

SCHOOL REFORM IN A HIGH POVERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A GROUNDED
THEORY CASE STUDY OF CAPACITY BUILDING

By

STEPHANIE LYNN DODMAN

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2011

© 2011 Stephanie L. Dodman

To my family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation represents more than just the culmination of a doctoral program. It represents a beginning. During the past five years, I have experienced the ups and downs of being a student again, the pitfalls of wanting to change the world quickly, the exhaustion of enormous personal loss, and the amazing light of personal happiness. I have been humbled and battered, praised and exalted. I have felt the sting of rejection and the comfort of acceptance. After these five years, my life will never be the same. Something new is beginning.

I thank Joe for never giving up on me during the dark times of this process, no matter how snarky I was. Thank you for always being there to reassure me when I doubted that I was on the right path. I am so lucky to have you in my corner and my heart for the rest of my life. I thank my mom, Fran, and my dad, Bob, who have supported me at every twist without question and without judgment. Thank you for having so much faith in me. It has made all the difference in my life; it has enabled me to be sitting here writing this today. I thank my sister, Jennifer, who unknowingly has been inspiration to me. You were the reason I became a special education teacher, so in a sense, you set me on this journey. I thank Jacob and Jeremy, not because you helped me get through this dissertation, but just because you are awesome. I thank Edna and Tiny and Frances and W.L. Without you as my grandparents, I would have been a completely a different person. I carry you with me each day. I thank Mount Vernon Elementary School that gave me my foundation to do the work I do. I thank every student that I ever had. Thank you for challenging me and forcing me to question the opportunities we provided you. I thank Dorene Ross. I do not think anyone has ever had a more supportive advisor. Your mentorship has been astounding. You continually

raised the bar for me, and I am a tremendously better researcher and teacher because of it. I thank my committee members who are the most amazing group of scholars and people. Alyson Adams, Buffy Bondy, and James McLeskey, your guidance has been without parallel and your work has inspired me. The opportunities that I have had because of you, have prepared me so well for this new beginning. Finally, I thank Gateway Elementary. Without your acceptance, candor, and strength this study would never have been done. You are the reason that I have hope and the reason that I will continue on tomorrow in this field.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>page</u>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	9
LIST OF FIGURES.....	10
ABSTRACT	11
CHAPTER	
1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	13
Purpose of the Study	17
Significance of the Study	18
Definition Of Terms.....	20
Organization of the Study	21
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	23
Introduction	23
A Brief History of School Change	24
Capacity Building	28
The Challenge of Change and the Need for Capacity	29
Dynamics of Internal Capacity	32
Teacher Instructional Practice	33
Teacher Learning and Leadership.....	37
School Climate and Professional Community.....	44
School Structures	47
Principal Leadership	54
Studies of Whole-School Capacity Building and Change.....	57
Conclusion	70
3 METHODOLOGY	74
Introduction	74
Theoretical Perspective	75
Research Design	77
Case Study Rationale.....	77
Site Selection	78
Site Description	79
Participants and Data Collection	82
Data Analysis	86
Researcher Role and Credibility.....	90
Summary	92

4	THEN AND NOW	94
	Introduction	94
	The Cultural Context: A History	96
	An Administration Absent: A Latchkey Faculty	96
	A Faculty with Untapped Potential.....	99
	The Catalyst for Transformation	100
	Now.....	101
	Continuous Innovation.....	101
	Reliance on and Belief in the Use of Data.....	103
	Collective Responsibility.....	104
	Conclusion	106
5	THE PROCESSES OF CHANGE	108
	Introduction	108
	Taking Immediate Action	110
	Mobilizing Leaders	110
	Becoming Instructionally Embedded	111
	Immediately Attending to Teachers to Build Trust.....	112
	Pulling Back the Curtain to Reveal Urgency and Extend Invitation	114
	Valuing and Empowering the Teachers' Voices.....	116
	Soliciting Input.....	117
	Invoking Elements of Team Strength (Leader vs. Ruler).....	120
	Encouraging Independent Problem Solving	121
	Changing Pedagogy	123
	Aligning School Practices with District Expectations	124
	Holding High Expectations and Acting Accordingly	124
	Becoming Data Centered.....	127
	Targeting Essential Areas with Resources School-wide	129
	Creating Structures to Systematize Processes.....	130
	Immediate and Strategic Action (Ready, Fire, Aim).....	130
	Strategically Using Resources.....	133
	Formalizing Processes	136
	Negotiating External Initiatives.....	139
	Conclusion	145
6	DISCUSSION	147
	Review of the Study.....	147
	Discussion of Findings.....	150
	Theoretical Assertion 1: Building Capacity in a School is a Complex Interplay of Actions that Are Influenced by Contextual Conditions.	151
	Theoretical Assertion 2: Capacity Building Is Dependent on the Principal's Actions; Because those Actions are a Necessary but Not Sufficient Condition for Change, Change Should Be Informed by Collective Professional Development in Capacity Building.	153

Theoretical Assertion 3: The Potential Effects of External Policies and Intended Supports Are Mediated by the School's Internal Characteristics..	154
Implications.....	156
For Future Research	156
For Teacher Education And Professional Development.....	158
For Education Policy	160
Conclusion	161

APPENDIX

A GATEWAY AND PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS.....	162
B INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	166
C REFLEXIVITY STATEMENT AND LOG	168
REFERENCES.....	171
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	185

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>page</u>
3-1	Overview of Gateway's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and student demographic history	81
6-1	Summary of findings.....	151
A-1	Achievement data by entire school.....	162
A-2	Student demographic and attendance data.....	163
A-3	Teacher education and experience	164
A-4	Staff movement by year.....	165
C-1	Researcher's log.....	170

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>page</u>
2-1 Dynamics of school capacity	73
3-1 The employed grounded theory process	90
5-1 The processes of change in Gateway	109

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

SCHOOL REFORM IN A HIGH POVERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A GROUNDED
THEORY CASE STUDY OF CAPACITY BUILDING

By

Stephanie L. Dodman

August 2011

Chair: Dorene Ross
Cochair: Alyson Adams
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

There is a persistent and significant gap in the achievement of students who attend high-poverty schools and those who attend low-poverty schools. Students in high-poverty schools, the majority of whom are African American and Hispanic, are not achieving the same levels of academic success as their low-poverty or White counterparts. Retention rates, graduation rates, and standardized test scores demonstrate a vicious cycle of reproduction by race and economics. Despite decades of reform efforts purporting to address this issue, little has changed for the better in the equitable education of students. Internal conditions often hinder the success of many high-poverty schools, including high teacher and administrative turnover, an excuse-driven culture, and ineffective operations. In our current policy context, schools are held accountable for their students' progress yet given little guidance regarding how to improve when such internal obstacles are present. As a result, failing schools remain failing and almost all of them are high-poverty schools.

School reform relies on the internal ability of schools to respond to changing students and changing demands, but study of how whole-school capacity is

strengthened for demonstrated student achievement is still only limitedly available. This study examines this issue and addresses this gap through a case study of successful internal reform in one high-poverty elementary school. Grounded theory methods of data collection and analysis were used to retrospectively examine this school's changes over time. Research questions focused on the what, how, and why of the changes to develop an explanatory theory of internal school reform.

Findings indicated that the previous context of the school was hostile, instructionally complacent, and stagnant. With the entrance of a new principal, the school engaged in five processes of change that strengthened their internal capacity: taking immediate action, valuing and empowering teachers' voices, changing pedagogy, creating structures to systematize processes, and negotiating external initiatives. These processes together resulted in a transformed culture of collective responsibility, pervasive use of data, and continuous innovation, as well as school-wide achievement. The five processes are described and paired with several theoretical assertions regarding internal school change.

CHAPTER 1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Public schools in the United States are failing their students. When the Coleman Report was released in 1966, this was a contentious argument (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Today, this is a fact that few would credibly dispute. Publications such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983), *Savage Inequalities* (Kozol, 1992), and *Class and Schools* (Rothstein, 2004), highlight the disparity existing in the educational opportunities for different groups of students. The story that school works very well for those who fit a certain class type and not as well for others is realized in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores that consistently demonstrate inequitable achievement by race and income. It is also realized in schools where the least qualified teachers are teaching the most educationally fragile students. Groups of students are being consistently failed by their schools, particularly when educationally fragile students comprise the majority of the student population (Haycock, 2001).

When students are failed in elementary school, their later educational success and their social and economic attainment in life is compromised. This is evident when examining educational statistics such as grade retention and later high school graduation rates. Nationally, the percentage of Black students retained in kindergarten through eighth grade is 16%, as compared to 11% of Hispanic students, and 8% of White students (Planty, et al., 2009). Pair this with a national dropout rate that for Hispanic students is four times higher than that of White students and three times higher than that of Black students (Planty, et al., 2009). Studies have consistently demonstrated that dropping out of school is a “a process of progressive academic disengagement that often traces back to children’s earliest experiences at school”

(Alexander, Entwisle, & Kabbani, 2001, p. 763), experiences that include consistent academic difficulties and depressed instructional engagement levels (Finn, 1989; Finn & Rock, 1997; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2007).

Additionally, when poverty levels increase in an elementary school by twenty-five percent, reading and math achievement scores decrease by approximately thirteen points (Planty, et al., 2009). Nationally, approximately 20% of all elementary students attend high-poverty schools, with Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and English Language students enrolled in disproportionate numbers (Aud, et al., 2010). It cannot be forgotten that there are many social and economic factors influencing achievement and educational attainment phenomena and schools are just one institution (Rothstein, 2004), but they are a highly influential one- one that can either serve to further perpetuate social and educational stratification or promote educational equity (Erickson, 1987).

