunities to provide clubs and things for children."

In response to a written interview question several teachers echoed the themes

of opportunity to learn and the sharing of ideas. One teacher wrote:

> SIT meetings, any faculty meeting for that matter, always expand my horizons
> because there is always information made available about new professional
> opportunities. I am impressed and challenged by the enthusiasm and
> professionalism of the other faculty members who participate in these
> programs. It motivates me to participate and expand my knowledge as well.
> As a matter of course during these meetings, discussions turn to the faculty's
> professional and practical experience; it broadens everyone's perspective. I
> think another important factor is that everyone feels completely free to share
> their questions, concerns and comments openly. A positive, "can do" attitude
> prevails. Everyone seems very willing to share and to help one another.

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A Collaborative Environment

The creation of viable subcommittees and the empowerment of the grade

groups fostered a sense of collaboration. Ms. Overton believed that the sense of

collaboration came from a cohesive relationship and a unified goal. She stated:

> I know personally we're a very cohesive team, professionally as well. There's
> not any bickering, not any fighting, not any territory. I've seen other teams
> that I've been part of where there's an odd man out. They just wouldn't move.
> But here, we all have the same goal in mind.

Ms. Phelps acknowledged the presence of a collaborative environment but credited

the principal for creating the environment.

> I think that goes to our administration. She brings us together. We do the
> school improvement plan together. We decide on the goals and objectives.
> She asks what we think we should be working on. We just talk about it. It's
> collaborative. It's open.

A sense of open communication has fostered this sense of collaboration. The assistant

principal believed that listening to teachers is a critical component. He said, "I listen

to people a lot when issues come up in staff. I like to do reality checks. Teachers feel

very comfortable coming to me. That's one of my goals." He then went on to say that

he and Ms. Likert communicate regularly. "Ms. Likert and I sit down and talk about

the direction we want things to go, and bounce things off each other. She's a fantastic

boss."

Ms. Phelps related an anecdote describing how Ms. Likert responds to a

proposal to regroup students in math:

> Eight of us along with the two special education teachers went to Ms. Likert
> and told her we have some concerns about math grouping. She was very
> receptive and listened. At first, she said she really liked the way we were
> doing the enrichment grouping. As soon as I pulled the numbers out, she said,
> "I see the problem. You are correct." I felt very good about her response.

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Ms. Overton described Ms. Likert's management style:

I think there is a certain openness with Ms. Likert so that you can say, "This is what I think we should do. This is what I'm thinking." She is very receptive. She works within the team. She is in charge, but she is not autocratic.

Virtually all of the people interviewed gave credit to the principal for creating the climate of collaboration and growth. Mr. Mains, the assistant principal, believed that Ms. Likert was able to communicate high expectations for teacher performance, yet still be supportive of teacher decision-making.

Ms. Likert is incredible. She sets a great tone. She's always there, always the number one cheerleader. No one wants to disappoint her. She has kind of set the bar and I think the thought of anyone disappointing her is not a good thought. She's not a micromanager, but she does set a tone, expectation, high expectations and with the sense that we are all in here doing our best. We're all working hard. No one can disappoint and no one can drop the ball.

Ms. Overton, a former administrator, described the culture of the school:

I said if I ever teach after being an administrator, I want to teach with the best. I don't want to be one of a few teachers that cares about instruction or looks at data. I felt like Stonegate is place I want to be. But, I think we've gotten better. I think we've gotten more data driven.

While several teachers suggest that there is a pervasive belief in sharing and collaboration, there is evidence to suggest there are teachers who may be resistant to the direction of collaborative decision-making. Ms. Likert indicated that she identified the potential resistors, and while giving them opportunities to state their concerns, she put her efforts into the teachers who were supportive. She stated:

I ignored the nay-sayers and built on the positive. I would still like to see some changes. It's always a work in progress, but for the most part, I see it positive. This door is always open, and they do feel they can come in here. They can belly ache to me or they can complain as a whole. I think that's good. There are two people   who are still what I consider negative. I call them my "faculty council queens".

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Another teacher in a written response stated:

I guess that I'm trying to say that I'm frustrated that in my SIT subcommittee there are some members that are obviously not interested and bring the whole group and its effectiveness down. However, I've been able to work outside the SIT subcommittee and find other staff members that ARE interested and we've worked together and made a lot of progress. The key for me has been finding teachers that share the same goal or interest and working with them towards a common goal. These teachers are at all grade levels and include cultural arts teachers.

This teacher went on to say:

This is my third elementary school in two counties. I find Stonegate's SIT subcommittee meetings to be the most effective of all. In addition, I think that Ms. Likert has a way of encouraging teachers to improve our school and our professional learning that is very effective. I've been in an Action Research Group at another school that couldn't be a true professional learning community because it was completely driven by the principal. The outcome was minimal and the teachers never owned the program. The teachers at Stonegate definitely have ownership of the many programs and professional learning opportunities here.

Teacher Talk

The openness to suggestions and the empowerment of the committees and grade groups have created a climate of focused discussion and intellectual stimulation. Ms. Overton credited the high level of teacher talk in the building to the experience of the teachers and the opportunities to learn:

I think the talk changes with exposure to other tenured teachers. I mean we're always talking. We do a lot of things in grade group. Someone will say that I tried this and it was very successful and you may want to try this. We are exposed to a lot and we do a lot of things in faculty meetings. There's a lot of expertise in this building. I don't know if it's culture or something else. We have weekly meetings, but teacher talk is daily. You can't walk down the hallway when someone doesn't ask, "What are you doing?"

The assistant principal believed that the teacher talk became pervasive. He said, "I think it was created by a lot of conversation and just repeated. When

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something is said enough, it becomes real."

Reflection

When asked about the role of teacher reflection, the principal indicated that

was a goal not yet achieved.

> I think reflection is a piece that I could build in, but I haven't done a lot of it. I know I would like to do more of that. I know it's in the National Board Certification process. There is reflection when the teachers do their goals assessment. I don't think I do enough of that.

However, Ms. Overton described her reflection on practice. She said, "My

reflection process is sometimes done silently. When I'm alone, I think about my day.

I think about the upcoming day or a challenge a child is having or something a parent

brought up." She went on to say, "I also get a lot more reflection through discussion.

That's one thing, I think, that I need more of. I need to reflect about instruction on a

day to day basis." Ms. Overton suggested that peer coaching may help with reflection.

She said, "If I had peer coaching, I think I would be even better. It's so hard to get

that time in." There is a sense of coaching with her relationship with the reading

teacher, but it is limited. She said, "I've come up with ideas just through talking with

my reading teacher. She'll spur something. But, it's kind of an isolated thing."

Ms. Phelps, another teacher, reiterated the private nature of reflection, "For

me, I reflect every minute. I do something and then I think, could I have done that

better or hey, that was pretty good. It's all private."

The Effects of No Child Left Behind

In regards to the impact of *No Child Left Behind*, the principal did not see a

major impact except that it pushed data to the forefront when examining teaching

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practice.

> I think that it *No Child Left Behind* says that the way to improve schools is one child at a time. You need to look at individual kids and you need to look at groups. I've always felt that. I think that *No Child Left Behind* is forcing us to look at data. I think you have to look at the data. I think principals have worried over individual children for years. But, I think for teachers, data hasn't been a powerful tool.

> Ms. Roy saw little impact of *No Child Left Behind* on her instructional

program except in how she formatted student assessment.

> It hasn't changed anything for me as a teacher. It has changed the things that I present. You know, I'm thinking about the state assessment program. I never really did anything like a brief constructed response. We did short answers. We did extended answers, but it was never anything like that. But, that hasn't changed the way I teach the things.

She went on to say that she never really looked at her students as members of a

subgroup before, and wasn't sure it was necessary to do that.

> Do I pay attention to the one child in my class who has a free lunch? Sure. Do I pay attention to the Hispanic child more than I would have? Maybe, but I don't think so. They're all my kids. They were just my kids.

Summary of the Case Studies

The three stories described the journeys principals took to create change in

their schools (see Table 11). In the first case, a principal of an at-risk school led the

staff through the development of a student behavior management plan. Then, the

principal led the staff towards a staff development plan to improve reading scores.

Through the restructuring of the decision-making and planning processes and

effective interpersonal skills, the principal helped to create a culture that supported

teacher decision-making and professional growth.

In the second case study, a principal perceived inadequacies in the

instructional program. After setting expectations for instruction, the principal

encountered resistance. The principal restructured the decision-making processes and

led the staff through the development of a shared vision, while challenging the

resistors. Through the hiring of new staff and the development of a leadership team,

the school began to reflect a culture of professional growth and teacher

empowerment. Teacher examined their practice and collaborated with peers.

In the third case, a principal made immediate changes in the grouping

practices at the school, but then supported those changes through the allocation of

resources and staff development. By restructuring the decision-making processes, the

school began to focus on data analysis and its impact on teacher practice. Teachers

were encouraged to pursue interests and to share with the staff.

The case studies allow for a cross case analysis to find consistencies and

differences in school context and principal practice. This analysis will uncover the

similarities in the sequential processes and actions taken by principals that eventually

led to cultures that support professional learning. In addition, the cross case analysis

will suggest themes that can be generalized to a greater context.

Table 11:

Case Comparison Summary

	Reynolds Elementary	Mayfair Elementary	Stonegate Elementary
School Profile	Low performing, high minority population	Performance, minority enrollment and affluence reflective of district averages.	High performing, low minority enrollment and affluent
Principal Profile	First principalship	First principalship	First principalship
Perceived need for change from the staff	High consensus for a need for change	Mixed perceptions	Low perceived need for change
Perceived need for change from the community	Not applicable	Low perceived need for change	Low perceived need for change
The principal's perceived need	Student behavior management and student reading	Instructional program and school climate	Grouping practices and advanced performance
Initial leadership style of the principal	Democratic	Authoritarian	Authoritarian
Development of a mission and vision	Democratic	Democratic	Democratic
Structural changes	School Improvement Team	School Improvement Team	School Improvement Team
Distributed Leadership	Large leadership team consisting of mostly resource teachers.	Small leadership team made up of the counselor, reading teacher and a few classroom teachers	Distributed to resource and classroom teachers.
Instructional changes	Implemented Literacy Collaborative	Focused on best practices and data analysis	Focused on best practices and data analysis
Cultural changes	Development of a supportive environment	Development of professional growth	Development of professional growth
Professional development	Study groups, graduate classes, individual growth	Individual growth with personal goals and portfolios.	Individual growth with personal goals and study groups.

Chapter - 5 - Cross Case Analysis

This study seeks to determine the practices that effective principals use to create climates that support professional learning. In addition, the study seeks to understand the impact of high-stakes accountability on both the practices that principals use and the resultant effect on the conditions that support professional learning. By using a cross case analysis, the study can determine patterns in principal practices, the conditions that affect professional learning and the impact of accountability.

To begin the cross case analysis, the study must look for patterns across the cases. One way of organizing these patterns is by using the guiding conceptual framework suggested by the literature as a heuristic. The guiding conceptual framework suggested an initial assessment of the school's context by the principal, a series of actions taken by the principal and a resultant impact on the conditions that affect professional learning. The school would then maintain an on-going assessment of the context of the school, based on student achievement. By using these broad categories suggested by the guiding conceptual framework, the cross case analysis can identify the specific actions that were consistent across the cases, thus adding to the literature on principal leadership, the support of teacher professional development and the effects of accountability.

The guiding conceptual framework suggested that principals do an initial contextual assessment. The cross case analysis found that this initial assessment was based on a review of the school data, but it was also shaped and informed by the

principals' personal belief systems. In addition, this assessment included an analysis of the staffs' perceived need for change. There was evidence to suggest that the results of this initial contextual assessment helped to determine the actions that principals utilized.

The second level of the guiding conceptual framework suggested that principals employ a set of actions that affect professional learning. The cross case analysis indicated that the practices used by principals could be categorized as actions that (a) change the decision-making structures in the school, (b) change the instructional planning structures in the school, (c) promote individual professional learning, (d) encourage teacher collaboration, (e) rely on the acquisition of new staff, and (f) require the management of teachers resistant to change.

The literature suggested that the actions of principals impact the conditions that support professional learning. The cross case analysis indicated that the following conditions emerged as a result of actions taken by principals: (a) the development of stated school-wide mission statement, (b) the emergence of a subtle, yet pervasive belief system that was similar to, but not directly reflected in the stated mission statement, (c) an increase in formalized celebrations, (d) an increase in teacher professional development, (e) an increase in structured collaboration among teachers, (f) the creation of individual teacher goals, (g) an increase in the number of teacher proposals for instructional changes, (h) a reliance on best practices for instruction, (i) an increase in the expectations for student learning, (j) an increase in the level of teacher talk about instruction, (k) some increase in teacher instructional risk-taking,

(l) a limited increase in the level of teacher reflection, (m) a focus on student data for decision-making, (n) a reallocation of resources to support change initiatives, and (o) the utilization of team-building exercises.

In regards to an on-going assessment of the school's progress as determined by student achievement, the cross case analysis indicated that this assessment was addressed through the existing structures in the school and depended heavily on the analysis of student data. In regards to the impact of *No Child Left Behind*, the cross case analysis indicated that their was little effect on the structures in the school or in the level of professional learning. Instead, *No Child Left Behind* helped to focus the professional learning. In the school that was in danger of not making Adequate Yearly Progress, the impact of the high-stakes accountability program was the cessation of a professional development program and the increase in tension among the staff as they endured heightened scrutiny and anticipated possible sanctions.

Initial Contextual Assessment

In the analysis of the interview data, the principals of the three schools studied began with an assessment of the current context. The problems identified by the principals were different in each case. However, each of the principals responded to the assessment with specific actions. This assessment included a review of the state and district test data but also included an assessment of the pervasive problems in practice. This assessment involved the observations of classroom instruction and interactions with staff in formal and informal discussions.

At Reynolds, student management was the initial concern, although student

achievement, particularly in reading, was also a concern. There was also a perception that these issues contributed to a low morale and a high turnover of teachers. At Mayfair Elementary, the principal was concerned with several elements including a perception of low test scores relative to the school's affluence, the negative tone that adults used with children, the lack of a formalized school improvement process, and a reliance on instructional practices that did not reflect the current thinking in the district. At Stonegate, the principal was concerned with grouping practices that segregated different types of learners and by a perception that student performance at the highest levels lagged behind schools with similar populations.

The principals also assessed the level of teacher leadership in the building. The principal at Reynolds recalled that a there was a group of strong teachers who held resource positions in the school. At Mayfair, the principal believed that teacher leadership resided in teachers who had a negative influence in the school. The principal at Stonegate believed that there were many capable teachers who had not had an opportunity to emerge as leaders under the previous administration.

Principal Beliefs

In each case of the initial contextual assessment, the principals relied on their own belief systems and experiences that they had developed prior to their appointment as principals. Each principal considered hard data such as test scores, but they relied heavily own their belief systems about how schools should run and how instruction should look. The principals cited their previous experiences as teachers and assistant administrators as the lens they used to complete the initial assessment.

The principals were consistent in their beliefs about the importance of teacher collaboration, professional learning and a reliance on data analysis. They also believed that it was their responsibility to create structures that fostered collaboration and teacher leadership. In addition, the teachers at all three schools commented that the principals were committed to children and learning.

It is important to note that this was the first principalship for all three principals in the study. It may be common assumption that first year principals would be cautious in expressing their views, using a "wait and see" approach. However, all three principals articulated their beliefs to their staffs very early in their tenure. They held whole staff or small group meetings expressing beliefs within the first month of assuming the role of the principal. In addition, the teachers reported that the principals consistently used their belief systems as a guide to decision-making throughout their tenures.

Despite these strong comparisons, the three principals did vary in some of their beliefs, particularly in the level of democratic decision-making. The principal at Reynolds was the most democratic, relying on consensus and voting. The principal at Mayfair was much more forceful in implementing changes and openly challenged teachers who resisted changes. The principal as Stonegate relied on interpersonal skills to negotiate changes through small group discussions and the allocation of resources. This may reflect the personalities of the principals, but it may also reflect the context of each school.

A Perceived Need for Change

An analysis of the data suggested that the three schools varied in the staffs' perceptions for a need for change. Interview data suggested that there was a general consensus of the most pressing problems at Reynolds Elementary. A Mayfair, the evidence suggested that there were conflicting views about a perceived need for change. Some teachers felt that the school was fine the way it was and some teachers wanted change but were hesitant to express their views. The principal felt that the predominant view held by the staff and in the community was that there was no need for a change. The principal at Stonegate believed that the staff and community did not see a need to change because the instructional program was perceived as strong.

It is not clear why there was variability in the perceived need for change among the three schools when the principals assumed their positions. The teachers at Reynolds reported a perceived low morale among the staff and they were consistent in identifying student behavior as the most pressing problem. In addition, there was a perception that teacher turnover was high. Test scores lagged significantly below the district average and the rate of students referred to the office for discipline was much higher than the district average. The principal had served at the school as an assistant for 17 months prior to assuming the principalship, so she was familiar with the staff and the pressing concerns. It is important to note that the principal strongly believed in a democratic style of leadership and worked to achieve consensus. Her first actions addressed student management and she allocated resources and staff development time to that single issue. It could be argued that her focus helped to create a consensus

for the need for change, but that is not explicitly supported in the interview data. It could also be argued that the state's accountability system of looking closely at test scores could have heightened Reynolds' level of concern and focused their identification of problems. However, the state accountability program addressed test scores and not discipline practices. This would indicate that the state's accountability system was not the driving force in the identification of perceived problems.

The principal at Mayfair believed that the staff's perceived need for change was low. District test scores were adequate and the staff members had not perceived pressure from the previous administration to make instructional changes. The principal believed that the staff was divided in what they felt the school needed with the more vocal leaders preferring the status quo and a more silent group that was unhappy with the status quo. The silent group passively went along with the way things were. The principal articulated her expectations and immediately found open resistance. Her approach was more autocratic and challenging. The principal also felt that she did not have a supportive leadership team. The principal felt that she was unable to exercise a more democratic approach until there was a shift in the culture of the school.

In the case of Stonegate, the student achievement data was strong. Stonegate was a high performing school and the teachers and the community were satisfied with their performance. However, the principal was able to implement changes without major resistance. She acknowledged "some grumbling" but the staff quickly adopted the changes. The principal believed that there so many strong teachers on whom she

could rely to implement changes. The evidence suggests that the principal utilized a process of open communication and clear beliefs to press for the changes. She also supported the changes with resources and staff development. It is possible that the changes implemented were subtle and not perceived to be significant. One teacher reported that she did not believe that the school had changed significantly from the way it had been before.

The communities' perceived need for change appeared to have some influence at Mayfair and Stonegate, but not at Reynolds. At Mayfair, the principal perceived that the community was resistant to changes initially because the changes were dramatic and there were allegiances to teachers who were resistant to changes. At Stonegate, the community questioned the changes. In addition, they held the school accountable for the perception of meeting the needs of the high performing students. The principals at both Mayfair and Stonegate were able to mitigate community concern through a consistent message that they were meeting the needs of children. The community at Reynolds did not appear to be involved in instructional decisions made at the school, although the principal reported that the school made frequent attempts to involve the community.

Practices and Strategies

Once the initial assessment of the context was completed, each principal began to implement strategies to address their concerns. These strategies involved a restructuring of the planning and decision-making processes, the emergence of teacher leadership and formalization of teacher collaboration. In addition, the

evidence suggested that the principals effectively hired teachers who would support their vision and marginalized teachers who were resistant.

Decision-making Structures

In each school studied, all three principals quickly established decision-making structures that included formal and informal teams. In the case of Reynolds Elementary, a leadership team made up of resource teachers already existed. The principal used the resource teachers to present information to the staff but allowed the entire staff to participate in the decision-making. The principal involved the entire staff on the School Improvement Team but then broke the School Improvement Team into subcommittees to address the major concerns including language arts, math and climate. Each subcommittee was chaired by a member of the leadership team. The principal visited the subcommittees during their deliberations and sometimes offered suggestions, but the subcommittees were clearly run by the teachers.

The model used by Reynolds Elementary was similar to the model used in Stonegate with the entire staff participating on one of five subcommittees: language arts, math, science, social studies and climate. Mayfair Elementary utilized a representative School Improvement Team, with team members reporting back to their respective grades.

All three schools gave formal structure to grade group meetings. Each grade group was responsible for meeting regularly. The principals at all three schools held grade groups accountable for minutes and directed the grade groups to focus on instructional issues. Teachers at all three school indicated that many instructional

decisions were made at the grade group level. Teachers felt that they could diagnose instructional needs and take instructional risks with the blessing of the principal. The grade groups at Reynolds Elementary had direct contact with a resource teacher while grade groups at Mayfair met with the single reading resource teacher. The grade groups in Stonegate Elementary would report directly to the principal.

All three principals maintained an open door policy to individual teachers and groups of teachers. There was a sense from the teachers, however, that changes in the instructional program had to be "run by" the principal. However, teachers at all three schools felt confident that the respective principals would support their ideas if they were thoughtful and supported by data.

In addition to the use of the School Improvement Team, all three principals relied on their leadership teams to assess progress and determine areas of need. Reynolds Elementary has the largest leadership team due to their Title I status. The leadership team at Mayfair Elementary developed through the selective hiring of key individuals. At Stonegate Elementary, the principal relied on a more informal leadership structure that included the resource teacher and counselor but also included several classroom teachers. As their tenure developed, all three principals included more teachers in the leadership process through the position of lead teacher or committee chairs. While all three principals acknowledged that there still existed resistance teachers, the principals felt that there were enough positive and active teachers to offset any significant negative influence.

Planning Structures

All three schools relied on the school improvement process to set goals and gauge progress. Data analysis, including state, district and in-house data sources drove decision-making and planning. All three schools relied on whole staff development to insure that initiatives were clear. The principals utilized the teacher observation process to monitor the implementation of initiatives. All three principals expected teachers to submit data reports on their students and each principal spent time analyzing the classroom level data. In addition, all three principals met with individual teachers to set goals.

The Emergence of Teacher Leadership

All three principals created democratic decision-making structures that diffused decision-making among the staff. However, even though the principals were able to disperse decision-making, members of the leadership teams played significant roles in the running of subcommittees, needs analysis and the development of plans to address needs.

Reynolds had a strong leadership team in place with a number of competent resource teachers and a wide variety of experience. In contrast to Reynolds, Mayfair did not have a strong leadership team in place. However, the principal was able to hire two new staff members that ultimately became the leadership team. With the addition of the two new staff members, the principal was able to keep the pressure to conform on the entire staff while allowing the leadership team to work individually with teachers.

Stonegate had a somewhat different leadership structure than Reynolds or Mayfair. At Stonegate, the evidence suggested that while there were effective resource personnel, there were several classroom teachers on staff who maintained leadership. The principal reported that there were many "high fliers" on the staff that were used to making decisions. So, rather than relying on the formal leadership team, smaller groups (like grade groups or the cultural arts team) were consulted by the principal.

The Formalization of Teacher Collaboration

All three principals fostered collaboration by creating structures and schedules for joint planning times. Collaboration was most structured at Reynolds Elementary during the implementation of the Literacy Collaborative. There appeared to be a significant collaboration in all three schools within grade groups and with resource teachers. By creating content committees, the principals were able to foster collaboration between teachers in different grades. The principal at Stonegate expanded collaboration in the EMT process, in which individual student concerns were addressed.

What was not evident, however, was a formalized peer-coaching component, except in the Literacy Collaborative at Reynolds. Teachers at all three schools desired more opportunities for peer-coaching but felt that the lack of time was an issue. Interestingly, the teachers at Reynolds were reticent when peer-coaching was first suggested, citing a concern about opening up their classrooms to others. However, this fear was mitigated by the perceived benefits of working with a facilitator. There

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was evidence that there were relationships at all three schools between resource

teachers and classroom teachers that could be considered a type of coaching.

However, resource teachers were considered to be "experts" due to their experience.

Hiring Teachers

All three principals indicated that hiring staff was a critical component to their

success in changing the schools' cultures. All three schools had opportunities to add

staff. Reynolds and Mayfair had high turnover rates. Teachers perceived that

Reynolds lost teachers because the population was so challenging. At Mayfair, the

turnover was a result of teachers leaving for a variety of circumstances. Stonegate

benefited from a growth in enrollment to allow for additional staff.

All three principals utilized a long interview process to select teachers. Each

principal stated that they purposefully sought teachers who not only knew about

instruction, but also wanted to collaborate with others and push their instructional

capacity. Teachers interviewed stated that the principals were very clear in their

expectations for working at their respective schools. Teachers that were hired moved

into leadership positions at their schools by chairing committees or becoming lead

teachers.

Marginalizing Resistant Teachers

There was evidence to suggest that all three schools had teachers who were

resistant to change. This resistance was more subtle at Reynolds and Stonegate and

openly hostile Mayfair. The resistors at Mayfair had more power on the staff and in

the community than at Reynolds and Stonegate. The principals at all three schools

actively sought out the teachers on the staff who were in alignment with their values. In addition, a major criterion for the selection of new teachers was an alignment of values. At Reynolds, supportive teachers were moved to the grades most affected by the Literacy Collaborative. At Stonegate, supportive teachers were selected to co-teach special education students. Both principals indicated that they politely ignored the "nay saying". However, they allowed the resistors opportunities to express their opinions and also included them in decision-making processes, although not in leadership roles.

At Mayfair, the resistors had more of an impact on the school's culture. The principal reacted with open confrontation. Some resistors voluntarily transferred but some were administratively transferred by the Central Office. The principal indicated that the resistors eventually lost power, allowing the supportive teachers to emerge in influence.

The Conditions that Support Professional Learning

The model used for this study suggests that the principal's practices impact the professional learning in a school. To assess this, the interview and observational data must be categorized based on the conditions that affect professional learning. The conditions that support professional learning (Leithwood, Jantzi, Steinbach, 1998) can be grouped into four broad categories: beliefs, culture, decision-making and planning structures. Beliefs that support professional learning include a clear and pervasive mission and vision that is perceived as meaningful and permeates the language of the school. Culture describes the level of collaborative and collegial

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relationships, respect for divergent ideas, risk-taking, honest feedback, a commitment to continuous improvement and shared celebrations. Decision-making structures include formal and informal problem-solving teams, consensus building activities and a reliance on current practices. Planning structures include how the school sets goals and gauges progress.

Beliefs

Each school developed a mission and vision. In all three cases, the development of the mission and vision was done by utilizing structures that involved the whole staff. The result of these efforts was the publication of a mission and vision statement. However, a subtle school vision emerged that reflected a combination of the stated mission and the principal's belief systems. This subtle vision became pervasive.

Whole staff involvement.

In all three schools the principals involved the whole staff both in the development of the mission and vision, but also in the school planning processes. At Reynolds, the principal sought consensus by utilizing presentations of researched-based programs and by using the established leadership team that had credibility on the staff. The principal went so far as to take votes and seek full agreement from the staff.

At Mayfair, the principal utilized whole staff meetings to express her vision and expectations. The development of the school's mission and vision was collaborative, but not always congenial. The principal remained steadfast in her

expectations and the staff eventually aligned with her vision. The whole staff was involved in both grade group and content committees.

The principal at Stonegate involved the whole staff in the planning process and held multiple committee meetings in the same room. However, the principal negotiated changes in smaller groups, directly appealing to the teachers most affected by her decisions. Her style suggested a broad forum for beliefs but a smaller forum to negotiate changes.

The emergence of a subtle vision.

In each school, teachers were remarkably consistent in their descriptions of the school cultures. While none of the teachers could recite the schools' expressed mission and vision statements, they used consistent language and could articulate the prevailing cultures. In each school, a vision emerged that was closely linked to the stated mission statement but included elements that were not formally articulated. For example, at Reynolds, the sense of "taking care of children" and the "staff as family" clearly emerged as themes in the interviews, but were not explicitly stated. At Mayfair, the stated mission statement of developing a "learning community" and the subtle themes of "best practices" and "collaboration" were closely linked. At Stonegate, the stated mission sought to gets students to "achieve personal excellence" and this was related to the use of "best practices" and providing enrichment programs. The themes of collaboration and teacher learning were evident at all three schools, both in the teacher and the principal interviews. All three principals were very articulate and proud of the level of professional learning in their buildings. Their

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ability to articulate the level of professional learning in the schools may have contributed to their supervisors' recommendations as schools that promote professional learning.

Culture

The culture of the school, as a condition of professional learning, describes the level of collegial and collaborative relationships, respect for divergent ideas, a willingness to take risks, the type of feedback given, the commitment to continuous improvement and the shared celebrations of success. While many of these characteristics were evident in the three schools studied, there were varying degrees of practice and implementation. Specifically, the cross case analysis found the following characteristics:

1. Shared celebrations were formalized.

2. Teacher professional development was encouraged and supported by the principal.

3. The professional development at Reynolds was directly related to the school initiatives, while the professional development at Mayfair and Stonegate could be more individualized.

4. Collaboration was forced through structural changes and accountability.

5. Teachers wrote individual goals.

6. Teachers felt that they could develop proposals for instruction and would be supported.

7. Teachers felt that "best practices" for students was encouraged.

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8. Expectations for instruction were clear.

9. Instruction became the subject of teacher talk.

10. Instructional risk-taking was evident, but only within the parameters
    established by the principal.

Shared celebrations were formalized.

Celebrations were a significant part of each observed School Improvement
Team meeting. Principals in all three schools began each meeting with teacher
recognitions for instructional and collegial accomplishments. At Reynolds, one
teacher received an award in front of the staff. At Mayfair, the SIT agenda devoted a
significant amount of time to recognition and the recognition flowed between
teachers and not just from the principal. In addition, Mayfair held regular staff "get-
togethers" on Friday evenings. Teachers at all three schools indicated that they felt
that the principals were supportive of their efforts.

It is important to note that all three principals interviewed were very articulate
about their school's accomplishments and regularly praised staff members in the
interviews. Each principal was adept at highlighting the school's accomplishments.
The principal at Stonegate was particularly proud that their school was a selected site
for a visiting delegation from Great Britain.

Teacher professional development was encouraged.

As highlighted previously, all three principals actively supported teacher
professional development. Teachers were individually encouraged to pursue
opportunities. In addition, teacher interest was encouraged, regardless if it fit with the

school's initiatives. Teachers were encouraged to pursue advanced degrees and National Board Certification. Principals also supported professional development with resources by securing substitute time, creatively paying for conferences and seeking opportunities for collaborations with outside organizations. Reynolds Elementary was particularly adept and securing outside relationships with a local university.