We know that individual teachers are vital to student success (see Darling-Hammond, 1999; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997), and this importance is not to be underestimated. When there is pervasive underachievement in an entire school, however, the issue moves beyond individual classroom walls. Pockets of effective teaching in a school are not enough. Students, especially educationally fragile students, need a quality education every year- they cannot afford the consequences of sporadic quality in teaching and learning (Sanders and Rivers, 1996). The simple answer to this would be to only staff the school with teachers who are documented as being highly effective. But as is common, the simple answer is far more complex than it seems. Schools that are struggling in student achievement are typically

not the most attractive to well established teachers (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008; Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006) and a cycle of staff instability and poor student achievement is a difficult one to break. This leaves large percentages of students being repeatedly failed by their school each year, and thus a cycle of social reproduction is perpetuated that maintains academic stratification by race, income, and perceived disability. This cycle can only end when the current context of schools begins to be questioned and subsequently changed.

Changing the context of schools for the improved achievement of all students is not an easy task. High teacher and administrator turnover, low faculty and student morale, ineffective and inefficient systems of operation, and a culture of excuses often characterize schools that are consistently challenged by student achievement (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Ingersoll, 2004). Transforming such a passive context into an active center of hope and motivation means engaging an entire school in contextual cultural change (Payne, 2008).

The school change process, like any organizational change process, is complicated and deceptively multidimensional (Fullan, 2007). In fact, this process is so complex that school reform efforts have come to be referred to as a “predictable failure” (Sarason, 1990). In addition to the issues plaguing struggling schools as noted above, change within the current contexts of teaching is hampered by an intensification of responsibilities, lack of administrative leaders who are prepared for change, lack of knowledge and skills regarding how to change, and lack of firm commitment to reform

initiatives by those involved (Nolan & Meister, 2000). As posited by reform leaders such as Fullan, the current conditions for reform need to change.

The answer to large-scale reform is not to try to emulate the characteristics of the minority who are getting somewhere under present conditions; if the conditions stay the same, we will always have only a minority who can persist (for short periods of time) against many odds. Rather, we must change existing conditions so that it is normal and possible for a majority of people to move forward. (Fullan, 2007, p. 301)

This transformation of conditions necessary for real change means that school capacity must be cultivated so that those within the school can withstand, adapt to, and own meaningful improvement. If a school has indeed engaged in successful reform resulting in higher student achievement for all students, the administration and teachers within the school will have changed not just their structures, but their very school culture (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 1994), and doing so will have interrupted the status quo by redefining the existing conditions.

Hargreaves (1994) stated that “[the successful development of collaboration and collegiality] is viewed as essential to the effective delivery of reforms that are mandated at national or local levels...collaboration and collegiality have become the keys to educational change” (pp. 188-189). Hargreaves made a key distinction between contrived collegiality founded on mandates and rigid procedures in order to implement an external change and true collaboration that “evolve[s] from and [is] sustained through the teaching community itself” (p. 192). This distinction means that to sustain change, there must be movement beyond just structural solutions (restructuring) to school reculturing (Hargreaves, 1994; Wilhelm, 2009) where administrators are no longer framed as “the decision makers of greatest consequence” and where teachers are no longer “cast primarily as targets of policies” (Little & McLaughlin, 1993, p. 79).

This transformation of school culture deemed necessary for meaningful school change relies on the development of capacity within a school. Much school reform research has long called for schools to reconsider externally imposed reform initiatives that are implemented without work on the ground to facilitate effective change. Rather, it is argued that through “developing the capacity of schools and teachers to be responsible for student learning and responsive to student and community needs, interests, and concerns” (Darling-Hammond, 1993) that the potential can be developed for school improvement.

If we accept that the potential for this improvement lies not in mere structural solutions but in cultural transformation, then capacity for change is intrinsically tied to a school’s culture. Studying how high-needs schools successfully build their capacity for change by engaging in reculturing, which breaks a cycle of student and teacher failure, has become vital. The current study is, in fact, designed to do just that— study a high-needs school reported to have successfully engaged in school reform that transformed their culture and improved their student achievement. Doing so will help to deepen our understanding of how a high-needs school can engage in meaningful school-based reform that offers all students equitable opportunities for achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this grounded theory case study was to analyze the internal school change process in a high-poverty school that experienced marked improvement in student achievement. By describing how and why the school changed from the perspectives of the stakeholders, a story of change is told and a theory of reform constructed. To examine how this school engaged in transformation, the following broad research questions were explored: 1) What are the changes that this school has

experienced? 2) How did this school experience the changes? and 3) Why did this school engage in the changes that it did?

These research questions were addressed in an instrumental case study (Stake, 2005) of a Title I elementary school that successfully improved. As an instrumental case study, which uses a case to provide insight into an external interest, this research was designed to investigate the larger issue of successful school reform. This topic was explored through the in-depth study of one particular school in one particular context utilizing constructionist grounded theory methods. The hope was that this school would be instrumental to understanding the particulars of how a high-needs school can transform, what elements interrelate to effect substantial changes, and how the stakeholders themselves effect these changes.

Significance of the Study

School reform approaches are being reconceptualized from foundational orientations of deficit-fixing to renewal orientations of capacity-creating (Giles, 2008). The development of internal school capacity, not for compliance, but for sustaining self-renewal, is being argued as the key means of transforming schools into improved vehicles for student success (Giles, 2008). Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) models, as externally designed reform programs, are losing steam. CSR models are also losing federal dollars due to a costly and heavy reliance on implementation fidelity, without which improved achievement outcomes are uncertain (Gross, Booker, & Goldhaber, 2009). Rather, as Lambert (1998) argues, recreating schools as learning organizations where stakeholders “assume internal responsibility for reform and maintain momentum for self-renewal” (p. 3) is the necessary means for improvement— a

means that is essential to developing the capacity necessary to foster resiliency for sustained school changes and student achievement.

As schools seek to improve their capacity for change, many are looking toward collaboration and communities of practice, and many researchers support these structures as essential. Collaboration and critical practices that truly challenge the status quo of a school's operational systems do not just happen, however. If research has shown us anything about change it is that capacity does not develop due to the implementation of structural conditions alone. It takes a transformation of the school's culture (Copland, 2003). What research has not done though is provide enough attention to how to actually succeed in reculturing as a part of capacity building (Harris, 2001). More intentional examination of "how collaborative practices in schools are fostered and developed" (p. 262) would add to our understanding of the internal capacity necessary for change.

Reform efforts designed to increase student achievement in low performing schools must negotiate the interplay of many concomitant factors, both school level and beyond. Factors such as staff commitment and skill, school leadership, district and state structures and policies, and complexity of the reform have all been noted to affect the capacity of schools to effectively and consistently implement a whole school reform model (Fullan, 2007). This research will contribute to the school reform literature by examining how one high needs school successfully developed their capacity for change and engaged in a transformation of teaching and learning.

The school in this study was selected due to its potential to offer a key case of successful high-needs school reform. It was identified by stakeholders as experiencing

a transformation, led by teachers and administration, rather than resulting from externally imposed programs. Stakeholders preliminarily indicated that a series of interrelated factors influenced not only strong positive change in professionalization and school health, but substantially affected student achievement. During the 2008-2009 school year, the school achieved a grade of an A with all student subgroups meeting Adequate Yearly Progress criteria in both reading and math for the first time¹.

Because school change is a socially complex process, which no two schools experience the same way, more in depth study is needed in order to understand how the broad array of confounding factors can contribute to success in challenging school contexts. As this school is studied, the grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis will enable a theory of change to be constructed for this context which will deepen our understanding of what is possible and how it can be attained.

Definition Of Terms

- **CAPACITY BUILDING.** “creating the conditions, opportunities and experiences for collaboration and mutual learning” (Harris, 2001)
- **CULTURE.** The taken-for-granted beliefs and assumptions that give meaning to people’s everyday actions and interactions (Deal and Peterson, 1990).
- **HIGH-NEEDS SCHOOL.** Public school where 75% or more of students live in poverty and where a large percentage of students are documented as struggling in achievement. The student population may also consist majorly of Black, Hispanic, English Language Learners, or students with disabilities.
- **HIGH POVERTY SCHOOL.** Public school where more than 75% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch. This definition aligns with that of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

¹ The school met AYP for all student subgroups in reading and math in the 2003-2004 school year. However, in 2005, the Department of Education amended its criteria for AYP by increasing the indicators from 30 to 39. Using the new AYP criteria, the school has only met AYP for all student subgroups once, which was for the 2008-2009 school year. Therefore, the school is referred to as having never met AYP before 2008-2009.

- **RECULTURING.** When a school undergoes massive internal changes by transforming the beliefs and assumptions of its members to affect how they think and act regarding teaching and learning. In reculturing, “change is brought about by acting on and supporting the culture itself so that teachers are more able to make change as a community in the interests of the students they know best” (Hargreaves, 1994).
- **RESTRUCTURING.** When current school structures undergo changes with the intent of improving operational aspects of a school with an ultimate goal of improving student achievement. This may include changes to policies, procedures, schedules, curriculum, etc. (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 1994).
- **TITLE I SCHOOLS.** “Title I” is a commonly used term designating schools that enroll large percentages of students from low-income families. Title I of the Education and Secondary Education Act of 1965 is targeted at improving the academic achievement of disadvantaged students. Schools that enroll at least 40% of students from low income families are eligible to use Title I funds for school-wide programs.