Structured collaboration.

Each principal created structures and accountability for collaboration. The structures included joint planning time within a grade group and demanded participation on cross curricular committees. The accountability for collaboration included the monitoring of minutes and agendas of meetings. A secondary level of accountability was the review of student work samples (Mayfair) and the use of the teacher observation process for teacher evaluations.

What was not present in any of the schools was peer coaching. At Reynolds, the Literacy Collaborative required coaching from a facilitator. After some initial hesitancy, teachers grew to appreciate the personal growth. However, changes in curriculum and the lack of time appeared to end the coaching. All three schools, however, utilized resource teachers in a type of collaboration, but it was not true peer coaching because the resource teachers were tightly aligned with the leadership of the principals.

Teacher goals.

All three principals asked teachers to develop professional goals and used the

goals to direct professional development and, in the cases of Mayfair and Stonegate, the attainment of the goals became a source for teacher evaluation. Mayfair had the most formal process for the review of goals with teachers developing portfolios and then sharing their portfolios to the staff.

Teacher proposals.

Teachers in all three schools felt comfortable in analyzing the performance of their students and then developing proposals to change practice based on their observations. Teachers reported that proposed changes were frequently developed within the grade group format but individual teachers felt empowered to make changes. As stated previously, teachers relied on in-house assessments such as student writing or running records to assess their programs and make changes to practice. Resource teachers at all three schools were frequently involved in the proposal process.

Best practices.

Teachers were continually seeking "best practices" at all three schools. The source of these practices generally came from the resource teachers and the principal because they were exposed to more district-level professional development. However, teachers could pursue interests through graduate courses or professional conferences and then share with the staff. Interviews indicated that "best practices" was a frequent topic of in-school staff development.

Expectations for instruction.

Teachers believed that the expectations for instruction were clear. Through the

use of collaboration and the focus on "best practices" and data analysis, teachers

sought consistency in their instructional delivery. There appeared to be little variance

among teachers within a grade. In addition, School Improvement Teams focused on

consistent models for the delivery of instruction. Teachers were focused on the

performance of their students and cognizant of the principals' expectations. The

principals expected staff development initiatives to be implemented but gave teachers

leeway in how to best implement the practices.

Teacher talk.

Principals felt that the level of teacher talk in their buildings was very focused

on instruction. This was explicitly stated in the teacher interviews at Stonegate.

However, the teachers at Reynolds and Mayfair utilized the same language and

touched on the same instructional topics. All of the teachers appeared knowledgeable

about their own practice and enjoyed discussing their teaching and the performance of

their students.

Instructional risk-taking.

Teachers at all three schools stated that they felt empowered to make

instructional decisions. However, an analysis of the interview data suggested that the

level of risk-taking varied at the three schools. In addition, the interview data

suggested that even when teachers took risks, they felt that the risks had to fall within

the parameters of the principal's expectations. In the case of Reynolds, the teachers

believed that the risk-taking was hindered by the district oversight and the risk of

failing to meet AYP. Even the principal was cautious in recommending instructional

changes, although she believed that the needs of the students came first. Her teachers, however, were very cautious to follow the guidelines established by the district. However, when looking at the implementation of school-wide programs before the district-mandated program changes, the teachers implemented the programs as written with little variance. This was evidenced by the consensus of the staff to select programs and the oversight of the resources teachers and facilitator in the Literacy Collaborative. It can be argued that Reynolds had a history of implementing programs as presented. Risk-taking appeared to be confined to decisions about individual students, which was a central element of the Literacy Collaborative.

Teachers at both Mayfair and Stonegate stated that they felt empowered to take instructional risks. However, teachers at Mayfair felt that new proposals must be cleared through the reading resource teacher to make sure the proposal was aligned with the principal's thinking. At Stonegate, there did not appear to be a screening of proposals by the resource teacher. Teachers could directly approach the principal with new ideas. The teachers at both schools felt that if they made a strong case, the principals at the respective schools would support and encourage their decision-making. The principals at all three schools indicated that they encouraged teachers to try new things.

The concept of clearing ideas through the principals appears to be based more on respect than on a perception of dire consequences. Teachers in all three schools commented on the vast knowledge and experience that their respective principals possessed. The teachers felt that their principals possessed great knowledge about

instruction, had the teacher's and students' best interests at heart and worked hard for the school. Teachers at all three schools found the principals to be consistent in their messages and practices.

The role of reflection.

Reflection was not a significant part of any of the schools. The principals stated that they would like to have more reflection. Teachers reported that their reflection was more personal rather than formal or part of the schools' cultures. Reflection implies a challenge of assumptions and the creation of dissonance to examine the discrepancy between teacher practice and student performance. This type of reflection was not evident in the interview data. Reynolds had a reflective component in the Literacy Collaborative but that feature did not transfer to other venues. Mayfair Elementary did have a formalized portfolio review of individual goals, but it was not clear if reflection was a significant part of the portfolio.

Interview data did not indicate a clear sense of dissonance between practice and results. The dissonance was limited to teachers reflecting on their own practice, but the examination of teaching practice was not formalized or institutionalized in the schools. The closest discussion of the dissonance of big issues was the examination of poverty as a topic of a study group at Reynolds. Instead, the focus at all three schools was on test data and "best practices", suggesting a more incremental approach to the analysis of teaching.

A focus on data.

An indicator of a professional learning community is a focus on individual

student results. While this is a major goal of *No Child Left Behind*, the evidence indicated that this culture of examining student work and results pre-dated *No Child Left Behind*. All three principals indicated that individual student data was important in decision-making. Teachers also spoke in terms of individual student data analysis.

In each case, the principals and teachers at the three schools felt that the results of the initial actions resulted in the desired student achievement outcomes. However, an analysis of state data trends indicated that student achievement remained relatively stable. When pressed about this contradiction, the teachers cited in-house testing measures and student work samples as evidence of growth. The teachers did not see the state data as relevant in assessing their own efficacy. However, the state standards did provide a focus for instruction.

Professional learning.

Teachers at all three schools felt that they were supported in their pursuit of professional learning by the principal and by the culture of the school. However, the teachers gave most credit to the principals for suggesting and supporting their professional learning. When asked about the impact of *No Child Left Behind* on professional learning, most teachers reported that it had little effect with the exception of perhaps focusing the professional learning towards the state standards. Many teachers felt that this focus was a good thing. Their concern about *No Child Left Behind* was not in the domain of professional learning, but in the perception that *No Child Left Behind* did not regard extenuating circumstances such as English as a second language or special education. Teachers felt that children, teachers and

schools should not be held to such high standards if there are circumstances beyond their control. This view was consistent across all three schools.

The commitment to continuous improvement was evident in all three schools. In Reynolds Elementary, the staff development was tied to initiatives developed by the School Improvement Team. There were opportunities to attend workshops and conferences, but the focus of professional learning was based inside the schoolhouse. Reynolds Elementary relied on study groups, collaborations between the leadership team and teachers and whole staff in-services to provide professional learning.

At Mayfair and Stonegate the professional learning also included initiatives developed by the School Improvement Team such as holistic scoring of writing, differentiation of instruction and the implementation of new programs. However, the principals in these two schools encouraged individual exploration that matched teacher interest. The principals at both schools provided opportunities for staff members to share their knowledge. At Stonegate, the principal actively distributed articles and journals to individuals when she thought it met their interests. Interestingly, both principals utilized a formal goal setting process that included professional learning. The principal at Mayfair required teachers to develop a portfolio to demonstrate goal attainment. Both principals assessed professional learning and goal attainment during the teacher rating process. In both schools, teachers could develop interests outside of the School Improvement Plan. At Reynolds Elementary, the goals were directly related to the school initiatives.

The principals at Reynolds and Stonegate utilized study groups to allow

teachers to investigate current issues. Both schools had study groups on structuring decision-making. Reynolds studied facilitated leadership and Stonegate studied professional learning communities. Study groups and action research teams continued to be an important part of the professional development at Reynolds.

Resource support.

The principals at all three schools had limited resources with time for collaboration being the most problematic concern. However, through the structures of committees, the principals were able to create time for joint planning. At Reynolds, teachers worked beyond their contracted hours in the Literacy Collaborative for graduate course credit. However, the teachers at Reynolds expressed a strong desire to participate. Even with the end of the Literacy Collaborative, many teachers continued to work beyond their contracted hours to provide special programs for the students. In addition, the principal at Reynolds arranged for teachers to receive graduate credit through a local university to develop skills for the teaching of math. At Mayfair, much of the development of the mission and vision was done after school. Using state incentive money for strong scores and money from PTA, the principal was able to provide stipends for working beyond the contracted hours.

The principals at all three schools used discretionary money to fund teacher attendance at conferences and to purchase teacher resource materials. Mayfair and Stonegate had active PTAs, which raised a great deal of money, while Reynolds had access to Title 1 funds and other state compensatory program funding.

Team-building exercises.

All three schools provided team-building exercises. Utilizing district personnel, the schools provided teacher training on cooperation, group dynamics and problem-solving. Stonegate devoted a study group to developing a professional learning community. One team building activity was observed at the School Improvement Team meeting at Reynolds.

On-going Assessment

The model utilized in this study suggested that the principals continue to assess the school's conditions even after the indicators of a professional learning community are in place. In the principal interviews, all three principals were very aware of the level of student achievement and the level of teacher collaboration that existed in their schools. However, the structures in place kept student data at the forefront of discussion. In addition, professional development was linked to the data and to new programs. In each school, the School Improvement Team or the grade groups were held accountable to student data. However, in each school, the leadership team had a significant role in the professional development plans for the school.

The timing of this study occurred during the implementation of new language arts and math programs in response to a new state testing program. In the two high performing schools, there was less concern about implementing the programs and a general satisfaction with the state testing programs. In fact, at Stonegate Elementary, which was historically a high performing school, there was a sense of confidence that the school would master the state test and the new programs. At Reynolds

Elementary, however, there was much concern about the effects of not making Adequate Yearly Progress, low benchmark scores on district assessments and the possible impact of a restructuring. The biggest concern of each teacher interviewed about possible sanctions was the possible transfer of the popular principal if scores remained low.

The Effects of No Child Left Behind

The central question of this study sought to determine the effect of *No Child Left Behind* on professional learning. While teachers at all three schools had concerns about the accountability measures, particularly the impact of testing on less-abled students, the general feeling among teachers and principals was that*No Child Left Behin*d had a positive impact on teaching. Specifically, the teachers and principals felt that *No Child Left Behind* provided a clearer focus and a target for professional development. Prior to *No Child Left Behind*, teachers felt that there was a greater array of choices to pursue in professional development. However, once the standards were clear, professional development became more targeted.

There was evidence that the change in the state assessment program required a refocusing in regards to professional development. A great deal of effort was expended to understand the state standards and revise teaching to reflect those standards. However, interviewees did not perceive this as a negative impact.

The threat of sanctions did have an effect on Reynolds because of low test scores. Several teachers appeared discouraged and stressed. The biggest fear was that continued poor performance may result in the removal of the very popular principal.

This stress was not evident in the two schools that performed at a high level. Teachers Stonegate Elementary, in particular, appeared unaffected by the state standards, believing that their own efficacy and past successes was sufficient to address the state standards.

All of the schools maintained their structures for decision-making in the wake of *No Child Left Behind*. All three schools appeared to address issues around state testing in the same manner as they had before the implementation of the statute. Professional learning appeared vibrant in all three schools. Reynolds, however, did alter the use of their resource team in response to state testing. Resource teachers became more involved in direct student contact and spent less time in consultation with teachers.

Summary of the Cross Case Analysis

Despite the significant differences in the populations and cultures of the three schools studied, there were consistencies among the three schools in the actions taken by the principals and the resulting effect on the climate and culture of the schools. The actions are be summarized by the following processes:

1. Principals conducted an initial assessment of the culture using (a) a review of test data, (b) informal and formal observations and discussions, (c) their own belief systems as a lens to assess, and (d) an assessment of the staff's "perceived need for change".

2. Depending on the level of perceived "need of change" each principal used a different tact to develop a shared belief system. In the case where the

perceived "need for change" was pervasive, the principal used a democratic approach. In the cases in which the perceived "need to change" was low, the principals were more authoritarian in pursuing changes.

3. Principals took action by: (a) articulating and consistently acting on their own vision, (b) establishing structures for planning and decision-making, (c) allowing the staff to engage in the development of a mission and vision, (d) hiring teachers who are supportive of the school's initiatives, (e) marginalizing resistant teachers, (f) reallocating resources and staff development time, and (g) allowing teacher leadership to emerge.

4. The implementation of these practices resulted in the development of: (a) school-wide beliefs, (b) a culture of collaboration and professional growth, (c) formalized recognition, (d) a focus on "best practices", and (e) a focus on data analysis and its implications for teaching practice.

5. The data utilized in decision-making included state, district and teacher developed assessments. In assessing their own efficacy, teachers relied more heavily on teacher-constructed assessments, believing these assessments to be closer to what was taught than the state testing.

6. Central to the changes implemented by the principals was the opportunity to hire new staff, develop trust and promote teacher decision-making.

7. Principals impacted the culture of the schools through shared celebrations, team-building activities, and individualized teacher goals.

8. Once this culture of collaboration and professional development was in place,

outside influences were addressed through the existing structures.

The cross case analysis suggested that the heuristic developed through a review of the literature was not sufficient to fully describe the practices utilized by effective principals. In particular, the cross case provided insight into the initial assessment of the context. In addition, the cross case demonstrated that this assessment impacts the actions that principals take. This analysis is relevant to the literature on the change process in general and to the school improvement process in particular. The cross case did support the literature on the conditions that effect professional learning, although the relative absence of peer-coaching, risk taking outside of the parameters established by the principals and the role of reflection suggested that the definition of learning communities may be necessary. The cross case analysis supported the literature on teacher professional development in regards to the opportunity to pursue individual interests, but also a close alignment to student achievement data and its relationship to teacher practice. Finally, the cross case analysis saw relatively little impact on teacher professional development or school culture from *No Child Left Behind*. These issues will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter - 6 - Discussion, Conclusions and Implications

Schools have faced high-stakes accountability for student achievement as a result of reform efforts across the country. The federal statute, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, placed that accountability at the doorstep of every public school in the country. To address this focus on student achievement, many reform movements called for the development of teacher professional learning as a necessary condition to raise student achievement (Knapp & Ferguson, 1998). Hawley and Valli (1999) and Joyce and Showers (1995) suggested that providing opportunities for collegial teacher professional development had a positive affect on student learning. Furthermore, researchers in the area of organizational learning suggested that there were identifiable conditions that promoted teacher professional learning (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998). Smylie and Hart (1999) suggested that school principals had substantial influence on the conditions that promote professional development.

The discussion on teacher professional learning was closely aligned with the research on learning communities and the culture of schools. Recently, this research began to focus on the leadership skills that principals used to implement change. The research suggested, however, that implementing this culture of collegial professional growth may be difficult. Principals may not have had the technical background to implement these changes (Elmore, Ableman & Furhman, 1996) or understand the central components of dispersing leadership to create collaborative learning communities (Ogawa, Crowson & Goldring, 1999). In addition, principals were faced with competing policy directives (Knapp & Ferguson, 1998), making changes

difficult. As school reform models encouraged principals to create climates that support professional learning, the high-stakes accountability demanded by *No Child Left Behind* added another layer of complexity. This raised the question about the impact of accountability on a principal's ability to create or maintain a climate that supported professional learning.

To investigate this question, I wanted to look at the practices that effective principals used to create the conditions that support professional learning. I wanted to uncover the specific practices and the sequence of actions and determine their effect on the conditions that support professional learning. I then wanted to determine how high-stakes accountability had affected the principals' actions.

Therefore, this study was framed around the following questions:

1. What practices and processes did principals use to create climates that support teacher professional learning?

2. What was the impact of high-stakes accountability on these practices?

3. What was the impact of high-stakes accountability on teacher professional learning?

To investigate these practices, I developed a guiding conceptual framework that suggested a sequence of actions taken by effective principals and identified the specific conditions that support professional learning. The guiding conceptual framework suggested that principals make an initial assessment of the context of the school by looking at student achievement data and teacher practice. They then initiated actions that, in turn, affected the climate and culture of the school. Teacher

professional learning was then impacted positively. The assumption, based on personal experience and the research on teacher professional learning (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1998), was that if the conditions were favorable to professional learning, student achievement would improve (Joyce & Showers, 1995).

I utilized a multi-case study approach to look at the practices that effective principals used. Through a nomination process, schools that supported teacher professional learning were identified. Principals and teachers were interviewed to determine their perceptions on the practices and culture of the schools. The guiding conceptual framework served as a guide to structure the interview questions and also as a heuristic to categorize data around the leadership practices and conditions that support professional learning. However, the second layer of analysis allowed for patterns to emerge beyond the guiding conceptual framework, making its purpose obsolete. The cross-case analysis described the initial assessment taken by principals, the specific practices utilized and their relationship to the school's specific context and the resulting effect these practices had on the school's culture and teacher professional learning. Finally, the cross-case analysis examined the impact of accountability on teacher practice.

This chapter will discuss four broad questions:

1. Did the case studies reflect the literature on the school improvement process?

2. Are these schools learning communities?

3. What is the level of professional learning in the schools?

4. What is the impact of high-stakes accountability?

The discussion will review the literature on these topics, describe how the case studies supported or refuted the literature and suggest new questions to consider. The discussion will address the limitations of the study. Finally, the discussion will suggest implications for research, practice and policy.

Did the Case Studies Reflect the Literature on the School Improvement Process?

The stories featured in the case studies were essentially stories of the change process to improve schools. The literature suggested that a process exists in the transformation of a school. Fullan (1991) argued that changing a school's culture goes through phases that involve an initiation, an implementation phase and an institutional phase. Tichy and Sharman (1993) believed that schools utilized a three-step process in changing the culture. This process suggested that problems were identified, a new vision was created and a restructuring occurred that allowed for the change. Camburn, Rowan and Taylor (2003) described a similar process of "configuration and activation". Configuration was the creation of structures that support professional development and activation referred to the social processes that encouraged teacher capacity.

This discussion will look at the three phases of change: (a) initiation, (b) implementation, and (c) institutionalization. Within these sections, I will discuss the principal's use of personal belief systems to assess problems, the establishment of a vision, restructuring, a change in culture in the implementation phase and the practices principals use to sustain the changes.

The Initiation of Change

Schein (1992) suggested that three conditions must be present to initiate change: the presence of a problem, the connection of the problem to the school's purpose and possible solutions. Joyce (1990) suggested that the identification of the problems involved an inspection of the data and practice. Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) suggested that effective principals consider the social context when problem-solving.

Assessing the need for change.

This study found that the process of change for school improvement included an initial assessment of both student performance and the social interactions among the staff. However, Hopkins, West and Ainscow (1996) believed that leaders, in addition to considering data and presenting problems, must also consider the internal capacity for change in a school. This study found this to be true. The assessment performed by the principals included an assessment of the teachers' and communities' perceived need for change. Using a personal belief system as a lens, the principals began the assessment process immediately. Principals looked at the state assessment scores and compared their results against district standards. They also compared their schools to schools with similar demographics. In addition to state scores, the principals also considered district assessments. The evidence also indicated that principals looked at the instructional practices utilized by teachers. This assessment was done through discussions and classroom observations. The principals also assessed the level of teacher leadership and the perceived need for change.

Community concerns were also considered in two of the schools.

Fullan (1991) and Hopkins, West and Ainscow (1996) indicated that a critical component to the acceptance of change was how change was introduced and understood by the teachers. What was interesting and deserves further discussion was how the principals instituted the initial change process. At one school, the principal was very democratic, but there was already a general consensus of the problems. The principal understood this and tackled the most pressing problem first. She did not address reading, which was also a problem. I would argue that by addressing student behavior first, the principal connected with teacher concerns, allowing for continued consensus and support. In addition, the principal participated in all staff development initiatives as if she were a peer, instead of a supervisor. This action engendered additional support from the staff.

At the second school, resistance was open, and at times, hostile. However, the principal chose to be authoritative in her expectations, forcing the hand of the resistors. This school apparently had a more entrenched resistance. It is impossible to determine the outcome had the principal utilized a more subtle approach. However, the principal felt that the problems were so extreme that immediate action was warranted. In addition, the principal was charged with the task of changing the school by her superiors when she was appointed to the position. It is important to note, also, that a more democratic leadership emerged as the principal perceived a change in the balance of power in the school.

The initiated change at the third school was much more subtle. The principal

made structural changes and met with the affected groups. However, she immediately reallocated resources (staffing and staff development) towards the affected teachers. She employed the same technique with parents, making changes but immediately addressing their concerns for more enrichment programs.

The actions that principals used to promote change could be related to the principal's personality or the context of the school that includes the level of support for change and the level of teacher leadership existing in the building. This study would seem to indicate that context is more important than principal personality, but that is a conjecture on a very limited sample and therefore, unreliable. Principal skill appeared to be a consideration, which was consistent with Boal and Hooijberg (2001) who suggested that the activation of the change process was dependent on the interpersonal skills of the leader. The study did suggest that the initial assessment was dependent on more that just student achievement scores. Principals must consider the social interactions in the building, which was consistent with the literature (Fullan, 2001 and Hallinger & Heck, 1996). This study was unable, however, to determine if school demographics had an impact on the perception of change.

A belief system as a lens.

Rosenblum, Louis and Rossmiller (1994) found that principals traditionally rely on conventional wisdom and personal experience when making decisions. This study found that principals articulated their views and took actions that were consistent with their personal beliefs. This study also suggested, however, that principals used their experiences as a lens in which to assess the context of their

school. This was apparent in their analysis of teacher practice, but it also determined how the principals perceived the social interactions in the school.

This observation has implications for the training and appointment of principals. This study would suggest that new principals should have a clear vision for instruction and the management of students. In addition, new principals should be able to recognize the need for change and be familiar with techniques to promote change. This study would suggest that new principals should demonstrate skills in recognizing problems and devising solutions, because these skills are employed immediately. Interestingly, all three principals studied were new to the principalship, indicating that the development of a belief system could occur prior to becoming a principal. This finding was consistent with the literature on school improvement that found that leaders provided the catalyst for change very early in the reform process (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003). Further study in this area may include looking at how new principals view change compared to experienced principals.

Implementation

The configuration process of school improvement described the actions taken by principals to restructure schools for change (Camburn, Rowan & Taylor, 2003). Activation referred to the development of the social processes that enabled change to occur. Fullan (2001) called this re-culturing. Fullan stated, "Structure does make a difference, but it is not the main point in achieving success. Transforming the culture-changing the way we do things around here-is the main point" (p. 43). This study indicated that the principals immediately instituted a three-pronged plan. They helped

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to establish a pervasive mission and vision, restructured the decision-making processes and began to create a new culture through actions that supported teacher decision-making and growth.

Articulation of beliefs and expectations.

Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) suggested that two components of transformational leadership were the identification of a value-laden vision that fostered commitment and an acceptance of group goals that fostered common goals. Boal and Bryson (1988) believed that principals needed to encourage their staffs to commit to shared goals. To be accepted, the issues must be meaningful to teachers (Gray & Wilcox, 1995). Dufour and Eaker (1998) suggested that effective principals articulated a clear vision of instruction based on student outcomes.

This study found that all three principals engaged in activities to articulate and commit to common goals. The common goals, however, were consistent with the principals' personal belief systems. There was evidence to suggest that principals used interpersonal skills and, in some cases, direct confrontation to seek an alignment between their personal visions and a common vision. Teachers did contribute to the vision in all three schools and this vision became pervasive. However, the creation of the vision was more of an alignment to the principals' goals and less to the synthesis of though from the entire staff.

All three schools developed mission and vision statements. Even though teachers could not remember the stated mission statement, they could consistently describe cultures of a focus on developing their instructional practice to promoted

student achievement. This focus relied on student achievement data and professional development on best practices. The principals promoted this culture through their words and actions. This finding was consistent with the research on transformational leadership in which leaders provided for intellectual stimulation designed to challenge and refine assumptions about instruction and current practices (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

Restructuring.

Marsh (2000) suggested that successful principals restructure the working environment before actual changes in the culture occur. He found that school leaders established work groups, aligned responsibility, authority and accountability and created the structures for the work groups to perform their tasks before the new culture emerged. This study found this to be true in the three schools. All three principals restructured decision-making and planning processes very early in their tenures in remarkably similar ways. All three utilized the School Improvement Teams and formalized grade group meetings. Subcommittees were created to reflect school initiatives. Subcommittees were led by teachers and grade groups had chairs who met regularly with the principals. The principals manipulated schedules to ensure joint planning time and they held planning groups accountable by reviewing agendas and minutes. Principals also created an expectation for the level of discussion, moving data analysis and instructional practice to the forefront of discussions. This is consistent with Cuban's contention that effective principals set high expectations for curriculum and instructional practices (2004).

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A change in culture.

West (2000) found that the school culture that is most conducive to school improvement is one of a distributed leadership, collaboration, and high expectations for all students. In addition, a culture conducive to professional learning was characterized by a focus on student learning (Sergiovanni, 1994), de-privatization of practice (Liebermann, 1988), collaboration (Little, 1990), and reflective dialogue (Zeichner & Tabachink, 1991). McLaughlin (1993) and Sergiovanni (1994) believed that teacher discussions centered around meaningful shared issues in schools that had a high degree of professional learning. Blasé and Blasé (1999) found these discussions to be both formal and informal and focused on the instructional process. Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996) found that teachers increased their sense of responsibility for their students. West (2000) found that a respect for the opinions of others was evident.

This study indicated that many of these characteristics were present in the studied schools, but were limited by a variety of factors. Leadership was distributed, but not to the entire staff equally. Each school had leadership teams that consisted of resource teachers or teachers who were in close alignment with the principals. There was no formalized structure in which resistant teachers could maintain leadership roles. However, the principals allowed for open discussions within all forums. In addition, principals listened to dissent through an "open door policy".

Student learning, teacher practice and data analysis remained the central topics of discussions. Teachers were "child-centered" and looked at their impact on

student learning. There was evidence of collaboration across subject areas and grade level. Collaboration, however, existed mainly at the grade group level. This collaboration included a discussion of practice and an alignment of activities so that instruction would "look the same" within a grade. There were no formalized structures for reflective dialogue in the three schools, but teachers did set personal goals and reflect on those goals. There was virtually no de-privatization of practice. School-based resource teachers did have some access to the classrooms but de-privatization between classroom teachers did not exist. Respect, both for the principal and among the teachers, appeared high in all three schools.

This study did not determine a consistent time frame among the three schools in which the culture changed. The timing appeared to be resultant of the context of each individual school in regards to the perceived need for change, the level of teacher support and the level of teacher quality. This issue deserves more attention in the literature.

Institutionalizing Change

Once the change process to improve schools was initiated, schools must secure and sustain the change (Harris, 2002). Securing change involved a clarity of purpose, shared control, a mix of pressure and support and early evidence of success. However, Fullan (2001) warned against constant change that could result in superficial innovations that lacked depth and coherence. Therefore, schools must allow time for changes to become institutionalized and then evaluate the changes for success (Harris, 2002).

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In this study, each principal utilized different strategies to initiate change and each staff accepted the changes through different processes and specific actions. The principals did conform to the suggestions by Harris (2002) and Fullan (2001). There was a clarity of purpose, shared control, a mixture of pressure and support and evidence of success. In addition, once the structures were in place and the cultures changed, the rate of change appeared to slow down as teachers appeared comfortable with the climate and their level of success. The study suggested the following findings about the acceptance of change:

1. The teachers saw results, although the assessment of results was based more on in-house school assessments and perceptions than on state data.

2. The teachers trusted the principals based on their perceptions of the principal's work ethic, integrity, support and knowledge.

3. Resistant teachers were removed or marginalized. Supportive teachers were elevated to positions of leadership.

4. The principals hired teachers who shared their beliefs. This included an alignment of instruction, collegiality and views on professional development. It is important to note that all three schools had opportunities to hire staff either through attrition or growth.

5. A culture of support and collegiality among the staff emerged.

Seeing results.

In regards to evaluating progress, perhaps one of the most interesting findings in this study was the discovery of how teachers assessed the progress of their actions.

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Despite district and state scores that showed little growth, the teachers felt that they were effective by examining teacher-made assessments that they felt more closely aligned with what they were teaching. Teacher-made tests can be designed to closely follow what the teacher has taught. In addition, even though each school looked at district data, they examined their own practices and designed assessments that reflected those practices. This finding is consistent with a case study done by Hudson and Williamson (2001) who found that teachers who had a high degree of efficacy resisted the pressures of district testing and provided a more individualized program. This would indicate that efforts must be made to align teacher-made tests to the state accountability measures required by *No Child Left Behind*.

The personal qualities of principals.

A critical component to securing the change was the staff's perceptions about the principals' core values. Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2000) found that effective school leaders possessed a number of core personal values that translated into characteristics and actions. Bennett (2000) described the personal characteristics of strategic leaders to include the personal values of integrity, social justice, humanity, respect, loyalty and morality. In addition, Bennett identified strength and courage to counter adversaries and a passion to proceed with visionary projects as necessary perceptions of a leader's character.

These characteristics of the principals were cited by teachers in the study as important in their own acceptance of change. The principals in this study were considered to be knowledgeable about instruction, experienced, passionate about

improving instruction, child centered, hard-working and consistent in their enacting vision. These characteristics were reinforced by the principals' actions and their communication skills. It is difficult to say if any one characteristic weighed heavier than another since all appeared to be present.

Another quality of effective principals in the research was the ability to adapt to the context (West, 2000). Murphy (1994) believed that principals must adapt, learn and reflect on their actions to suit the context. He believed that principals should guard against a reliance on status quo solutions and they should move beyond prior experience. This study supported these contentions. The principals adapted to their environments and changed as the context changed. In addition, al three principals were able to move beyond the status quo and their own personal experiences to create new environments.

Marginalizing resistance.