Organization of the Study

The study is divided into six chapters. This chapter, Chapter 1, described the current situation of educational reform in the United States and established the need for the current study. The second chapter details the relevant research related to capacity building for school improvement, a broad area of the literature that was revealed as significant from the study’s findings. The purpose of Chapter 2 is to situate the study in a broader literature context and reveal the gaps that this study’s findings fill. The third chapter explains the research methodology that led to my findings. Chapters 4 and 5 describe those findings. Chapter 4 details the context of the case study school before and after transformation, while Chapter 5 addresses the processes of change that affected that transformation. Finally, Chapter 6 is a discussion of the explanatory theory of school capacity building and its implications for research and practice. This study is the story of what happened within this particular school, why it happened, and how it happened, but examination of the school’s individual changes is not the sole purpose of

this research. This school's story is used for the grander purpose of constructing a theory of change in high-poverty, low performing schools. That theory depends on the intricacies of context and how people make sense of their world. For this reason, the school's changes were critically analyzed from the perspectives of participants but then reconstructed into a broader theory of reform.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze the internal school change process in a high-poverty school that experienced marked improvement in student achievement. To build a foundation for understanding the importance of the study, this chapter synthesizes the literature related to school change, with a specific focus on organizational capacity. The intent is to situate the study within the relevant literature on school change while also highlighting gaps in the current research. This is a grounded theory single-school case study. As in many grounded theory studies, review of the literature was delayed in order to identify the salient focus from the data analysis process (Charmaz, 2006). Data analysis indicated the importance of organizational capacity for school change. This literature review contextualizes the findings by providing an overview of prior research in school change and the development of organizational capacity. The literature was reviewed using the following criteria for inclusion: 1) empirical studies were published in a peer-reviewed journal or agency report, or if published in a book provided a strong description of methodology, 2) empirical studies and literature reviews were published within the past 10 years, and 3) empirical studies directly examined some aspect of school-based change. Additionally, foundational work, both empirical and theoretical, was included if it helped to establish the historical context for the recent work or if the work was cited repeatedly in the literature.

All of the literature synthesized here concerns school based change. It is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief history of school change that tracks

the various movements of education reform over time. It highlights a disconnection that exists between public reform policy and school change research. The second section details what we know about school-level organizational capacity, provides a rationale for why it is important to school change, and identifies a model for capacity building that was built from the literature. Because the literature was reviewed after data analysis, the findings from this study also influenced the model. Finally, the third section focuses more intensely on recent qualitative case study research in school change. This section highlights the lack of rigorous research available regarding the internal changes of high-poverty, low achieving schools.

A Brief History of School Change

In her edited volume of the International Handbook of Educational Change, Lieberman (2004) traced the history of educational change throughout the decades beginning with the end of World War II. It is at this time, she and her fellow authors argued, that educational change became a true field of study. The effects of the GI Bill meant many more students needing preparation for a post-secondary education, which in turn meant a greater need for schools able to effectively prepare students for such a future. From this point on, the field of school change, or school reform, can be characterized by widespread trends that are perhaps best illustrated as “waves” in the literature and in public policy (Desimone, 2002). The first wave moved from the GI Bill to the Cold War. During this time, the pressure for change focused around preparing students for post-secondary education and for competition in a math and science dominated race to space. These changing emphases resulted in large-scale efforts to “reform” the curriculum of schools. The reform meant increased federal involvement in

schools and increased reliance on the imposition of external curricular programs and mandates.

During this first wave there was an increased emphasis on curricular “fixes” for schools; research during this time, however, made it clear that student success could not be programmed. The Coleman Report (Coleman, et al., 1966) made the assertion that schools mattered little in the academic achievement of students, and that families and society determined success. It became apparent that improving education for all students would require more than simply changing the curriculum. The events that followed could be characterized as the “second wave of school reform”. During this time, school change efforts shifted to focus on the creation of family, school, and community partnerships that could affect student educational success. There were also efforts to professionalize teaching and to strengthen teacher education (Desimone, 2002). This second wave also produced limited change in student achievement.

The next major reform wave involved looking more intensely at the teaching and learning that was occurring in schools. The third wave of reform (during the 1990s and first half of the 2000s) relied heavily on the development and implementation of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) models that targeted the curriculum and the instructional practices of the whole school. Phrases such “scientifically research based” and “measurable outcomes” gained footing in the common education vernacular. During this time, the federal government invested a great deal of money in CSR model implementation for Title I schools. Comprehensive School Reform models had to meet eleven criteria to receive federal funding for implementation at the school level. These included, among others, “uses proven strategies and methods for learning, teaching,

and school management based in scientifically based research and effective practices, and used successfully in multiple schools” and “uses high quality, external technical support and assistance from an experienced provider” (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2002). During this wave, the reform was not just focused on the “what” of curriculum as in the first wave, but now there was a pairing of “what” with “how” (Desimone, 2002; Fullan, 2000). CSR models offered top-down direction “in theory, [through] tangible and accessible support for school change rooted in research and literally packaged and delivered to each school” (Borman, Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003, p. 126). The third wave of reform was, as Fullan stated, “the return of large-scale reform” (p.8).

As with each prior wave, the third wave did not consistently result in widespread effects for student achievement, nor in school-level change over time (Datnow, 2005). Some programs did result in academic improvements for students (Datnow, Borman, Stringfield, Overman, & Castellano, 2003), however, these gains were uneven and dependent on a host of contextual factors (Rowan, Camburn, & Barnes, 2004). Among these factors were high site fidelity to implementation guidelines, number of years using the program, program match to the local policy context, and relationships between the CSR program developers and the schools and districts (Borman, et al., 2003; Correnti & Rowan, 2007; Datnow, 2005; Epstein, 2005). There were also concerns about the limited attention that CSR models paid to cultural and linguistic diversity (Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Datnow, et al., 2003). Wave three did not result in the consistent and pervasive effects on student achievement that were anticipated and as of this review,

the third wave of reform has arguably come to close. However, ripples from this wave are still impacting current education reform policy.

We are now in a time that might be characterized as Wave 3.5. The field has not transformed to wholly new emphases, as there is still explicit focus on measurable outcomes and research based instruction but the field is in a place seemingly different from the third wave of reform. Educational reform policy is now less dominated by the Comprehensive School Reform models seen at the core of the third wave and is now more focused on external accountability through an increased emphasis on competition and rewards. Teacher merit pay and the promotion of charter schools has turned the public's gaze to improving education through holding educators accountable for their job performance. Payne (2008) describes this as the "standards-based movement" predicated on the assumption is that if "states or localities set high standards for curricula; develop assessments that measure student performance against the standards; give schools flexibility to change curriculum, instruction, and organization; and hold schools strictly accountable for achievement, then achievement should rise" (p. 169).

Notable is that while schools experienced the aforementioned "waves" of reform, scholars have also engaged in a parallel line of research since the 1970s. This body of research looks beyond the surface application of external reforms to focus on how those reforms are implemented in schools. As external efforts in curriculum, family-school partnership, and Comprehensive School Reform each faltered in their intended effects, the school change research examines what is happening inside of schools. Examining the complex reality of teaching (Lortie, 1975), considering the school as an organization

(Sarason, 1971), and analyzing the characteristics of effective schools (Levine and Lezotte, 1995; Sammons, Hillman, & Mortimore, 1995; Zigarelli, 1996) moved the discourse of reform in academia from one focused on implementation to one heralding the need for building the capacity for change. This research documented that despite reform efforts, little change occurred at the classroom level (Fullan, 2000) and subsequently little change on any grander scale. Experiences in each wave made it clear that implementation of a reform was more than an event, it was a process (Miles, 2005); and more than that, it was a process dependent on its smallest unit (McLaughlin, 2005). This demonstrates that the operations of individual schools and classrooms are critical to reforming education. The next section focuses on the research in building internal school capacity.

Capacity Building

Capacity building is about strengthening schools to meet the demands of our changing world. Capacity is considered the ability to utilize and create resources and structures that will enable students to achieve socially and academically at high levels (Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Stoll, et al, 2006). Capacity is not about change for change's sake, as innovation just to innovate has been found to be negatively associated with achievement (Berends, Goldring, Stein, & Cravens, 2010); nor is it about having the facility to increase the basic skills of students for better test scores, although improved achievement is certainly the goal. Rather, capacity to adapt to the ebb and flow of educational needs means knowing at the school level how "to turn educational policy into constructive practice" (Lieberman and Miller, 2004, p. 13; Darling-Hammond, 1995) and knowing how to distinguish the constructive from the destructive (Fullan, 2007).

The capacity of a school is dependent on how well equipped its faculty is to recognize and adapt to their needs. The history of federal, state, and district level educational policy has been to mandate change *on* schools rather than focusing on how to affect what is happening *in* schools. The response of schools has been to treat such policy as an imposition. History has demonstrated how little changes in the actual work inside school walls, particularly through externally derived means. The waves of policy reform in public education to date are characterized by an assumption that if you build it, they will come; if you make it policy, it will happen (Fullan, 2007; Lieberman, 2005). Such an assumption discounts the already existing system into which changes must fit (Senge, 1994). It also discounts the actors who must do the fitting (Ball, 1997).

The Challenge of Change and the Need for Capacity

The process of implementing a change is, as Fink and Stoll (2005) wrote, “easier said than done” (p. 17). They argued that, “in spite of the convergence of powerful forces for change, schools appear remarkably untouched, and exhibit many structures, policies, and practices of years gone by” (p.18). With these structures, policies, and practices in place, mandating change does little to actually affect change (McLaughlin, 2005). In 1983, Baldrige asserted:

The response [to secure a desired change by those outside of schools] is often to require new procedures. In turn, the response of the schools frequently is to accept these new procedures without altering the procedures which already exist. The result is the proliferation of procedures and the appearance of change. But because the existing procedures are not altered, progress has not occurred. (p. 109)

Fink and Stoll discussed this phenomenon in terms of preserving the continuity of a system. For systems to sustain, they need some level of continuity. As schools are constantly bombarded with “change”, members in essence reject the change in order to

continue working in ways that make sense to them and maintain the continuity of their reality. Therefore, new procedures or programs may be implemented but not integrated into a teacher or school's core work. This marginal implementation preserves the system's continuity.

Richardson (1990) offered a complementary theory about why there is lack of change in schools. She explained it as an issue with lack of understanding, both on the part of schools as organizations and on the part of teachers. She described school practices, specifically teaching, to be activities embedded in theory. When those within the organization are asked to change their activity without being asked to examine their theoretical frameworks, it results in a type of deadlock where a change might be implemented but then immediately dropped because it does not fit into established ways of thinking. Richardson argued that change requires both a solid pairing between beliefs and activity and increased time to reflect on the theoretical frameworks of the organization and individuals. Without that opportunity, the status quo will prevail.

However, it is important to note that the status quo might be exactly what some schools need. Some schools already possess the ability to positively affect students academically and socially. Some schools may not need to integrate new ways of working into their school at a given time. Holmes (2005), for example, has criticized change literature as being contradictory and assumption driven. He argued that assuming a school's status quo to be inherently bad and any change good, flies in the face of the critical awareness that capacity reformers espouse as essential. Richardson (1990) and Rowan and Miller (2007) echoed this caveat. Therefore, an outcome of capacity building must be the ability to evaluate current work in terms of a specific

proposed change; integrate where it is necessary, and hold off where it is not (Mulford, 2010).

Building a school's capacity to critically evaluate its needs in terms of a theoretical framework while still preserving the system's continuity during change is a complex process that requires many changes in the context of the school as an organization. Lieberman and Miller (2004) have characterized these changes as "altering the social realities of teaching" (p. 10) by moving from individualism to professional community; from placing teaching at the center of schools to placing learning at the center of schools; from technical work to inquiry based work; from control to accountability; from managed teacher work to teacher leadership; and from a classroom focus to a whole school focus (Lieberman and Miller, 2004, p. 11; Miller, 2005). These "transformative shifts" would position schools as learning organizations. The development of schools as learning organizations is regarded as the goal of internal capacity building, with high student achievement being the desired outcome (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 2009).

Summarizing the literature presented here on the goals of capacity building, schools with strong capacities for effective teaching and learning are schools that:

- Can continually evaluate their status and needs in terms of a shared theoretical framework
- Can integrate policy into their work based on that continuous evaluation
- Focus on student learning outcomes and demonstrate high achievement for all student groups
- Recognize that students change, the world changes, and they as teachers and schools must change

Developing schools to be learning organizations that can engage in these activities requires understanding how schools are internally constructed as systems. Schools as systems inherently have a complex interplay of components. These components depend on and affect one another for the system to operate (Senge, 1994). The next section describes the elements of a school's capacity as derived from the literature. It also presents a model of the dynamics of school capacity.

Dynamics of Internal Capacity

The literature is replete with support for strong internal school capacity. In the field of reform, capacity is cited as essential for effectively responding to the demands of external policy and intervention (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Lieberman, 2005), for engaging in continuous professional learning that affects practice (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006), and for positively affecting student outcomes on a collective rather than individual level (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2001). The terms capacity for improvement and capacity for change are used interchangeably in the literature to represent "the complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organizational conditions, culture, and infrastructure of support" (Stoll, et al., 2006, p. 221) that enable student learning. Capacity is how schools adapt to the chaos that is society and define themselves as living organizations engaged in relentless evaluation of their work (Hannay, Erb, & Ross, 2001).

But what comprises a school's capacity to respond to the changing demands of society and education? What elements of a school's internal work affect how it can "turn policy into constructive practice" and evaluate when and what change is needed? From a review of the literature in school change and from the findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 of this study, five internal elements of school organization seem to contribute to

a school's capacity. They are teacher instructional practice, teacher learning and leadership, school structures, school climate and professional community, and principal leadership. The dynamic interplay of these elements is shown in Figure 2-1 located at the end of this chapter. Principal leadership is positioned as the foundation or guiding force for all other elements. The other four elements affect one another reciprocally, and all five influence teachers' instructional practices. The model additionally indicates that these five elements together not only create the school's capacity for addressing need but also create the school's culture. Culture, or the way of doing business, is inextricably aligned with a school's capacity.

The following six sections present a synthesis of reviewed literature related to teacher instructional practice, teacher learning and leadership, school structures, school climate and professional community, and principal leadership. Each section begins with an overview of its theoretical underpinnings, and then synthesizes the empirical research supporting its place in school capacity. A final section summarizing the literature is presented at the end of the chapter. Although this model of school capacity is drawn from both the literature and this study, only the literature is presented here. Chapter 6 offers a discussion that synthesizes the findings with the literature.

Teacher Instructional Practice

Instructional practice is portrayed as the core of a school's capacity since "teachers have the most direct, sustained contact with students as well as considerable control over what is taught and the climate for learning" (King & Newmann, 2001, p. 86). Presented in this section is literature related to instructional practice. This literature demonstrates that instructional practice is both an element of capacity and a goal of capacity building efforts.

Historically, school reform efforts seek to address classroom instruction by providing curriculum or professional development aimed at improving teachers' actions in some way. These efforts tend to treat instruction as insular, affected only by the teacher doing the teaching, and removed from the larger system of which it is a part (Cohen & Ball, 1999). Guskey's (1986, 2002) teacher learning and instructional practice theory exemplifies this treatment. Drawing from the literature, Guskey posited that change in practice is a more or less linear and independent process between an individual teacher and his or her practice. The essence of Guskey's argument is that changes in practice and subsequent student learning outcomes have to come before significant changes in teachers' attitudes and beliefs. Teachers have to try something new and see a difference before their belief about it will change; individual attitudes and beliefs then are positioned as the foundation for sustained change. Although Guskey admitted that the model "in some ways...overly simplifies a highly complex process" (p. 385), as is demonstrated below, it moreover discounts a larger social world that affects teacher actions and beliefs.

We know attitudes and beliefs play an important and complicated role in instruction. Pajares' (1992) comprehensive review of the connection between beliefs and behavior in educational research presented sixteen conclusions regarding the nature of our beliefs. Each conclusion was supported by both research and theory. Among them were the findings that beliefs strongly affect behavior, that beliefs are part of a system that is inextricably intertwined with knowledge, that the belief system helps individuals to define and understand their world, that beliefs are culturally transmitted, and that the longer a belief is held the harder it is to change (p. 324-325). The

instructional practice literature since Pajares' review continues to support his conclusions. Scholars are consistent on this point: beliefs and attitudes about self, students, and instruction are connected to practice and change (see for example, Aguirre & Speer, 1999; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991; Smylie, 1988; Stipek, Givvin, Salmon, MacGyvers, 2001; Wilkins, 2008). The literature also provides evidence that changes to one's practice depend on more than an individual teacher's beliefs and attitudes. Geijsel, Slegers, van den Berg, and Kelchtermans (2001), for example, found that teachers participating in a Dutch reform initiative agreed with the principles of the reform much more than they enacted them. Geijsel, et al. used survey data from two studies of a large-scale education innovation in 14 agricultural training centers for a total of 1,249 teacher participants. Using structural equation modeling, they analyzed for the conditions that fostered implementation of an initiative from the teachers' perspectives. Supporting Guskey's theory, the authors found that teachers' feelings of uncertainty negatively influenced teachers' implementation of the innovation. However, Geijesel, et al. also found school based elements to affect that uncertainty, namely shared vision and opportunities for intellectual stimulation. Therefore, even when participants believed in the principles of the reform, elements of their context either constrained or encouraged their enactment in practice.

Working from criticism that Guskey's model is too linear and does not take into account the teacher's environment, Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002) offered a further conception of instructional practice growth. They adapted Guskey's model based on their findings from three separate studies of teacher professional learning and practice in mathematics and science. Across studies, 79 teachers from at least seven schools in

Australia participated. The resulting Interconnected Model positioned an external domain, personal domain, domain of practice, and domain of consequence in non-linear arrangement. The domains were mediated by reflection and enactment and were couched within a change environment. The authors indicated that “change in every domain and the effect of every mediating process are facilitated or retarded by the affordances and constraints of the workplace context of each teacher” (p. 965). In other words, while teacher change may depend on enacting and experiencing benefit in their own classrooms, the extent of teacher actions and changes additionally depend on the school context.

Further supporting the role of the school in teaching practice, Hargreaves (2001) proposed a theory that deepens these conceptions of instructional practice change. He argued that teaching itself is a system. Trying to change one piece of that system will not be effective at changing the embedded instructional patterns of a teacher. So while a single change in practice is at least in part dependent on a teacher’s experiences implementing the practice with his/her students (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Guskey, 1986, 2002), changing the core of a teacher’s practice is more complex. It requires examining and improving the “script” of teaching. That examination, said Hargreaves, is dependent on teachers collectively engaging in knowledge creation and innovation. This means surfacing beliefs and examining actions with colleagues. Hargreaves posited that not only does this affect teachers’ individual practice as they examine their own system of teaching, it provides the necessary mobilization of knowledge for affecting practice across classrooms. Studies of the effects of professional development on practice support Hargreaves’ theory (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, and Gallagher,

2007; Smylie, 1988; Buczynski & Hansen, 2010; Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, & Bergen, 2009). For example, a quantitative survey study of 1,027 teachers in 358 districts by Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) found that two essential characteristics of teacher professional development linked to change in instructional practice were collective participation at the same school site and communication with others. Although the authors did not collect evidence related to why these elements affected change in instructional practice, they offered an explanation drawn from the literature. They stated, “By sharing methods, discussing written work, and reflecting on problems and solutions, teachers may foster a better understanding of the goals for student learning that proposed changes in teaching imply” (p. 928).

These latter conceptions of instructional practice as being part of a larger teaching and schooling system represent the current paradigm of school improvement (Cohen and Ball, 1999; King and Newmann, 2001; Stoll, et al., 2006; Riehl, 2000). The argument for strong capacity within a school is at its core about affecting instructional practice and creating organizational elements to support effective teaching and learning.