Fullan (2001) suggested that innovators should embrace resistors because they could provide important feedback to innovation and they represented a diversity of opinion. In addition, too many "like-minded people" could narrow the focus of the organization so that important issues may be missed. While the resistors in this study had opportunities to express themselves, they were marginalized in their role in the change process. Resistors were either openly confronted or simply ignored. In some cases, resistors were moved to positions that had little impact on the innovations. They were never given leadership responsibilities. In one school, the resource teacher and counselor acted as a buffer between resistant teachers and the principal. In some

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cases, resistors left the school either voluntarily or with pressure from the administration.

This study seemed to suggest that there is a balance between the number of supporters and the number of resistors and the power they possess. In the schools with a common purpose, resistors required little attention. In the school with a high number of powerful resistors, a great deal of energy was expended addressing the resistance. This study also suggested that the community may play a role in the resistance to change, although this was not fully explored. Identifying this balance requires further study. In addition, the role a community plays in the change process deserves further attention.

Hiring new staff.

The literature on school improvement discussed the building of teacher capacity and teacher development. The assumption was that leaders work with the people within their organizations. However, the literature on organizational learning and the change process gave little attention to the role of bringing in new people. Copeland (2003) acknowledged, however, that the hiring and firing of teachers was an important component in protecting the vision of a core group of teachers and in the distribution of leadership. This was a consistent characteristic among the schools studied; all of the principals had opportunities to hire new staff. This process involved long interviews in which the principals sought teachers who shared their passions. Interestingly, many of the new teachers hired ultimately served in leadership roles in the school. The implications of this finding include how teachers move from school to

school within a district and the opportunities for principals to attract new teachers. A discussion of contract negotiations is beyond the scope of this study, but a principal's ability to hire new staff became an important component to the creation of a culture that supports professional learning.

An environment in which people like each other.

Fullan (2001) believed that the most critical factor in the change process was building relationships. Hopkins (1996) believed that successful school leaders encouraged mutual support. Murphy (1994) and Louis and Kruse (1998) believed that effective principals must cultivate a dense network of relationships among the staff. This study found that teachers developed close personal relationships that extended beyond the nature of their jobs. The development of a shared vision included personal support for each other. This affect was also reflected in the relationships that the principals extended to their staffs and in the actions, such as team-building, that were planned. This finding suggests that leaders should consider the development of personal relationships on a staff.

Are These Schools Learning Communities?

Bryk and Driscroll (1988) defined learning communities as "a social organization consisting of cooperative relations among adults who shared common purposes and where daily life for both adults and students was organized in ways which fostered commitment among its members" (p.1). Leithwood and Aikens (1995) suggested that a learning organization was:

> a group of people pursuing common purposes (and individual purposes as well) with a collective commitment to regularly weigh the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously

developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes. (p. 41)

The concept of learning communities was derived from the work done on organizational learning, which suggested that organizations must learn through constantly challenging assumptions as a result of constant and competing demands (Senge, 1990). A learning community implied an emphasis on a commitment to stability, trust and a common purpose (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993).

Louis and Kruse (1998) found that when schools are structured as learning organizations a dense network of collaboration emerges as evidenced by increased shared planning time and informal interdependent teaching roles like team-teaching. Teachers become more reflective in their practice. The structures of problem-solving teams, decision-making teams and a climate of inquiry supported the tenants of a learning organization. A learning organization valued individually held knowledge, and created knowledge through self-appraisal, reflection and dialogue organized towards a goal of student achievement. The process of learning occurred in meaningful contexts. There was an emphasis on consensus and systematic learning.

The concept of community implied an organization characterized by trust, mutual interdependence, and permanent personal investment, affiliation, and caring that promoted continuity and stability (Leithwood & Louis, 1998). The added components of collegiality, common purpose and commitment transformed a learning organization into a learning community (Sergiovanni, 1994). The difference between a learning organization and a learning community would be the increased level of commitment to collegiality and purpose. This added emphasis would reflect in the

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type of professional learning that occurred in the school.

The schools in this case study appeared to fit this definition. However, it was clear that there was not total acceptance of the entire staff because of the presence of resistors. In addition, the analysis of instruction was incremental and did not address deep issues of the value of education and a critical analysis of practice. Reflection on practice was limited. Finally, the development of the school's vision was very much a reflection of the principals' personal vision and not necessarily the result of divergent or pluralistic discussions.

Communities of practice.

Perhaps a better description of the schools studied is a community of practice. In his work on distributed leadership Copland (2003) described a community of practice in which there existed "the development of a culture within a school that embodies collaboration, trust, professional learning and reciprocal accountability" (p. 379). There were three conditions that must exist to create a community of practice: (a) the development of the culture that was dependent on interpersonal skills, (b) a consensus of the problems that faced the organization and, (c) a rich expertise that resided within the school. Communities of practice instituted a Cycle of Inquiry in which problems were identified and refined. Measurable goals were developed and a plan was devised and implemented. Data was then analyzed, suggesting new problems.

Using this rubric, the three schools studied appear to be examples of schools instituting a Cycle of Inquiry. Copeland refined the concept by identifying stages of

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inquiry (see Table 1). The schools in this study were approaching the advanced level in inquiry. In each case, data was examined and drove practice. Instructional changes, however, appeared to be incremental and there did not seem to be a critical analysis of the predominant pedagogy in each of the schools by the teachers or the leadership. To move to an advanced level of a community of practice, the schools would need to become adept at data analysis and generate instructional reforms from within by relying of the professional expertise and inquiry in the school with less of a reliance on outside resources.

The implications of this analysis would suggest that the literature on organizational learning and learning communities may overstate the role of divergent thinking, dissonance and reflection on practice. Instead, the current literature on school improvement more accurately reflects what actually happens in schools. There may be less diversity of opinion and more of a reliance on a shared vision, a focus on data and incremental changes in practice. It can be argued that *No Child Left Behind* and other accountability systems that rely on specific standards have contributed to this narrowing of focus. This is consistent with the literature on high-stakes accountability that found that these reform systems narrowed the curriculum and limited the capacity for substantive change (McNeil, 2000).

An alternative explanation may be that as accountability systems narrow the focus of instruction, the presence of dissonance and reflection takes a different path. Instead of discussions around the nature of pedagogy and practice, the dissonance and reflection utilized by teachers is specific to the specific outcomes and assessments

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demanded by state accountability programs. The focus becomes specific data

collection measures and not on the broad questions of what is the best way to teach.

This was evident at one school which expended considerable energy looking at the

effects of generational poverty on student learning and behavior only to change focus

to specific writing strategies in response to changes in the state testing format.

Authoritarian or distributed leadership?

Much of the literature on learning communities suggested that a necessary

element was distributed leadership (Rosenblum, Louis & Rossmiller, 1994; Murphy,

1994). Distributed leadership involved participative decision-making, the sharing of

expertise among teachers and mutual learning (Day & Harris, 2003). Gronn (2002)

suggested that school leaders could disperse leadership by creating structures with

little thought to social interactions or they could give attention to the social

interactions within the school. Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl, Watson, Levin and Fullan

(2004) found that attention to the social interactions when dispersing of leadership

was more productive.

This case study found that the three principals demonstrated both authoritarian

and distributed leadership. All three principals activated structures to encourage

collaboration and the analysis of data. In addition, they facilitated the development of

a shared vision and made their expectations clear. The actions taken by the principals,

however, created the climate in which distributed leadership could take place. This

was consistent with Camburn's, Rowan's and Taylor's (2003) description of

configuration (creating structures) and activation (implementing social processes).

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The level of authoritarian action appeared to be related to the level of resistance to change. In the school with a high degree of consensus of the problems, the principal utilized democratic techniques very quickly. In the school with the most resistant teachers, the principal utilized very authoritarian methods to ensure alignment and to neutralize resistance.

Another consideration to the use of authoritarian leadership may be related to the readiness of a school to begin the change process. Leithwood and Louis (1998) suggested that the initial conditions of effective learning must be in place before the tenets of a learning community could take form. Mortimer (1994) and Lezotte (1997) argued that a control-orientated form of leadership was more effective in implementing change. This study indicated that a control-oriented leadership was the choice in a context of resistance and an ambiguous desire to change.

Distributed leadership occurred as principals were able to hire individuals who supported their vision. Leadership teams were developed and teachers were encouraged to make instructional decisions. After a time, virtually allof the school - based committees were chaired by teachers. However, leadership opportunities appeared to reflect the teachers' interpersonal skills and their alignment with the principals' visions. The parameters for risk-taking were determined by the principals and influenced by district mandates. In addition, the principals had established internal accountability systems that included a review of committee minutes and agendas and the monitoring of teacher goals and instructional practice.

This finding would suggest that principals still retained control and

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responsibility over the total instructional program. Teachers had some leeway in making instructional decisions, but those decisions were bounded by the district and state accountability mandates and by the principals' own beliefs. There was no evidence in this study that indicated that principals or teachers were willing to openly challenge or revise district mandates. Instead, two principals embraced the district initiatives and one principal reluctantly complied.

What is the Level of Professional Development?

The key assumption in this study was that quality professional learning positively impacted student achievement (Murphy, 1994). A quality professional development program must focus on the implementation and evaluation of the instructional program (Blasé & Blasé, 1999). Joyce and Showers (1995) believed that teacher professional development should focus on promising practices, information processing models and effective curricula. It should include collaborative inquiry (Sparks & Simmons, 1989), teacher input (Whitworth, 1999) and reflection (Sparks-Lanager & Colton, 1991).

The schools in this study were nominated because they were perceived to support professional learning. Interview data suggested that teachers felt that professional learning was an important element in their schools. Professional development was focused on school initiatives that were developed after an analysis of data. Teachers developed personal goals that were dependent on professional development and were tied to school needs. Teachers could pursue individual interests and were encouraged to do so by their principals. Principals challenged

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teachers to stretch themselves by taking courses, attending workshops and investigating new topics. Two schools used study groups to investigate instructional practices and to look at school organization. Discussions around instructional practices were pervasive and there was evidence that teachers collaborated on programs.

The delivery of professional learning included a variety of formats and resources. Staff development included whole staff and small group work. Teachers attended conferences. Individual teachers worked with district and school-based resource teachers to hone skills. Graduate studies were encouraged and one school developed an on-site relationship with a local university. Teachers were expected to share their knowledge with others.

Peer-coaching.

What was not evident in the schools was peer-coaching. One school instituted a program in which coaching was a critical piece. In interviews, the coaching was cited frequently as a positive. The coaching, however, was not necessarily peer-coaching since it involved a facilitator and a teacher and the facilitator was considered the expert. There was evidence in all three schools of coaching opportunities involving resource teachers and classroom teachers. These relationships were considered positive. However, it was also clear that the resource teachers reflected the leadership in the school, or at least had closer access to the principal.

The time structure of the school did not lend itself to peer coaching, although all three principals indicated that they provided substitute money for teachers who

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wanted to watch other teachers. My sense is that there still existed a privatization of practice in the three schools. This was mitigated by grade group discussions and open communication. However, teachers were not really sure what was happening in other classrooms.

Reflection.

Reflection was limited in the three schools. One school had instituted a program in which reflection was a central element, but that program was abandoned when the district implemented a new reading program. Teachers believed that they reflected on practice privately, although all three schools had formal goals conferences. One school formalized the presentation of teacher portfolios that could be argued to be a form of reflection.

Collaborative reflection requires a high degree of de-privatization and efficacy. While teacher efficacy appeared to be high in the teachers interviewed, de-privatization of practice was not. Each principal indicated that they would like to see more teacher reflection. Teacher reflection could thrive in highly collaborative structures when reflection was a central component (Rentel & Pinnell, 1989; Roberts & Wilson, 1998). This was true in the Literacy Collaborative model instituted by one school. To encourage reflective practice, the structures and training needed to be incorporated in the professional development practices utilized by schools.

What is the Impact of No Child Left Behind?

The effects of high-stakes accountability have become better understood as *No Child Left Behind* was enacted across the country. Hudson and Williamson (2001)

believed that high-stakes accountability systems demand a narrow focus. Singh and McMillan (2002), however, discovered that schools with demonstrated success in high-stakes accountability systems shared common characteristics that included a shared commitment to improve among the staff, collaboration and decentralization of responsibility and decision-making. In addition, effective professional development relied on presentations from teachers within the school and a focus on specific needs of the school. This focus included a collaborative analysis of student work and the identification of problems and solutions specific to students.

This appeared to be the case in this study. All of the interviewees agreed that standards helped to clarify what teachers needed to do. The standards and the resulting data provided a focus for staff development and instruction. There was evidence of collaboration and distributed leadership. Student work was analyzed and teachers sought instructional programs that would make a difference. In general, teachers were positive about the intentions of *No Child Left Behind*.

What is interesting is that the structures implemented by the principals at the three schools occurred prior to the implementation of *No Child Left Behind.* However, each school was operating under the context of a state accountability system that was not unlike *No Child Left Behind*. The common characteristics included identified standards and a testing system that produced data that could be analyzed. Each principal felt that the standards were of value and worth achieving. Once *No Child Left Behind* was implemented, it was not difficult for the schools to use their structures in place to respond to the changes in accountability.

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Concerns about No Child Left Behind.

Teacher and principals from all three schools, however, were concerned about the accountability for students who had learning concerns that seemed beyond the teachers' realm of control which included a lack of English proficiency or a documented learning problem. Nevertheless, the evidence indicated that teachers looked at students individually and were concerned about each student's growth.

The threat of sanctions did impact morale at the one school in danger of not meeting AYP. While there did not seem to be a major impact on professional development, teachers felt threatened in a vague way. The school had developed systems for affectively supporting the staff and the threat of sanctions appeared to undermine those efforts. Their biggest fear was the potential removal of the principal, who was a major provider of the affective support.

As discussed previously, there were concerns that the accountability tests did not match what teachers taught and children learned. This was more of a concern in the school in danger of not meeting AYP. Teachers were desperate to see improvement and relied on school-based assessments to judge growth. The school-base assessments looked at smaller increments of change. This has implications for teacher decision-making and efficacy. Teachers need to see that their efforts are making a difference. In schools with relatively high scores, the efficacy was affirmed. In more at-risk schools, principals and teachers need to establish standards of success in smaller increments. Without some measure of improvement, morale suffers. In the absence of positive data, there appears to be a tendency to "reinterpret" the data. For

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example, in the schools studied, teachers felt that they were effective with students even though the scores in three schools remained relatively stable. This is a phenomenon that deserves further study and is not fully covered in the literature.

The implications of this finding are that schools and district may consider relying of a variety of data to assess progress beyond the scores on state exams. This variety would include district and school-designed assessments. It may behoove schools to make these alternative assessments public to engender public support and increase teacher efficacy.

In addition to relying on multiple data sources, it is important to link state assessments with classroom assessments. This requires a deep understanding of the construction of state assessments and how teacher and district designed assessments can match the state protocols. It is clear in this study that teachers assess their own efficacy by their own designed assessments and discount state assessments. Districts and schools must establish that close link.

Limitations of the Selected Sample

Case studies are a valid research tool when it is difficult to separate the phenomenon from the context (Yin, 2003). This study sought to describe of conditions that promote professional learning by using at multiple data collection techniques. However, case studies, by their nature, have limitations (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). This study had limited generalizability in three domains: (a) population validity, (b) situational characteristics, and (c) methodology. Specifically, the schools studied were from a purposeful sample. The selected schools did not fully

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represent the district selected in terms of student achievement, level of poverty or race. In addition, the contexts, or situations, of the three schools may not be representative of the district. Finally, the methodology used may limit the generalizability.

Population Validity

This study was bounded by a single school district. In addition, this study relied on a purposeful sample of schools that had been nominated by district supervisors. In comparing the nominated schools to other schools in the district, the sample was not representative. The 15 schools nominated by the supervisors predominantly represented the top quartile in state test scores (9 of the 15 schools nominated were in the top quartile; 12 of the 15 were in the top half of scoring for the district). The selected schools predominantly represented schools with low percentages of students living in poverty. Race and school size did not seem to be a factor in the nominated schools.

By using just one school district, one may assume that the principals in the study had common experiences with district curricula, practices and professional development, therefore, limiting the generalizability of the study. However, it is important to note that the findings of the study were very consistent with current research. In addition, each principal approached problems in different ways, yet consistent patterns emerged.

An assumption made in this study was that schools that have high support for professional learning have high student achievement. Therefore, one would expect the

nominated schools to over-represent high performing schools. However, the scores in two of the three schools studied did not significantly change after the new principals were appointed. What did change significantly were the cultures of the three schools and the depth and type of professional learning. In addition, not all of the high performing schools in the district were nominated, indicating that professional development may not be the critical element in student achievement. The critical element in predicting high student achievement in this district is the relative affluence of the community served by the school.

The over-representation of the nominated schools that have high student performance suggested that the support of professional learning may be more common in schools with less challenging populations. The interviewees in the one low-performing school studied indicated that the management of student behavior "took energy". Teacher energy may be a necessary component to professional learning, since many of the opportunities existed outside of the school day. Interestingly, one aspect of the culture of the school with relatively low performance was the commitment to at-risk children. In fact, much of the professional learning concerned the culture of the community and the management of student behavior. Student behavior and academically at-risk concerns were not evident in the interviews of the other two schools. The conclusion, then, is that professional development time is spent on issues like student management that do not directly relate to test scores.

Another possible explanation may be the selection and placement of principals. In the two schools with relatively high performance, the community

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exerted more influence. It could be argued that community pressure may have forced the district to consider appointing principals with excellent interpersonal skills. There is not enough data to fully explore this question.

Situational Characteristics

It would be difficult to determine if other schools share the same contextual features as these schools. Specifically, the principals of the three schools shared common characteristics and values. All three were interested in the change process, valued their own learning and were articulate in their views. The three schools studied underwent changes in practice and culture. The principals were interested in "capacity building" in which they "felt confident in their own capacity in the capacity of their colleagues and in the capacity of the school to promote professional development" (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000, p. 78). In addition, the principals had strong feelings about professional growth, for their teachers as well as for themselves. Finally, all three principals shared the characteristic of excellent communication skills. They were able to articulate their own visions to their schools, as well as communicate their vision to their supervisors and in the interviews for this study. It can be argued that this ability to communicate made them likely candidates for nomination for this study.

Methodology

Case studies are limited by the population sample, as noted above, but also by the data collection and analysis processes. This study relied primarily on interview data but did use observational data and a document review. Interviews exposed a

person's perceptions. By using teacher, as well as principal interviews, data could be triangulated to look for consistencies and patterns. However, the teachers selected for the long interview for this study were nominated by the principal. This limited the range of perceptions. However, virtually the entire staff of two of the three schools had an opportunity to respond to a written question. The written question was posed to half of the third school. While these responses were not anonymous, they did provide an opportunity for dissent and contradiction.

It is very possible that interviewees were cautious in their responses for two reasons. One was to protect themselves from saying anything that may be construed as negative about the school or the principal. Second, they would like to appear knowledgeable and helpful. In my position as a principal in the district, they may have been somewhat intimidated, or at least anxious to contribute to the study in a positive way. Several interviewees expressed nervousness in being interviewed and ended the sessions with the statement, "I hope this is what you wanted".

The interviews generated long transcripts. I had to decide what were relevant data and what were not. This decision-making process of culling data invariably led to possibilities of ignoring critical information. However, by cross checking statements against multiple interviews, I believe that I captured the salient features. In addition, I made use of a critical friend who was familiar with the district to check for possible inconsistencies or information that may have proven to be harmful to the subjects.

Implications for Practice

This study has implications for leadership practice for principals. Specifically, the study illuminates the need to understand the change process in the school improvement. In addition, the study identifies practices that create a "community of practice". Finally, the study describes the impact of *No Child Left Behind* on schools that are supportive to professional learning.

Instituting change demands a clear vision based on personal experiences. Principals must establish their vision very early in their tenures. In addition, principals must assess the school's context in terms of hard data such as student achievement, but also they must assess the social context. This includes the staff's perceived need for change and the leadership structures in the school. The school community must also be considered when implementing change.

This study indicated that the change process was instituted early in a principal's tenure. This is consistent with the research done by Fullan (2001). What remains unanswered is how principals who are already firmly established in their schools can implement the change process. This suggests a rationale for moving principals from school to school.

Principals must begin to create structures that foster distributed leadership. These structures should be based on student achievement needs. Resource allocation, including staff development and the use of resource personnel must support school initiatives. Principals must have the opportunity to hire new teachers that support the school's mission. Finally, principals must promote inquiry and professional learning

by creating opportunities for teachers to grow and make instructional decisions. These changes in structure suggest a democratic approach. However, the evidence suggests that a more authoritarian approach may be required first, before leadership is distributed.

The processes listed above require principals to possess excellent interpersonal skills. Principals must be good communicators and understand how to deal with teachers who are resistant to change. They must demonstrate commitment to the school's vision and they must be perceived as consistent and hard-working.

By creating a school culture in which teacher leadership can emerge, schools can navigate the challenges of high-stakes accountability. Principals must continue to allow teachers to understand and respond to the demands of assessment programs. In addition, principals must be cognizant of, and open to alternative forms of assessment that are closely tied to instructional practice. Principals in schools with the potential to fall short of ambitious national or state goals should be familiar with the impact of the threat of sanctions. The threat of sanctions may affect teacher morale.

The evidence in this study did not indicate that the district implemented a systematic professional development program for principals. Instead, the principals developed their skills through highly contextualized and personal relationships with mentor principals. This study suggests that districts consider a professional development model that identifies and develops the leadership skills necessary to navigate the change process. If districts use the evidence from this study as a model, then a professional development model would be structured around clear goals and

expectations, a mission and vision and structures and a culture that would encourage the professional growth of principals. There would be opportunities for reflection and feedback. In effect, the model for the professional growth of principals would mirror professional growth for teachers.

Implications for Research in Practice

While this study linked the practices of principals with teacher professional development, there was no apparent link to school achievement. Further comparison studies are needed to investigate this connection. Additional studies may also look at teacher efficacy, teacher turnover and overall school climate. These factors were beyond the scope of this study.

A phenomenon that deserves more attention is the role of resistance in the change process and how principals address resistors. Related to this is how principals align staff, create leadership teams and attract new teachers that support the change process. In addition, this study looked at schools with principals who implemented change by institutionalizing structures. Additional research could address the effectiveness of maintaining these structures in the face of new challenges.

Other phenomena that are relevant to this study but are not fully explained in the literature are the effects of principal personality and professional development. While this study looked at principal actions, it did not link those actions to the personality of the principal. Additional studies may uncover a link between a principal's personality and the actions they take. Related to this is the question of the developmental growth of principals. This study clearly links a principal's experiences

to the development of their personal lens for assessment and the development of their goals and expectations. However, the study does not suggest that there is a developmental growth in principals and the forces that impact that growth. Further study in this area is warranted. It is suggested that the questionnaire utilized in this study may be adapted to address issues of principal growth and personality.

Implications for Policy

This study has implications for board policy in two areas. One is the district's role in training and supporting principals. The second board area is a re-examination of the high-stakes accountability.

The District's Role

This study suggests roles for the district in the areas of the training and selection of principals and the supports that can be provided to schools. In the training of principals, districts should help potential candidates understand the change process. This would involve learning the phases of change, but more importantly, the social aspects of change. Change must be directed and the principal remains at the core of that direction. In addition to understanding the change process, districts must assist potential principals by providing experiences that sharpen their belief systems. The ability to articulate a belief system through communication and actions appears to be essential in moving schools towards improvement. This belief system should include the roles of data, professional development, student/teacher interactions and distributed leadership. Providing a mentor to potential administrators and providing an opportunity for reflective practice is suggested.

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This study makes suggestions about principals who are new to the principalship, but does not address principals who have long tenures. The study does suggest, however, the types of skills that are necessary to affect change. Districts may consider an aggressive professional development plan for all principals that focuses on understanding the change process and the utilization of interpersonal skills to create cultures that support professional learning. Districts may also develop a plan to move principals to different schools to facilitate the change process.

In addition, this study suggests that districts may support current principals in three ways. One is to create opportunities for principals to hire additional staff. This appeared to be a critical element in the change process of the schools studied. This may require changes in the negotiated agreements with teachers, but it may also involve the creation of school-based positions.

The second support that districts may provide to principals is access to resource personnel and professional development opportunities. The schools involved in this study made use of district resource personnel. They also relied on the district to learn about new initiatives. Districts made consider supporting school-based professional development opportunities. This was not the case in the schools studied. Instead, these schools relied on alternative funding sources.

The third way districts can support schools involves their role with struggling schools. It is suggested that districts consider the negative effects of sanctions and threats and instead, provide alternative measurements that have validity but are also closely aligned with the instructional program.

High-stakes Accountability

This study indicates that teachers and principals appreciate clear standards and look forward to meeting the challenge. High-stakes accountability narrows the focus of instruction, which is appreciated by teachers. However, teachers believe that children with extenuating circumstances should not be held to the same standards. Of course, one purpose of high-stakes accountability is to eliminate the double standard. A solution may be a broadened scope of assessments in which progress can be measured across a variety of measures. This is what the teachers do in their classrooms. They rely on assessments that measure incremental growth and are closely aligned with instruction.

In regards to sanctions and rewards for student performance, the schools who received awards used them to promote professional development. Rewards can have a positive effect on the school's mission and culture (Strouse, 2004). However, sanctions did not appear to have a positive effect and indeed, contributed to a lower morale in one school. The threat of sanctions at the high-performing schools had no effect on teacher morale or behavior. Of course, the context of this study was under the guidelines of *No Child Left Behind.* The study cannot predict the outcome if sanctions were not part of the accountability system.

Implications for Research in Policy

This study suggests that additional research is needed in the area of principal preparation. Prospective principals should have multiple opportunities for experiences related to school structures and to the social aspects of the change process. Research

may also shed light on how principals are selected and placed in schools. In addition, the implementation of high-stakes accountability is currently generating a great deal of research. This study suggests that research may look at the validity of using different types of assessments to monitor student achievement. The teachers interviewed in this study relied on measures that closely related to classroom instruction and provided immediate diagnostic information.

Closing on a Personal Note

This study ultimately began with an interest in my own practice as a principal. I was interested in teacher professional development and my role in promoting growth. This study was an extension of that interest. This study allowed me to see how proactive principals can be in structuring schools to promote distributed leadership, professional development and a focus on data analysis. Once the structures and culture are in place, schools can be communities of practice, able to respond to external pressure in a systematic and enlightened fashion. This experience has had a profound effect on how I perceive my position as principal and how I might do things differently.

Appendix

Appendix A: Indicators of Organizational Learning

School: _____

Processes

Indicator	Operationalized
Systematic processes for collaboration	Structures are in place for collaboration
Exchange of information through informal discussions	Instructional problem-solving is done informally.
Trail and error approach to teaching	Teachers feel free to try new techniques.
Experimentation and a focus on problem solving	If a technique fails, teachers problem-solve to improve the technique
Opportunities to see others teach	Peer observation and coaching are evident
Opportunities for reflection	Teachers have opportunities to reflect on practice through discussions or journals.
Systematic strategies for goal setting	The school uses a formal process to establish goals.
Individual growth plans	Teachers create individual growth plans.
Processes that include implementation and evaluation	Goals are measured using benchmarks, milestones and data

Culture

Indicator	Operationalized
Mission and vision	Teachers perceive the mission as clear, meaningful, pervasive and widely accepted.
Collaboration	Collaboration is perceived as a school norm.
Respect for divergent ideas	Divergent ideas are accepted and can co-exist with the dominant themes in the school.
Willingness to take risks	Teachers feel safe in instructional risk-taking.
Honest feedback	Teachers feel that feedback from administrators and peers is honest.
Shared celebrations	The achievement of goals is celebrated.
Focus on the needs of all students	School goals focus on the needs of all types of learners.

Leadership

Indicator	Operationalized
Articulate a vision	The principal articulates a clear vision.
Foster acceptance of group goals	Goals are created collaboratively with the teachers.
Convey high performance expectations	The principal maintains high expectations for instruction.
Provide appropriate models	The principal sets an example for personal and professional growth.
Provide individualize support	The principal tailors concerns for the individual.
Provide intellectual stimulation	The principal encourages teachers to learn.
Help structure the school to enhance participation	The principal promotes structures for the dispersal of decision-making.

Decision-making Structures

Indicator	Operationalized
Formal problem-solving teams	Systematic structures are in place that promote shared decision-making.
Informal problem-solving teams	There is evidence of informal decision-making.
Sufficient resources to promote professional development	Teachers felt that resources were availalbe to promote professional development.
Access to resources	Teachers had access to current research and information about instruction.
Participation in decision-making	Teachers felt that decision-making was participatory.
Restricted and manageable goals.	Goals were limited to a manageable set.

Appendix B: Reliability of Surveys

Reliability of Conditions Affecting Professional Learning

Construct	Reliability
Vision	.82
Structure	.71
Culture	.70
Strategy	.69
Resources	.54
Means of Five Constructs	.84

Conditions Affecting Professional Learning (Leithwood & Aikens, 1994)

Reliability of The Leadership and Management of Schools Questionnaire

Construct	Reliability
Symbolizing good professional practice	.932
Developing Collaborative Decision-making Structure	.932
Providing Individualized Support	.896
Providing Intellectual Stimulation	.938
Holding High Performance Expectations	.874
Fostering Development of Vision and Goals	.931

The Leadership and Management of Schools: The Nature of Leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1997)

No Child Left Behind and Professional Learning:
A Multi-case Study of three Elementary Schools
Supervisor Nomination Form
Overview

There is a large body of evidence that links the quality of teacher professional development to the structure and culture of the school. The research in organizational learning links professional development to the creation of learning communities that support shared decision-making, a supportive environment for experimentation, collaboration among peers and supportive leadership. The school principal is a key component in the creation of learning communities. However, there is very little work done that examines the practices that principals use to create environments that support professional learning in an era of high stakes accountability. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* has raised the stakes of accountability. This study seeks to uncover the practices that elementary school principals utilize that balance the demands of accountability with the creation of environments that support professional learning by employing a multi-case study approach consisting of interviews, observations and a document review.

The first phase of this study is the identification of schools and principals that support professional learning. I will rely on the judgment of the Area Directors to nominate schools that you believe are supportive to professional learning. Once a pool of potential schools has been created, I will select three schools for the case study. The case study will involve interviews with the principal, assistant principal and Lead Teachers, an observation of a School Improvement Team meeting and short follow-up interviews with the School Improvement Team members. The study also includes a document review of internal memos, agendas and meeting minutes. Finally, I will do follow-up interviews with the principals and Lead Teachers to clarify points and confirm patterns.