Teacher Learning and Leadership

Smylie (1996) indicated, “The most crucial mechanism to build human capital is learning” (p. 10). He posed a theory of human capital that suggested that for schools to be most effective, teachers need the ability to recognize students’ needs and to evaluate their practices in light of them. He criticized reform policy as attempting to regulate behavior when it should be attempting to “build human capital by developing the knowledge, skills, and commitments of teachers and by creating supportive conditions for their work” (p. 10). Drawing on theories of adult learning and learning to teach, Smylie went on to posit:

Teachers' opportunities to learn should be problem-oriented and grounded in inquiry, experimentation, and reflection. They should be collaborative, involving interaction with other teachers and educational professionals as sources of new ideas and feedback. These opportunities should be coherent, intensive, and ongoing. They should be instrumentally connected, at least in part, to broader goals for student learning and school improvement. (p. 10)

The ideas undergirding Smylie's argument are echoed throughout the reform literature, particularly in theoretical work in teacher knowledge that draws heavily on the literature (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999; Desforges, 1995), comprehensive literature reviews of teacher learning (Putnam & Borko, 1997) and teacher leadership (York-Barr and Duke, 2004). What follows is a synthesis of the teacher learning and leadership literature as relevant to building school capacity. It is drawn from the prior cited work and additional empirical studies. Three conclusions that have important implications for school capacity are presented from this available literature.

Teacher learning is a complex process and influenced by the teacher's self.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) offered three well-accepted conceptions of teacher knowledge: knowledge-for-practice, knowledge-in-practice, and knowledge-of-practice. Knowledge-for-practice characterizes the traditional professional development structure that imparts knowledge and then assumes classroom action. It positions teachers as "knowledge users, not knowledge generators" (p. 257) and considers knowledge as something tangible and equal across people. Separating knowledge from the knower in this way is problematic. For example, as demonstrated in a small-scale study by Van Eekelen, Vermunt, & Boshuizen (2006), teachers have differential "wills" for learning. Van Eekelen, et al. studied 14 Dutch high school teachers who were involved in a nationwide program intended to foster active and self-regulated learning among high school students. All participants had been teaching at least seven years. The authors

described the program as requiring “teachers to shift from a traditional teaching role to a more process-oriented coaching role” (p. 412). Based on their analysis of observations of teaching and two interviews with participants, the authors suggested that will acts as a filter affecting teachers’ ability to learn from their practice and the researchers provided evidence indicating the same for professional development endeavors. Treating knowledge as outside of the person does not take into account the kinds of individual influences described here.

Additional empirical research has demonstrated that teachers learn in relation to their past experiences and those past experiences and perceptions affect the opportunity to learn from new experiences (Garet, et al., 2001; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Illustrating this effect, Desforges’ (1995) used constructivist learning theory to examine the literature on novice-expert shifts in teaching and then re-characterized teacher knowledge in a new model. He drew heavily on work by Chinn and Brewer (1993) that indicated four factors strongly influencing teacher learning:

- The effect of ‘old knowledge’,
- The credibility of data/experiences,
- The depth of processing of an experience, and
- The availability and quality of alternative cognitive structures

Desforges argued that when faced with new experiences, it should be expected that these factors will work against new learning rather than for it. For example, when faced with a seemingly abnormal situation in a teacher’s classroom, the tendency is not to “seek explanations of discrepancy”, but to enforce normality (p. 393); when alternatives are absent, considering new knowledge is not even possible, or if those

alternatives are there but do not meet teachers' criteria of quality, they will not be considered for new knowledge integration. Particularly, if we pair Deforges' theory with the beliefs literature presented earlier in this chapter, the complexity in affecting teacher learning becomes apparent.

This is where teachers' involvement in their own learning comes into play. Supporting Desforjes' assertion that deep processing is more likely when teachers are personally involved, Meirink, Meijer, Verloop, and Bergen (2009) examined the relationship between learning activities of teachers and changes in their beliefs in 34 secondary school teachers over one year. The authors found that engaging in learning experiences with colleagues in the context of professional development was more greatly related to changes in beliefs than was engaging in spontaneous learning experiences with or without colleagues. They also found that intention in learning mattered. That is, when participants haphazardly implemented new teaching practices without any intention to evaluate the effectiveness of those practices, their beliefs did not change; when participants intentionally implemented new practices intending to evaluate their effectiveness, the implementation of new practice was more greatly related to belief change. Their changes also relied on their individual dissatisfaction related to their current teaching methods. In sum, the individual teacher's self affects his or her response to learning situations and influences how beliefs and practice change or remain constant.

Teacher learning is situative and must be considered as such. The cognitive self is not the only influence on teacher learning; the social world also affects that learning. Putnam and Borko (1997) reviewed research on learning in teacher

communities. They described current conceptions of teacher learning as involving more than the learner and the discrete information to be learned; they posited that the context for that learning mattered. The authors described learning as situative, which depicts learning as social, situated, and distributed. If we accept practice as predictive of learning, then further research on teacher learning supports this conception. It is consistently found that learning is most connected to changes in practice when the learning is active, based in authentic inquiry related to the teacher's own practice, explicitly connected to a larger agenda of a school, and engaged in with colleagues at the same school site (Desimone, et al., 2002; Garet, et al., 2001; Nir & Bogler, 2008; Schnellert, Butler, & Higginson, 2008). Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1999) image of knowledge-of-practice positioned teacher learning as fostered by a community. It further illustrated the important role that the context and colleagues have in teacher learning. Putnam and Borko (1997) stated that viewing learning as situative places emphasis on the discourse communities in which teachers work and learn.

These discourse communities play central roles in shaping the way teachers view their world and go about their work. Indeed, patterns of classroom teaching and learning have historically been resistant to fundamental change, in part because schools have served as powerful discourse communities that enculturate participants (students, teachers, administrators) into traditional school activities and ways of thinking. (p. 8)

Altering that discourse and reshaping schools into learning centered communities recognizes teachers as situative learners who draw on their classrooms and their schools to inform their learning. The social context of learning has taken a front seat in theories such as Hargreaves' (2001) theory of school effectiveness and improvement. He used evidence from two cases of education reform in the United Kingdom and research on teacher effectiveness to test his theory. He posited that a reform will only

be effective to the extent that it contributes to not only student outcomes, but to “enhancing intellectual capital, social capital, and high leverage” (p.496). Hargreaves described leverage as being the ratio of effort to outcome. These three elements are enhanced when learning and responsibility are collective endeavors and outcomes.

School improvement means capitalizing on teachers as learners and data generators/users. Across the research is a call for schools as learning organizations. Studies in high performing high-poverty schools consistently find that effective schools in some way encourage and capitalize on teacher learning. Examples include teachers engaged in continuous data use to drive instruction (Taylor, Pressley, & Pearson, 2002) and commitment to and belief in continuous professional development (Cole-Henderson, 2000). A review of the school improvement literature by Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, and Russ (2004) found both themes echoed in their reviewed studies of effective schools in challenging contexts. They cited inquiry mindedness as a key component to “continuously interrogate existing test data to see whether initiatives are working, or whether there are problems with achievement in particular areas or with particular populations” (pp. 158-159). They cited research by Florian (2000) that indicated schools sustaining in reform efforts did so in large part because of the schools’ work as learning organizations. These schools could integrate new practices into the school routine and the schools created structures that put emphasis on professional development and collaboration. The relationship of such structures to organizational learning has been found in related research (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998). A study by Silins, Mulford, & Zarins (2002) found organizational learning to directly affect teachers’ work in classrooms and to mediate school effects on student outcomes. They

considered learning organizations to be schools that 1) have a trusting and collaborative climate where faculty actively seek to improve their work, 2) emphasize taking initiative and risks and have structures to support it, 3) have shared and monitored mission where faculty critically examine practices and align curriculum with school goals, and 4) engage in professional development that is ongoing, team based, and promoted by leadership.

Creating schools that are learning organizations is seen as the way to break down barriers to continuous improvement, to promote the idea of evaluation and subsequent action, and to redefine how teachers view their abilities to affect student learning.

Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, and Valentine (1999) examined the organizational learning literature to create the analytic framework for their two-year qualitative case study of professional community development in three schools. In their framework, they drew on Argyris and Schön's (1978) seminal work that conceptualized two levels of organizational learning: single- and double-loop. Single-loop learning was described as being "structural in nature...responses to organizational needs or environmental pressures [in this level] consist of actions embedded within existing ways of knowing. Limited by existing norms, those actions ironically tend to perpetuate ineffective assumptions and practices" (p. 134). From the history of educational change presented previously, we can characterize most change in schools as being single-loop. The second level of organizational learning was double-loop learning where organizations:

Question underlying assumptions that guide practice so that chosen solutions address the core problem and not merely symptoms. Organizations using double-loop processes often merge new learning with existing organizational knowledge or replace that prior knowledge entirely. In doing so, they create new organizational knowledge and new norms that guide future actions and create new cultures. Organizations that experience

double-loop learning search for ways to increase their cognitive, behavioral, and performance effectiveness through multiple strategies. (Scribner, et al., 1999, p.134)

In other words, schools that engage in initial and sustained improvement do so through the continuous learning of faculty by evaluating practices, assumptions, and norms. This learning is not just focused on the happenings within individual classrooms, but is focused on individual classrooms as part of the larger school organization. Scribner et al.'s findings support the role of leadership and community organization in the development of double-loop learning. In order for schools to develop as learning organizations, they need structural and cultural supports. These supports include opportunities for teachers to use their learning to participate in school decision-making processes in ways that enable them to move from awareness to action (Marks & Louis, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1998; Scribner, Cockrell, Cockrell, & Valentine, 1999).

School Climate and Professional Community

School climate represents a school's interpersonal work life; it is the psychosocial state of an environment (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). A helpful way to think about climate is in terms of an organization's mental health (Miles, 1965). For example, in a healthy school climate, school members have high morale, high sense of efficacy, and feel a sense of cohesiveness between themselves and other members. An unhealthy school climate is marked by distrust, lowered efficacy, and lowered interactions between members. School climate and professional community are parallel concepts. There are five elements commonly accepted as key to professional community: shared values, focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatized practice, and reflective dialogue (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1998). School climate and professional community play important roles in school capacity and in resultant student

achievement. In fact, research examining elementary school level achievement and climate has found strong, interdependent relationships between the two, indicating that professional community and climate affects and is affected by student achievement (Brookover, et al.,1978). The rest of this section details the research in school climate and professional community. The research presented here demonstrates the influence of community on teacher practice and student achievement

Various elements of school climate and professional community have been linked to student achievement. For example, Johnson and Stevens (2006) examined the climate variables of affiliation, innovation, participatory decision making, resource adequacy, and student support. They analyzed surveys from 1,106 teachers in 59 elementary schools in a single district in the United States. Using structural equation modeling, they found a significant positive relationship between school climate and student achievement. Hoy and Hannum (1997) reported similar findings in a study of 86 middle schools in New Jersey. They found school health as measured by academic emphasis, teacher affiliation, collegial leadership, resource support, principal influence, and institutional integrity, to be positively associated with student achievement. In another study, Stewart (2008) used data from a large database set to examine the relationship between individual student characteristics, “school structural characteristics” (this included a variable of school cohesion), and student achievement in a sample of 1,238 10th grade African American students from 536 high schools. Data sources were interviews with students, their teachers, and administrators. After controlling for the individual-level variables, school cohesion had the most significant effect on student grade point averages. School cohesion was a global measure that

represented indicators such as positive interactions between students, teachers, and administrators; shared expectations; teacher efficacy; and student perceptions of teacher care. In fact, when taking school cohesion and individual-level predictors into account, no other school level indicators (school poverty level, proportion of Non-White students, location, size, or social problems) had significant effects on student achievement.

Additionally, professional community has been found to contribute strongly to teachers' responsibility for student learning (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Studies in collective efficacy have also demonstrated strong relationships to student achievement. Considering collective efficacy to be "the perceptions of teachers in a specific school that the faculty as a whole can execute courses of action required to positively affect student achievement" (p. 79), Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) found direct effects between collective efficacy and achievement. More specifically, collective efficacy was the strongest predictor of mathematics achievement, even over socioeconomic status in their study of 97 randomly sampled high schools in Ohio. Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy (2000) reported very similar results in a single urban district. They found that a one unit increase in collective teacher efficacy was associated with an increase of more than 40% of a standard deviation in student achievement. Further, research by Goddard and Goddard (2001) supported this relationship and also found that individual teacher efficacy was higher in schools with higher collective efficacy. Relatedly, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Steca, and Malone (2006) found teacher self and collective efficacy beliefs aggregated across a school to be a significant predictor of student achievement. Such

findings consistently support the social role of the school in influencing individual beliefs that lead to professional action.

High levels of professional community and a healthy climate have also been found to encourage innovation in instructional practice (Bryk, et al., 1999; Mulford & Silins, 2003). Meirink, et al. (2009) found that as teachers exchanged ideas and then experimented with those ideas in their own classrooms, that their beliefs changed regarding student learning. Professional community had to encompass more than just collegial discussion, but had to encourage instructional risk taking for these participants as well. The deprivatization of practice paired with risk taking and evaluation through data analysis holds promise for school improvement efforts. The relationships between school climate and achievement presented here indicate the need for a strong professional community within and across a school where uncertainty and success are shared, supported, and deconstructed. Such a need has positioned teacher leadership ideals at the forefront of school improvement efforts. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) define teacher leadership as when teachers “lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of learners and leaders; influence others toward improved practice; and accept responsibility for achieving outcomes” (p. 6). Teacher leadership is conceptualized as the means for transforming schools into learning communities (Harris, 2003).

School Structures

It has long been argued that the structures of a school are not enough to affect the capacity of the school (Elmore, 1995; Fullan, 2007; Sarason, 1971). Reform efforts that are based in restructuring alone have historically not been effective at changing the practices of teachers or affecting the achievement of students. Previous sections of this

review have demonstrated the ineffectiveness of changing core work when structures are laid over existing beliefs and cultures. That said, school structures have an important role to play in the capacity of a school. Structures here are considered to be the elements that frame how a school is organized. For example, they include roles, responsibilities, meetings, formal teacher groups, teaching arrangements, and all other organizational elements that affect how the school operates. Research in organizational conditions have shown that a school's infrastructure can constrain or foster the school as a learning organization (for example, Ingram, Louis, & Schroeder, 2004; Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998). No structure within a school affects only one element of capacity. As Stoll (2010) described it, all elements of a school are part of a larger system and affecting one means rippling effects for all others.

What is presented in this section is a snapshot of effective structures for capacity. Professional learning communities research is used to illustrate three conclusions regarding effective structures for school capacity. There are many other effective structures that make up a school, including curriculum coherence (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001) and the matching of formal teacher leadership roles to existing instructional responsibilities and expertise (Copland, 2003). However, because professional learning communities are a popular and widely advocated structure for capacity, I focus on them here. They also help to make the point that school improvement is about the school as a system, and structures need to do more than merely be structural placeholders for the same norms and practices of years past. In Elmore's (1995) article exploring the relationship of structural change and instructional

practice, he made the following observation illustrating how structures do not dictate behavior.

The relationship between structural change in schools and changes in teaching and learning are mediated by relatively powerful factors, such as the shared norms, knowledge, and skill of teachers, and that changing structure has a slippery and unreliable relationship to these mediating factors. A teacher who responds to the opportunities presented by longer class periods by showing the whole movie is a teacher who is pursuing old practices while working in a new structure. (p. 26)

What follows is drawn from empirical studies in school capacity and improvement, three literature reviews (Harris, 2010; Stoll, et al., 2006; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008; York-Barr and Duke, 2004), and conceptual/theoretical work (Hargreaves, 1994; Harris, 2003; Spillane, Diamond, & Halverson, 2004).

Effective structures are those that enable time and space for community and learning activities and in doing so provide the opportunity to break the physical isolation of teachers. Scholars characterize the inherent physical and organizational structure of school as isolating and promoting of individualist attitudes (Hargreaves, 1994; Spillane, Diamond, & Halverson, 2004). Hargreaves described school cultures as “formed within and framed by particular structures [and] these structures are not neutral” (p. 256). The relationship of structures to a school’s way of life is inextricable. School capacity is dependent on how a school’s structures both represent and foster shared ideals of community, teacher learning, and leadership. Therefore, formal school structures that can enable social and intellectual access to colleagues can help to enhance school capacity. For example, structural actions such as time for primary teachers to work with intermediate teachers, daily common planning time for grade level teams, creation of half days for professional development, and forming teacher inquiry groups have been reported as supportive to maximizing professional development

within a school (Youngs & King, 2002), as have opportunities for large gatherings of the entire faculty and opportunities for regular meetings of small teacher teams (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996).

Schools as learning communities depend on smaller groups of teachers to enact the principles of the larger organization. As Harris (2003) stated in her review of the teacher leadership literature, “attention must be paid to building and infrastructure to support collaboration and creating the internal conditions for mutual learning. This infrastructure provides a context within which teachers can improve their practice by developing and refining new instructional practices and methods” (p. 321). One such formal structure that is meriting a great deal of attention both in practice and in research is that of small formal professional learning communities within a school. Other terms for this structure might be communities of practice or critical friends groups. These structures provide the time and space for examining and refining practice. Two reviews of the literature support that view.

Vescio, et al. (2008), reviewed work from 11 studies that examined PLC impact on teaching practice and/or student learning. They cited four characteristics of PLCs from their reviewed research that were found to affect teaching culture: intentional collaboration, focus on student learning, teacher authority to make decisions regarding both the processes of the PLCs and school governance, and the facilitation of continuous learning. Similar findings were also reported in a PLC review by Stoll, et al. (2006). Conflicting with these reviews, are more recent findings by Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010). These authors conducted a large-scale exploratory quantitative study that tested various paths of how leadership influences students’ learning and did not

find professional community to be a significant predictor of achievement. It is unknown, though, what the structure and content of the PLCs were like for the participating teachers. Leithwood, et al. concluded that professional learning communities get more attention than research merits. However, without knowing whether the content of participant PLCs had an intentional focus on student learning and teaching practice, it is hard to evaluate the strength of this conclusion since the research reviewed by Vescio, et al. and Stoll, et al. clearly indicates the necessity of this PLC focus for student achievement.

Effective structures have a shared purpose and intentional focus. Providing the structures for organizational learning is a necessary but not sufficient element of capacity building; it is what happens during that time that makes the difference. Shared goals help to frame collaborative work and provide a focus regarding broader issues than just individual classroom problems. For example, Huffman and Kalnin (2003) examined the effects of shared engagement in inquiry. Using TIMMS scores for the state, individual teams of teachers then created inquiries that were more specific to their classrooms and/or school (e.g., ways to improve the math scores of certain groups of students or comparing the performance of students participating in two different math programs). The authors analyzed survey data from 29 participants and focus group interviews of nine participants. They found that the shared umbrella topic and shared process bound participants together and they reported deep reflection into teaching practices, increased professionalism, and an increased focus on the school unit versus just their individual classroom.

Operating with an intentional focus that supports the shared goals is a key attribute of an effective structure. Supporting this, Vescio, et al. reported in their review that changes to instructional practice occurred when there was an intense focus on student learning and achievement in PLCs. The need for intention in community work is additionally supported by Levine and Marcus (2009). Levine and Marcus examined teacher collaboration in a small, low income high school in California. They primarily relied on field notes from 37 collaborative meetings of the six teachers and one principal in the school. They found that when the PLC was intentionally and tightly focused on instruction, teachers' instructional practice became more transparent and offered deeper connection between teachers' "action and agency in the classroom" (p. 395). They concluded that collaborative endeavors seem most effective when they engage a feedback loop that pairs student outcomes with a specific group focus. Such intention provides opportunities for reflective dialogue that are accompanied by consistent focus on means and ends.