Directions

Please list five schools that you believe are supportive to teacher professional learning. Schools that are supportive of professional learning take specific actions to create an environment supportive of collaborative professional development. Please consider the schools you currently supervise or schools that you have previously supervised. Please return this nomination form to me by December 1.

Nominated schools:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Supporting Professional Learning in an Era of Accountability:
The Elementary School Principal Perspective

Principal Meeting

Overview

There is a large body of evidence that links student achievement to teacher professional development, although the linkage may be indirect. There is also a large body of evidence that links the quality of teacher professional development to the structure and culture of the school. The research in organizational learning links professional development to the creation of learning communities that support shared decision-making, a supportive environment for experimentation, collaboration among peers and supportive leadership. The school principal is a key component in the creation of learning communities. However, there is very little work done that examines the practices that principals use to create environments that support professional learning in an era of high stakes accountability. This study seeks to uncover the practices that elementary school principals utilize that balance the demands of accountability with the creation of support learning environments.

To uncover these practices, this study will utilize a multi-case study of schools identified as having supportive environments for professional learning. Three schools will then be selected that vary in achievement scores and socio-economic demographics. A case study approach utilizing interviews will gather evidence of the practices that principals use the support professional learning. The data will be categorized using a framework developed from a review of the literature on organizational learning, principal leadership and teacher professional development. In addition, this study will identify and categorize the actions that principals utilized to support professional learning in an era of high-stakes accountability.

This study will identify the practices that elementary principals use to support professional learning. This is significant because accountability and student achievement impact virtually every school in the country. The identification of these practices under the weight of accountability will add to our knowledge about leadership and the development of environments that support learning.

Your school has been identified as a school that supports professional learning. All information collected in this study is confidential to the extent permitted by law. I understand that the data I provide will be grouped with data others provide for reporting and presentation and that my name will not be used.

If you choose to participate, please sign the Informed Consent Form. In addition, please indicate one teacher who could respond to the issues related to the creating of an environment that supports professional learning. You may select a Lead Teacher or someone who you feel has a perspective to the school's support for professional learning.

Informed Consent Form

**Supporting Professional Learning in an Era of Accountability:
The Elementary School Principal Perspective**

I state that I am over 18 years of age, in good physical health, and wish to participate in a program of research being conducted by Allan D. Arbogast in the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park.

The purpose of this study is to identify the perceived practices utilized by elementary school principals that support professional learning. Schools that are supportive of professional learning take specific actions to create an environment supportive of collaborative professional development.

This study involves a case study approach using interviews of selected principal regarding professional learning. The case study seeks to identify the practices that promote professional learning in your school.

All information collected in this study is confidential to the extent permitted by law. I understand that the data I provide will be grouped with data others provide for reporting and presentation and that my name will not be used.

The experiment is not designed to help me personally, but to help the investigator learn more about principal practices that contribute to the creation of a learning community. I am free to ask questions or withdraw from participation at any time and without penalty.

Principal Investigator: Allan D. Arbogast
                         Ridgeway Elementary
                         1440 Evergreen Road
                         Severn, MD 21144   420-222-6524 arbogastd@hotmail.com

NAME OF SUBJECT _____

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT _____

Date _____

Appendix F: Principal Survey

Supporting Professional Learning:
Principal Interview

Surveys of Area Directors have indicated that your leadership supports the conditions of a learning community. I would like to talk to you about the actions you have taken to promote professional learning in your school. In addition, I would like to know what factors have affected your ability to create a climate that supports professional learning. (The questions listed below include possible prompts to facilitate discussion.)

1. What changes have occurred in your school in the last few years?
    a. To what do you attribute those changes?
    b. What was the impetus for the changes?

2. What have you been trying to accomplish in the last few years that involves other people in the school?
    a. Why have you been trying to accomplish these things?
    b. What kinds of things have you done to accomplish them?
    c. What steps have you taken?
    d. In your efforts to effect change, what are the most important factors to consider? Why?
    e. Can you give examples?

3. How would you describe your school goals?
    a. How were the goals derived?
    b. How does the staff react to the goals?

4. What are some of the obstacles you've faced while trying to accomplish these goals?
    a. How did you handle the obstacles?
    b. What did you learn from working through the obstacles? For example, what would you do differently?
    c. What sorts of things have you learned in past experiences that help you now?

5. Are there things you have needed to learn to accomplish the goals? If so, how did you learn them?

6. Have there been things your staff has needed to learn to accomplish the goals we were talking about earlier?
    a. How did they go about learning them?
    b. Are there specific structures for learning?
    c. How widespread is the learning?
    d. What kinds of materials did you use?

e. What is your role in the learning?
f. What kinds of learning take place not specifically related to the goals?

7. As a result of the teacher learning, have there been changes in teacher practice?
   a. To what extent have the changes occurred?
   b. Have the changes in teacher practice occurred due to reasons other than the new learning?

8. Can you describe the culture of your school?
   a. What are the shared beliefs and values?
   b. Is there anything about the culture that helped you accomplish your goals?
   c. What is your influence on the school culture?
   d. Who else influences the school culture?
   e. How do you think the culture of your school influences the capacity to learn?
   f. What bearing does the school culture have on the actual content of learning?

9. How would you describe the level of trust in your school?
   a. How is trust communicated?
   b. Give some examples of trust.

10. What is the role of teacher reflection in your school?
    a. How is reflection supported?
    b. To whom is the reflection directed?
    c. How is feedback provided?

11. To what extent does the staff participate in decision-making in the school?
    a. What kinds of issues does the staff deal with?
    b. What are the forums for staff participation?
    c. Do you think the staff is satisfied with the level of participation?
    d. What is the composition of the various decision-making groups?
    e. How do you encourage staff participation?
    f. Do you think the kinds of decision-making structures in your school influence the kinds of learning that takes place?
    g. What kinds of things are learned in the decision-making groups?

12. Does your school ever engage in goal setting?
    a. How is it done?
    b. What is the impetus for goal setting?
    c. How do you facilitate goal setting?
    d. Once goals are set, how do you influence what your school does?
    e. What is the relationship between what is learned and the school goals?

13. What are the resources that assist you and your staff in your professional learning?
    a. Are they sufficient?

    b.   How do you make sure teachers have what they need to implement practices?
    c.   Who is responsible for making sure the resources are available?
14. Is there an overall vision for your school?
    a.   Is it understood and shared by most of the staff?
    b.   What bearing does the vision have in the professional learning of the staff?
    c.   What role do you play in developing the vision?
    d.   Who else plays a part in developing the vision?

15. What impact does the district have on the professional learning of your staff?
    a.   How does the district encourage professional learning?
    b.   What forums does the district provide for learning?
    c.   Give examples of specific learning activities provided by the district?
    d.   How frequent are such activities?
    e.   How helpful are these activities?
    f.   Who provides professional development from the district?
    g.   To what extent does the district engender a feeling of community among its schools?
    h.   How does it do that?
    i.   Do district policies support professional learning within your school?
    j.   What kinds of resources are provided by the district?
    k.   Can you think of something you have learned through a district initiative?

16. What is the level of accountability within your school?
    a.   How is the accountability monitored?
    b.   What is the effect of the accountability on teacher learning?
    c.   How does the accountability affect school culture, vision and practice?
    d.   What is your role in addressing accountability?

17. What is the level of accountability from outside the school?
    e.   How is the accountability monitored?
    f.   What is the effect of the accountability on teacher learning?
    g.   How does the accountability affect school culture, vision and practice?
    h.   What is your role in addressing accountability?

18. How do you provide individualized support for teachers?
    a.   How are the unique needs of teachers addressed?
    b.   What is the role of teacher opinions in decision-making?

19. How do you promote intellectual stimulation?
    a.   What are the sources for new ideas?
    b.   What is the role of professional goals?
    c.   How do you promote reflection?

20. How long have you been a principal? How long have you been at this school?

Memo

To:

From: Duane Arbogast, Principal

CC:

Date: 2/8/2004

Re: Document Review

Greetings,

First, thank you for the enlightening interviews. I learned so much, and frankly, I was terribly impressed that your schools were on the cutting edge because of your efforts. While all three schools have somewhat different cultures, there are some remarkable similarities between the three schools. It occurred to me that we may want to consider focus groups at principal meetings to describe management styles. I think that may work better than individual presentations and you all have so much to share, particularly about assessing culture and aligning your vision with the predominant culture in the school.

I most likely will have to ask you additional questions, but I will probably use email.

I would like to ask you to collect the following for me, but at your convenience. Perhaps you could just drop stuff in a folder, like you do for the directors. Or, maybe I could have access to the portfolios that you already collect for the directors.

I would like copies of the following, if possible:

- The School Improvement Plan,
- Internal memos that reflect professional learning including opportunities for staff development,
- Teacher goals,
- Reflection logs,
- Samples of content or grade group planning minutes, and
- Documents that reflect vision, instructional analysis and feedback on practice. A sample observation write up would be wonderful.

Again, thank you for your support and interest.

Conditions Affecting Professional Learning
(Leithwood & Jantzi, 1994)
This section lists factors that may influence implementation of new programs or teaching practices in your school. After reading each statement indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement by checking one of the boxes: **SD** = Strongly disagree; **D** = Disagree; **A** = Agree; **SA** = Strongly Agree; **NA**= Not Applicable.

		SD	D	A	SA	NA
1	Our school has a clear vision to improving programs and instruction					
2	The school leaders make the most important decisions in our school.					
3	The organization of our school facilitates team work.					
4	The district provides substantial opportunity for professional learning.					
5	Our school's vision fosters commitment to continuous learning by the staff.					
6	We have access to expert professional staff.					
7	Our district has a clear vision related to improving instruction.					
8	Our school goals encourage continuous improvement.					
9	Leadership in our school comes from people with formal administrative roles.					
10	Teachers are hesitant to ask colleagues for help.					
11	The decision-making process in our district provides for input from schools.					
12	The culture of our school is characterized by a creative tension.					
13	Teachers are encouraged to develop action plans for improving instruction.					
14	Teachers are expected to share their work with colleagues.					
15	Our school has a clear vision understood by the entire staff.					

16	Teachers take leadership responsibilities.					
17	Teachers mostly work in isolation.					
18	Our school has a process for developing priorities.					
19	Teachers have access to financial resources to facilitate professional learning.					
20	Schools in our district work in isolation.					
21	Teachers have opportunities to be involved in decision-Making processes.					
22	Most colleagues share a similar set of values.					
23	Our district provides a substantial amount of release time for professional learning.					
24	Teachers work in teams across grade levels.					
25	Teachers have appropriate materials to assist in professional development.					
26	Teachers within the district are expected to share expertise.					
27	Time tables reinforce isolation.					
28	Discussions about new programs include the how and why teachers would implement the new program.					
29	Our school goals are helpful in screening initiatives generated from outside the school.					
30	Teachers are expected to develop innovative practices without adequate personnel and material support.					
31	The district sets reasonable expectations for initiatives to be undertaken.					
32	Teachers have adequate release time to meet with colleagues.					
33	Teachers keep written records of what they learn when implementing new programs for future reference.					

34	Our school goals reinforce the maintenance of the status quo.					
35	Appropriate personnel are available to assist in implementing new programs.					
36	District policies inhibit risk-taking.					
37	Teachers are not penalized for making mistakes in their initial efforts to improve practice.					
38	Our school strikes the right balance between attempting too much or too little change.					
39	Our district provides expert personnel to help with professional learning.					
40	The potential for negative consequences inhibits teacher risk-taking.					
41	We increase our chance of success by setting school goals that focus our efforts on manageable changes.					
42	Our district provides appropriate material to help with professional learning.					

The Nature of School Leadership
(Leithwood, Steinbach and Jantzi, 1997)

The following statements are descriptions of leadership that may or may not reflect leadership practices in your school. After reading each statement indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement by checking one of the boxes: **SD** = Strongly disagree; **D** = Disagree; **A** = Agree; **SA** = Strongly Agree; **N**A= Not Appicable.

To what extent do you agree that the person(s) providing leadership in your school:

		SD	D	A	SA	NA
1	Shows respect for the staff.					
2	Delegates leadership.					
3	Takes teacher opinions into consideration.					
4	Is a source of new ideas for professional learning.					
5	Has high expectations for us as professionals.					
6	Gives a sense of overall purpose.					
7	Sets a respectful tone.					
8	Distributes leadership broadly.					
9	Is aware of the unique needs of teachers.					
10	Stimulates me to think.					
11	Helps clarify the practical implications of the school's mission.					
12	Demonstrates a willingness to change own practices in the light of new understanding.					
13	Ensures adequate involvement in decision-making.					
14	Encourages me to pursue my own goals.					
15	Holds high expectations for students.					
16	Communicates the school mission to staff and students.					
17	Models problem-solving techniques.					
18	Supports effective committee structures for decision-making.					
19	Is inclusive and does not show favoritism.					
20	Encourages me to develop professional goals.					
21	Encourages the development of school norms.					
22	Promotes an atmosphere of caring.					
23	Facilitates effective communication.					
24	Provides moral support.					
25	Encourages me to evaluate my own practice.					
26	Helps us top understand the relationship between the school's mission and the district's initiatives.					
27	Symbolized success and accomplishment.					
28	Provides an appropriate level of autonomy.					
29	Encourages me to try new practices.					
30	Expects us to be effective innovators.					
31	Works towards hold staff consensus for school goals.					
32	Facilitates opportunities to learn from each other.					

Organizational Learning
Principal Interview
(Leithwood & Jantzi, 1994)

We would like to talk to you about the changes that have taken place in your school over the last few years and what has influenced those changes. In particular, we are interested in finding out about the nature and extent of the learning that has enabled, assisted, accompanied, or even caused this change in practice. We are not only talking about individuals' professional learning, but also about the staff's professional learning as a whoile.

Before we start, please tell me the number of years you have been the principal at this school.

1. What changes have occurred in your school in the last few years?
   a. To what do you attribute those changes?
   b. What was the impetus for the changes?

2. What have you been trying to accomplish in the last few years that involves other people in the school?
   a. Why have you been trying to accomplish these things?
   b. What kinds of things have you done to accomplish them?
   c. In your efforts to effect change, what are the most important factors to consider? Why?
   d. Are there other personal or school wide goals we haven't talked about?

3. What are some of the obstacles you've faced while trying to accomplish these goals?
   a. How did you handle the obstacles?
   b. What did you learn from working through the obstacles? For example, what would you do differently?
   c. What sorts of things have you learned in past experiences that help you now?

4. Are there things you have needed to learn to accomplish the goals?
   a. If so, how did you learn them?
   b. Can you recall other things you have learned that are not related specifically to the things you are trying to accomplish?

5. What did you already know that helped you take steps to reach your goals?
   a. Where did you learn it?
   b. What other kinds of knowledge do or did you draw on in trying to accomplish your goals?

6. Have there been things your staff has needed to learn to accomplish the goals we were talking about earlier?
   a. How did they go about learning them?
   b. Are there specific structures for learning?
   c. How widespread is the learning?
   d. What kinds of materials did you use?
   e. What is your role in the learning?
   f. What kinds of learning take place not specifically related to the goals?

7. As a result of the teacher learning, have there been changes in teacher practice?
   a. To what extent have the changes occurred?
   b. Have the changes in teacher practice occurred due to reasons other than the new learning?