Developing effective structures means guidance is needed for establishing purpose and constructive action. In their review of the teacher leadership literature, York-Barr and Duke (2004) cited numerous research studies that demonstrated how teachers and administrators are often tossed into leadership roles with limited preparation, thus limiting their effectiveness or even their tenure in that role. Just as formal roles and structures need an explicit purpose, studies in individual PLC development have indicated that they also need guidance. For example, a study by Clausen, Aquino, and Wideman (2009) examined the establishment of a single professional learning community at a rural Canadian elementary school. They found

that the group relied on the focus and technical guidance provided by the principal before members understood the PLC's purpose or were able to embrace many of the characteristics of a collaborative community.

Additional work by Dooner, Mandzuk, and Clifton (2008) illuminates the need for a group leader who can provide purpose and help members expand their ideas of reflective dialogue. The authors traced an organically self-created learning community from its inception through two years of practice. The group was established because of a common pedagogical interest, and had no formal leader due to their agreement that "all members had equal voice". Without any guidance though, the group dynamics described by the authors suggest limited forward motion in establishing capacity across members for sustained work. They noted a commitment to "getting the job done", rather than to using the experience as a way to continually study their practice and student learning. Their norms of teaching and learning were not disrupted. Additionally, participants were continually challenged by the need to maintain social relationships and although they were typically candid with one another, the tensions did not subside. The group eventually split into smaller groups by the end of the study.

Research such as that presented here regarding professional learning communities, reinforces the need for structures that can both support and advance the school's work. To do so means that school structures must be aligned with ideals for teacher learning and leadership, principal leadership, and professional community. There must be a shared vision that structures are helping to create, and they must be guided. Developing structures for a new way of work is challenging and requires strategy (York-Barr, Ghere, & Sommerness, 2007). Elmore's question of why anyone

would “expect structural change to produce changes in teaching practice” sums up the role of structures in school change. Structures are there to support a wider effort in teaching and learning that will dictate how the structure is utilized; structures are not the effort in and of themselves.

Principal Leadership

Research in school organization consistently positions school principals as critical elements of school capacity. Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) went a step further and placed principal leadership as the foundation for all elements of school capacity. Their reasoning was that as the legal head of the school, the principal holds enormous power and has been shown in the literature to have a powerful impact on a school’s capacity. In fact, in their review of the leadership literature, Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) claimed that “school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning” (p. 28). Not any type of principal leadership will do, however, and Leithwood, et al. offered six further claims regarding successful leadership. Relevant to this review are the claims that successful leadership is comprised of the same basic activities across leaders, but differentially enacted for each specific context; that school leaders improve student achievement through their influence on motivation, commitment, and working conditions; and that school leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed throughout a school’s organization. This last point is of particular value and will drive the rest of this section.

Various terms are used throughout the literature to describe current notions of effective leadership. Scholars tend to attach themselves to one term for their research purposes, although each label for leadership is conceptually very similar and all are

aimed at increasing a school's capacity. These terms include distributed leadership (Harris, 2003; Spillane, et al., 2004), teacher leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lieberman, and Miller, 2004); transformational leadership (Leithwood, et al., 1998, 2010; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Mulford & Silins, 2003); collaborative leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2010); and shared leadership (Lambert, 1998, 2002). The idea undergirding them all is that the principal cannot and should not be the only decision-maker of a school. Building internal capacity requires cultivating and utilizing the intellectual and social capital of a school's members. Such a requirement dictates that leadership be multifaceted and dynamic depending on the school's context at any given time. (Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007)

For example, Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) defined transformational leadership as leadership that "aims to foster capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals [among school faculty]" (p. 113). Transformational leadership then can be characterized as intentional capacity building leadership. Elements of transformational leadership have been found in large scale studies to be significantly related to organizational learning conditions in schools (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000; Mulford and Silins, 2003). These actions include building school vision and goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, symbolizing values, demonstrating expectations, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. Leithwood and Jantzi include the managerial dimensions of staffing, instructional support, monitoring school activities, and community focus as important elements of a transformational leader's actions (p. 114). Both sets of authors also demonstrated parallel findings that leadership has strong direct effects on organizational

learning, but significant indirect effects on student participation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000) and student learning (Mulford & Silins, 2003). Such findings make sense considering that teachers, not principals, are the people who have the most direct sustained involvement with students.

In more contextually oriented, qualitative work, Scribner, Hager, and Warne (2002) used interviews with teachers and principals and observation of professional learning events to examine the professional community in two urban high schools. The schools were selected for “excellence in educating diverse student populations”. The authors found that the principal at one school fostered professional community by encouraging risk taking, pushing teachers to pursue their own ideas, and establishing and maintaining a common vision of meeting students’ needs. The combination of these actions met the individual autonomous desires of the teachers while also cultivating a collective identity for the school. The principal of the second school in the study was less successful at cultivating professional community. This school was described by the authors as being “privileged” due to its magnet program and teacher qualifications. However, these characteristics did not preclude the faculty from a professional community that was tense and isolationist. The principal in this school attempted to impose a collective identity without considering individual teacher needs. This resulted in a retreat of the teachers from pursuing learning opportunities with peers and from participating in school decision making. Scribner, et al.’s study supports Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) and Mulford and Silins (2003) by finding very similar leadership elements affecting school community, and they also extend them by demonstrating that those actions are mediated by how they are employed in context.

Additional work by Newmann, King, and Youngs (2000) found that principals of schools rated in their study as having the strongest school capacities, had stronger emphases on coherent professional development for their teachers. The principals made learning a priority and shaped the content of the teachers' professional development opportunities that occurred during school hours; this was in contrast to the schools with the weakest rated capacities where professional development decisions were entirely up to individual teachers. The assertions that effective capacity-building principals foster coherent professional development, as well as enable opportunities for teacher leadership is supported in other research on the roles of school principals (see for example, Cosner, 2009; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2010). This research utilizing principal perspectives of their actions also found that an important role of principals in capacity building is building trust and encouraging data use to drive instruction. In their case study of an individual principal, Hoppey and McLeskey also pointed to a key action of the principal as buffering teachers from external pressures in part by the school creating its own standards and goals internally. In their review of how school leaders interpret accountabilities, Firestone and Shipps (2005) argued that this internal accountability and its effects on student learning bears more research, particularly in how it is developed in challenging school contexts.

Studies of Whole-School Capacity Building and Change

The research reviewed thus far has examined elements of capacity building. The findings have demonstrated that principal leadership, teacher learning and leadership, school structures, and professional community work in complex ways to both directly and indirectly affect teacher practice and student achievement. The research designs have included four kinds of studies: large scale quantitative studies of randomly

sampled schools and teachers to examine a predetermined set of variables, studies of schools and teachers to examine the effects of a specific reform effort, studies of smaller groups operating within a larger school to examine community dynamics, and studies of whole schools identified as excellent to examine elements of their operation. This section is a closer examination of the research most aligned with the present study. As this is a study of internal capacity building, it was important to review research that explicitly focused on the internal changes in high poverty, academically improving or improved schools. Searching for rich description of change in action was especially important due the large amount of research we already have documenting the characteristics of effective, high poverty schools. For example, Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll, and Russ (2004) found the following elements in their review of the research in low income school improvement: school-wide pervasive focus on teaching and learning; leadership that involves teachers in decisions; creating and utilizing a data rich environment, creating a positive school culture, cultivating learning communities; engaging in continuous professional development; involving parents; and maximizing resources and external support. As is evident, these elements match what has been reported in this review thus far regarding capacity building more generally. However, scholars have pointed to the necessity of context in school reform research (Thrupp & Lupton, 2006; Muijs, et al., 2004). The change process of a dysfunctional, chronically underachieving, low capacity school is logically going to be different from the process in a school that is successful in at least one of these areas already. Highlighting this, in their study of the development of professional community in three schools Scribner, et al. (1999) found that along with leadership and organizational priorities, organizational

history played a role in how schools developed or did not develop community over the course of two years. Additionally, given the sociopolitical challenges of teaching students from poverty (e.g., mobility, documented relationship between socioeconomic status and achievement, low teacher expectations for student achievement, low achievement motivation) and the challenges frequently documented in high poverty schools (e.g., high teacher and principal attrition, often mandated basic skills curriculum, external accountability pressures, cultural mismatch of teachers and students) a host of contextual factors come into play that make reform contextually dependent.

Therefore, to identify research for this section, I searched for recent case studies of between one and ten schools, that were methodologically qualitative, that examined the school as a unit, and that relied at least in part on the voices of both the formal leadership and the teachers. Because there is some evidence that principals' perceptions may not coincide with those of the teaching staff as a whole (Bevans, Bradshaw, Miech, & Leaf, 2007), it was important to pair data from both groups of participants in a study of a school's changes. Additionally, it was key that the studies did not just focus on the present work of the school, but followed the school over time, either longitudinally or retrospectively. It was necessary that the schools have demonstrated improvement in some way, preferably in academic achievement. What follows is not an exhaustive list, as access to all published studies was not possible, but it is at the least representative of the available literature.

I found one study that matched the delimiting criteria exactly (Eilers & Camacho, 2007). A further eight studies were culled that met the criteria to varying degrees. Six studies examined a school or schools' changes over time specific to a reform effort

(Anderson & Kumari, 2009; Copland, 2003; Malen & Rice, 2004) or to examine a framework of capacity (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Youngs & King, 2002). Of these six, none provided analysis of the prior context, and only four provided evidence that student achievement was affected (Anderson & Kumari, 2009; Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Youngs & King, 2002). Finally, two studies generally examined internal change over a thirty-year time span (Giles, 2008; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006). Because the study by Eilers and Camacho (2007) so closely mirrors my study, it is critically deconstructed. The remaining studies are more broadly synthesized.