8. Can you describe the culture of your school?
   a. Is there anything about the culture that helped you accomplish your goals?
   b. What is your influence on the school culture?
   c. Who else influences the school culture?
   d. How do you think the culture of your school influences the capacity to learn?
   e. What bearing does the school culture have on the actual content of learning?
   f. Tell me about some of the important beliefs people share about how things are done here.

9. To what extent does the staff participate in decision-making in the school? What kinds of issues does the staff deal with?
   a. What are the forums for staff participation?
   b. Do you think the staff is satisfied with the level of participation?
   c. What is the composition of the various decision-making groups?
   d. How do you encourage staff participation?
   e. Do you think the kinds of decision-making structures in your school influence the kinds of learning that takes place?
   f. What kinds of things are learned in the decision-making groups?

10. Does your school ever engage in goal setting?
    a. How is it done?
    b. What is the impetus for goal setting?
    c. How do you facilitate goal setting?
    d. Once goals are set, how do you influence what your school does?
    e. Does anything having to do with goal setting or outcomes have a bearing on what you learn? Does it have a bearing on what the staff learns?

11. What are the resources that assist you and your staff in your professional learning?
    a. Are they sufficient?
    b. What do you do to make sure teachers have what they need to implement practices?
    c. What do you do to make sure your staff has the resources they need for professional learning?
    d. Who is responsible for making sure the resources are available?

12. Is there an overall vision for your school?
    a. What bearing does the vision have in the professional learning of the staff?
    b. What role do you play in developing the vision?
    c. Who else plays a part in developing the vision?

13. Can you think of an example of something you've learned primarily through initiatives by your district?

14. What impact does the district have on the professional learning of your staff?
    a. How does the district encourage professional learning?
    b. What forums does the district provide for learning?
    c. Give examples of specific learning activities provided by the district?
    d. How frequent are such activities?
    e. How helpful are these activities?

15. Who provides professional development from the district?

16. To what extent does the district engender a feeling of community among its schools?

17. Are there opportunities for you to collaborate with your colleagues in other schools within your district?

18. How would you describe the relationship between your school and the district office?

19. Do district priorities support professional learning within your school?

20. Are there any aspects of the district's culture that affect your school's professional learning?

21. Does the district do anything to facilitate information exchange among schools?

22. To what extent do schools within your district have input into district-level decision-making?

23. What can you tell me about the district's planning activities?

24. What influence, if any, do the planning activities have on you or your school?

25. What kind of resources does the district provide to support professional learning?

26. Does your district have an overall mission? Is the staff aware of this vision?

27. Is there anything about the relationship between your school and the local community that has a bearing on the professional learning of your staff?

28. What impact do the Ministry policies have on the professional learning of you and your staff?

1. About how many students are enrolled at your school?
2. How many teachers are there?
3. How many years of experience do you have as an educator? What roles did you have prior to becoming an administrator? How many years have you been a principal?

Appendix K: Literature Support of the Constructs

Literature Summary

Construct	Implied by the Literature	Verified by the Literature
Accountability	Adams, J.E. and Kirst, M.W. (1999) Wagner, R. (1987)	Elmore, R.F., Ableman, C. and Fuhrman, S.H. (1996) Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998) Pittman, T.S. (1998)
Student Achievement	Guskey, T. (2000) Murphy, J. (1994)	Blase, J. and Blase, J. (1999);Dietz, M. E. (1995); Hawley, W. and Valli, L. (1999); Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1995); Newmann, F. and Wehlage, G. (1995); Pace, A. and Leibert, R. (1987); Roberts, L. and Wilson, M. (1998); Smylie, M. A., Lazarus, V., and Brownlee-Conyers, J. (1996); Warren, J. (1982)
School Reform	Dufour R. and Eaker R. (1998) Hawley, W. and Valli, L. (1999) Knapp. M. and Ferguson, M. (1998) Peterson, K. and Deal, T. (1998)	Elmore, R. (2000); Elmore, R.F., Ableman, C. and Fuhrman, S.H. (1996); Marsh, D (2000); Ogawa, R., Crowson, R. and Goldring, E. (1999)
Professional Development	Alexander, P.A. and Murphy, PK. (1998); Darling-Hammond, L. (1996) Guskey, T. (2000); Guskey, T. and Peterson, K. (1996); Hawley, W. and Valli, L. (1999); Leiberman, A. and Miller, L. (2002)	Ball, D. L. and Cohen, D. K. (1999); Dunne, F. and Honts, F. (1998); Hamilton, M. L. and Richardson, V. (1995); Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1995); Roberts, L. and Wilson, M. (1998); Sparks, G. M. and Simmons, J. (1989)
Reasoning	Sparks-Lanager, G. and Colton, A. (1991)	Dunne, Faith and Honts, Frank (1998); Rentel, V. and Pinnell, G.S. (1989)
Reflection	Ball, D. L. and Cohen, D. K. (1999); Killion, J. and Todnem, G. (1991); Kinchloe, J., Slattery, P. and Steinberg, S. (2000); Reagan, T., Case, C. and Brubacher, J. (2000); Sparks-Lanager, G. and Colton, A. (1991)	Alexander, P.A. and Murphy, PK. (1998); Dunne, F. and Honts, F. (1998); Louis, K. S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S. (1996); Rentel, V. and Pinnell, G.S. (1989); Roberts, L. and Wilson, M. (1998); Zeichner, K. M. and Tabachink, B. R. (1991)
Collaboration	Guskey, T. and Peterson, K. (1996)	Barott, J. and Raybould, R. (1998); Dunne, F. and Honts, F. (1998); Evans-Stout, K. (1998) Hart, A. W. (1998); Johnson, B. (1998) Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1995); Little, J.W. (2002); Louis, K. S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S. (1996); Newmann, F. and Wehlage, G. (1995) Pounder, D. (1998); Roberts, L. and Wilson, M. (1998)

Organizational Learning	Argyris, C. (1996); Dufour R. and Eaker R. (1998); Edmonson. A. and Moingeon, B. (1996); Hawley, W. and Valli, L. (1999); Leiberman, A. and Miller, L. (2002); Leithwood, K. & Aikens, R. (1995); Senge, P. (1990)	Leithwood, K. and Louis, K. S. (1998) Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998) Mitchell, C. and Sackney, L. (1998)
Learning Community	Sergiovanni. T. J. (1994)	Bryk, A. S. and Driscoll, M. (1988); Hawley, W. and Valli, L. (1999); Leibermann, A. (1988); Leithwood, K. and Louis, K. S. (1998); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998); Louis, K. S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S. (1996); Mitchell, C. and Sackney, L. (1998);
Vision and Mission	Dufour R. and Eaker R. (1998) Sergiovanni. T. J. (1994)	Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1995); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998); Westheimer, J. (1999)
Culture	Fullan, M.G. (1993) Guskey, T. and Peterson, K. (1996) Murphy, J. (1991) Sergiovanni. T. J. (1994)	Dunne, F. and Honts, F. (1998); Hart, A. W. (1998); Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1995); Leibermann, A. (1988); Leithwood, K. and Louis, K. S. (1998); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998); Louis, K. S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S. (1996); Mohrman, S. (1994); Peterson, K. and Deal, T. (1998); Zeichner, K. M. and Tabachink, B. R. (1991)
Structure		Elmore, R. (2000); Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1995); Leibermann, A. (1988); Leithwood, K. and Louis, K. S. (1998); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998); Little, J. W. (1990); McLaughlin, M. W. (1993); Mohrman, S. (1994); Mortimore, P. (1994); Peterson, K. and Deal, T. (1998); Smylie, M. A., Lazarus, V., and Brownlee-Conyers, J. (1996); Stoll, L. and Fink, D. (1996); West, M. (2000); Westheimer, J. (1999)
Strategies		Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (1995); Leibermann, A. (1988); Leithwood, K. and Louis, K. S. (1998); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998); Little, J. W. (1990); Westheimer, J. (1999)

Principal's Role		Blase, J. and Blase, J. (1999); Elmore, R.F., Ableman, C. and Fuhrman, S.H. (1996); Hallinger, P. and Heck, R. H. (1996) ; Hallinger, P., Leithwood, K., and Murphy, J. (Eds.) (1993); Leithwood, K. and Louis, K. S. (1998); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998); Lezotte, L. (1997); Mortimore, P. (1994); Murphy, J. (1994); Ogawa, R., Crowson, R. and Goldring, E. (1999); Peterson, K. and Deal, T. (1998) Reynolds, D., Sammons, P., Stoll, L., Barber, M. and Hillman, J. (1996); Rosenblum, S., Louis, K. S., and Rossmiller, R. (1994); Schreens, J. (1997); Smylie, M. A. and Hart, A. W. (1999)
Leadership	Murphy, J. (1991)	Crow, G. (1998); Elmore, R. (2000); Hallinger, P. and Heck, R. H. (1996); Halliger, P., Leithwood, K., and Murphy, J. (Eds.) (1993); Leithwood, K. (2002); Leithwood, K. and Louis, K. S. (1998); Leithwood, K. and Steinbach, R. (1995); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, (1998); Mortimore, P. (1994); Reynolds, D., Sammons, P., Stoll, L., Barber, M. and Hillman, J. (1996); Rosenblum, S., Louis, K. S., and Rossmiller, R. (1994); Schreens, J. (1997); West, M. (2000)
Problem-solving	Kennedy, M. (1987)	Brown, J., Collins, A. and Duguid, P (1984); Goodell, J., Parker, L., and Kahle, J.B. (2000); Leinhardt, G. (1992); Leithwood, K. (2002) Leithwood, K. and Steinbach, R. (1995); Schwenk, A. (1988); Sparks, G. M. and Simmons, J. (1989)

Appendix L: Sources of Constructs by Instrument

Sources of Constructs for the Guiding Conceptual Framework by Instrument

Indicator	Conditions Affecting Professional Learning (1994)	Leadership Survey (1997)	Question-naire (1994)	Other Sources
District Effects				
The district provides substantial opportunity for professional learning.	X			
Our district has a clear vision related to improving instruction.	X			
The decision-making process in our district provides for input from schools.	X			
Schools in our district work in isolation.	X			
Our district provides a substantial amount of release time for professional learning.	X			
Teachers within the district are expected to share expertise.	X			
The district sets reasonable expectations for initiatives to be undertaken.	X			
District policies inhibit risk-taking.	X			
Our district provides expert personnel to help with professional learning.	X			
Our district provides appropriate material to help with professional learning.	X			

Our district provides sufficient resources to help with professional learning.	X			
Can you think of something you've learned through initiatives by your district?			X	
What impact does your district have on the professional learning of your staff?			X	
To what extent does the district engender feelings of community among the schools?			X	
Mission and Vision				
Our school has a clear vision to improving programs and instruction	X			
Our school has a clear vision understood by the entire staff.	X			
Our school goals are helpful in screening initiatives generated from outside the school.	X			
Our school goals reinforce the maintenance of the status quo.	X			
Our school strikes the right balance between attempting too much or too little change.	X			
The principal fostering the development of a vision and goals		X		
What have you been trying to accomplish that involves other people in your school?			X	

Is there an overall vision for your school understood or shared by most of the staff?			X	
Culture				
Teachers are hesitant to ask colleagues for help.	X			
The culture of our school is characterized by a creative tension.	X			
Teachers are expected to share their work with colleagues.	X			
Teachers mostly work in isolation.	X			
Most colleagues share a similar set of values.	X			

Discussions about new programs include the how and why teachers would implement the new program.	X			
Teachers are not penalized for making mistakes in their initial efforts to improve practice.	X			
The potential for negative consequences inhibits teacher risk-taking.	X			
The principal symbolizes good professional practice.		X		
The principal holds high performance expectations.		X		
The principal provides intellectual stimulation.		X		
Can you describe the culture in your school?			X	
There is a high level of trust in the school among the staff.				Mitchell and Sackney, 1998 Dunne and Honts, 1998.
Administrative support.				Dunne and Honts, 1998.
Belief in the high purpose of education.				Joyce and Showers, 1995 Brooks, 2000

Reflection				Alexander, P.A. and Murphy, PK. (1998) Dunne, Faith and Honts, Frank (1998) Louis, K. S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S. (1996) Rentel, V. and Pinnell, G.S. (1989) Roberts, L. and Wilson, M. (1998) Zeichner, K. M. and Tabachink, B. R. (1991)
Structures				
The school leaders make the most important decisions in our school.	X			
The organization of our school facilitates team work.	X			
We have access to expert professional staff.	X			
Our school's vision fosters commitment to continuous learning by the staff.	X			
Leadership in our school comes from people with formal administrative roles.	X			
Teachers take leadership responsibilities.	X			
Teachers have opportunities to be involved in decision-making processes.	X			

Teachers work in teams across grade levels.	X			
Time tables reinforce isolation.	X			
In our school we work towards consensus.	X			
The principal develops collaborative decision-making structures.		X		
To what extent do staff participate in decision-making in the school?			X	Joyce and Showers, 1995
Strategies				
Our school goals encourage continuous improvement.	X			
Teachers are encouraged to develop action plans for improving instruction.	X			
Our school has a process for developing priorities.	X			
Teachers have access to financial resources to facilitate professional learning.	X			
Teachers have appropriate materials to assist in professional development.	X			
Teachers are expected to develop innovative practices without adequate personnel and material support.	X			
Teachers have adequate release time to meet with colleagues.	X			
Teachers keep written records of what they learn when implementing new programs for future reference.	X			

Appropriate personnel are available to assist in implementing new programs.	X			
We increase our chance of success by setting school goals that focus our efforts on manageable changes.	X			
The principal provides individualized support.		X		
Does your school engage in goal setting?			X	
Leadership				
Symbolizes good professional practice		X		
Shows respect for the staff.		X		
Sets a respectful tone.		X		
Demonstrates a willingness to change own practices in the light of new understanding.		X		
Models problem-solving techniques.		X		
Promotes an atmosphere of caring.		X		
Symbolized success and accomplishment.		X		
What obstacles have you faced.			X	
How did you handle the obstacles?			X	
Developing Collaborative Decision-making Structures		X		
Delegates leadership.		X		
Distributes leadership broadly.		X		
Ensures adequate involvement in decision-making.		X		

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Supports effective committee structures for decision-making.		X	
Facilitates effective communication.		X	
Provides an appropriate level of autonomy.		X	
Provides individualized support		X	
Takes teacher opinions into consideration.		X	
Is aware of the unique needs of teachers.		X	
Is inclusive and does not show favoritism.		X	
Provides moral support.		X	
Provides Intellectual Stimulation		X	
Is a source of new ideas for professional learning.		X	
Stimulates me to think.		X	
Encourages me to pursue my own goals.		X	
Encourages me to develop professional goals.		X	
Encourages me to evaluate my own practice.		X	
Encourages me to try new practices.		X	
Facilitates opportunities to learn from each other.		X	
Holding high performance expectations		X	
Has high expectations for us as professionals.		X	
Holds high expectations for students.		X	
Expects us to be effective innovators.		X	
Fostering development of vision and goals		X	

Gives a sense of overall purpose.		X	
Helps clarify the practical implications of the school's mission.		X	
Communicates the school mission to staff and students.		X	
Encourages the development of school norms.		X	
Helps us top understand the relationship between the school's mission and the district's initiatives.		X	
Works towards hold staff consensus for school goals.		X	

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