In their single-school case study, Eilers and Camacho (2007) used interviews with school faculty, observations, and culture surveys to detail how a chronically underachieving, high poverty, minority majority school recultured and restructured with the leadership of a new principal. The authors provided evidence that the school engaged in changes in culture and improved student achievement over the two year period of study. Accounting for the prior context of the school, they reported that the principal encountered “a slate of veteran teachers with limited will to change” (p. 620) and a pervasive resistance to learning and collaboration when he began at the school. They also described how the teachers operated in isolation from one another and from the district. There was little to no consistency across classrooms in scheduling or instruction, and data were not used nor intentionally collected. Low expectations for student learning were also reported. The authors stated that the school scored in the “beginning” stage of readiness for reform on their district culture survey. “Beginning” readiness was defined as “having little teacher collaboration around instruction, some

team structure, weak professional community of practice, weak administrative support, and limited district office contact” (p. 631). By the end of the study, the authors reported that the school moved above district averages in their survey scores, but did not indicate in what stage of readiness that then placed the school. The school also met “their AYP goals” by qualifying for safe harbor at the end of the two-years, resulting in their removal from the state’s watch list. It is unknown what student subgroups met the safe harbor criteria and the school’s standardized reading scores were still below the district and state average.

The authors reported that three themes in leadership action led to the school’s change in achievement. They identified the following actions within each leadership theme:

- Creating learning communities: 1) the principal embracing and fostering a no-excuses mentality through high expectations and focus on what they can do to affect students, 2) holding an immediate team building retreat with follow-up session throughout the year, 3) implementing a book study, 4) site visits at other schools known for their community, 5) grade level teaming with shared professional time, 6) redesigning schedule for professional development time, and 7) strengthening link between curriculum and assessment by relying on a district specialist to coach teachers
- Collaborative leadership: 1) serving as a model to teachers by practicing continuous learning by visiting peer schools and inviting them to visit, 2) asking district for help with weak areas of the school, 3) using teachers on special assignment for literacy and math professional development
- Evidence based practice: 1) explicit district training in data use, and 2) implementing regular data meetings

This study offers insight into a principal’s actions to intentionally reculture and restructure a school for improvement. It supports other research in leadership and effective schools (for example, Kannapel & Clements, 2005; Ma & Klinger, 2000; Sammons, 1995) by finding learning communities with high expectations for student

learning, principal as model of his own expectations, and use of data to be key elements in the school's achievement. It also illuminates the on-the-ground work in high poverty schools that is missing from the school reform literature.

That said, there are some immediate issues with the methodology of Eilers and Camacho's study that limit its use in the literature. First, it is not known why this particular school was selected for study. Second, it is not known how the authors analyzed the data in this "mixed-methods" design nor how many of the 32 teachers at the school participated. It is also unknown what role the school level observations played in the findings as the observation data are not referred to in any way throughout the report. Additionally, the principal's voice is dominant throughout the findings. The authors make no mention of this being intentional. Finally, there is strong evidence that the second author is the principal of the studied school. The authors do not make this explicit in their article and do not describe how this factored into their data collection and analysis.

Finally, the principal is presented in this story as savior versus engaged leader. The role of the teachers in the school's improvement seems diminished, as though once presented with the opportunities for better teaching they just accepted them. They are portrayed rather passively and their inclusion in the study seems to be only to support the principal's version of change. If the second author conducted interviews with his own staff, the power relationship could help to explain this.

The remaining eight studies in the section are described to highlight common methodologies, questions, and findings. The end of the section provides a synthesis of findings from all case studies.

The next two studies examine the same data set (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Youngs & King, 2002). Here the authors collected data in seven public elementary schools across the United States. All schools served large proportions of low-income students that “(a) had histories of low achievement, (b) had shown progress in student achievement over three to five years prior to participation in this study, (c) attributed their progress to school-wide and sustained professional development, (d) participated in site-based management, and (e) had received significant professional development assistance from one or more external agencies” (p. 265). They conducted interviews with 10-12 members of school staff in each school, observed professional development activities and classes, and collected documents. School reports were written to synthesize this information in relation to elements of capacity and how professional development in each school addressed them. Capacity was considered by the authors in terms of five constructs: teachers’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions; professional community; program coherence; technical resources; and principal leadership. Each study, however, only closely examined three constructs: knowledge, skills, and dispositions; professional community; and program coherence. They then used the reports to rate the schools in terms of six indicators: level of school capacity at the first visit, the extent to which professional development strongly addressed each dimension of capacity over time, the extent of principal leadership for professional development aimed at each aspect of capacity, the extent to which the school received technical assistance addressing aspects of capacity from external agencies, the extent to which district and state policy supported professional development, and level of school capacity at the final visit.

The first study (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000) described how each of the seven schools differentially used professional development to address capacity. The authors detailed a variety of actions within each school that addressed each of the three elements of capacity under study. What they found was that schools with high initial ratings of capacity were most effective at integrating professional development in ways that further developed capacity. For example, in one school they continued the learning spurred by their Success for All CSR training and observed colleagues, visited conferences, and took risks in their instruction evaluated with data. They also used the collaborative learning advocated by SFA and used it to structure their own professional growth by collaboratively engaging in inquiry. In contrast, in another school with low initial capacity scores, teachers engaged in professional development but there was no schoolwide collective focus. Although this school was an Accelerated Schools CSR model they did not use the emphases of AS to push their learning in a targeted direction or to enhance how their community operated. Members of the school faculty additionally participated in a graduate course offered on-site by a local university. However, its contributions to the school's professional development was mediated by the university's tendency "to cater to the school's changing interests" (p. 279). Professional development remained fragmented and without collective direction.

The authors also found a strong association between principal leadership and comprehensive professional development. This was detailed further in (Youngs & King, 2002). The leadership varied significantly between schools as principals interpreted their jobs differently. The authors concluded that "professional development for principals should help them to understand the main elements of school capacity and

how professional development can enhance, neglect, or even diminish aspects of capacity” (p. 292). Additionally, there was indication that when schools experienced principal turn-over, the goals of the new principal affected school capacity because those goals affected the principal’s professional development emphases. For example, one new principal came in to a school with the intention to focus on thematic integration of the arts. The school was already operating in a Montessori model that the principal knew little about. The result was further fragmentation in professional development and inconsistent school vision; capacity was weakened. The importance of the principal examining the school’s current work was illuminated, as was the need for principal professional development surrounding that work.

Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk’s (2001) mixed-methods study pairs with these findings. In this study, the authors found that schools with stronger program coherence (common instructional framework, staff working conditions to support that framework, and school resources directed at matching improvement efforts to that framework) experienced greater student achievement gains. The authors examined schools over three years and found that as instructional coherence increased, so did student achievement.

The last study in this group is a single school case study of a school in Pakistan that was involved in a 10-year partnership with a local university (Anderson & Kumari, 2009). The partnership was formed to counter the previous “fragmented, non-systemic approach to teacher development and school improvement” and was based on the idea “that school cadres of teachers and administrators trained over time in a common array of teaching methods and school improvement strategies (e.g., peer coaching) will work

together to improve teaching and learning” (pp. 285-286). Data included interviews with administrators and teachers, classroom observations, focus groups with students, and student work and school documents. During the ten-year partnership, the university had a marked influence on the teaching and learning of the school. The authors described a variety of changes, such as new instructional leadership roles being formed to enable site-based school improvement planning and activities, appointment of a principal supportive of the partnership activities, implementation of various models of instruction based on new learning and reflective dialogue amongst school leaders, participation in peer coaching by teachers. By the end of the study, formal organizational structures transitioned to more informal means and infrastructure adaptations occurred that enabled the school to become less dependent on the university’s resources. The teaching methods focused professional development resulted in changes to instructional practice, but not to changes in achievement. Additionally, the researchers questioned teacher understanding of the practices they were using due to their “apparent routinization” in use. The partnership then changed its focus from teacher development to student learning (data use and achievement targets) and reported significant increases in achievement. It is not known how that change affected teaching practices.

The remaining studies are change over time studies. They offer strong evidence of how schools negotiate changes to curriculum, reform efforts, and society, but they do not offer outcomes related to student learning. Copland (2003) used qualitative methods to study school change using a framework, or “theory of action”. He specifically examined distributed leadership practices in sixteen schools operating within the Bay

Area School Reform Initiative (BARSC), an inquiry focused reform effort. Schools were either in their first or second year of the initiative. Drawing from the literature to guide his analysis, he considered distributed leadership to be a collective activity, spanning responsibility between roles, and relying on an expert authority versus hierarchical authority. Using BARSC's theory of action Copland identified distributed leadership as an important component of school capacity. In line with other research on capacity for change, he found that administrative turnover and external pressures adversely affected the development of distributed leadership practices. His analysis of the schools' inquiry practices also led him to conclude that shared inquiry into student learning had the potential to foster community within the school and promote the distribution of leadership across the faculty. While Copland offers evidence that leadership was distributed, he does not offer evidence that doing so affected student achievement, nor is there evidence that it significantly affected any other elements of school capacity, at least not in ways that would indicate potential for the school to sustain its distributed leadership practices.

Maren and Rice (2004) used two case studies to examine the impact of accountability policy on school capacity. They used a framework of capacity that included resource and productivity dimensions to study four schools over two years that were identified as low achieving. Three schools were located in the same urban district and one was a small rural school. The urban schools underwent reconstitution while the rural school experienced "graduated sanctions". Massive staff and curricular changes occurred in the urban schools as a result of reconstitution. A consequence of this upheaval was "organizational freneticism" where the schools were working each day to

just stay open. The rural school's graduated sanctions enabled the staff to remain stable, but pushed them to adopt a variety of new programs in a short amount of time leading to fragmentation in their work and confusion about what they were trying to accomplish. The authors conclude that accountability policies that on the surface seem designed to strengthen school capacity (e.g., by starting over with a new staff to build community and vision or providing choice in program adoption), in reality undercut that capacity by not attending to how the policy affects the school's resource base and productivity. There was no description of the school's capacity prior to these changes, however, from the authors' case descriptions, it seems that the schools lacked capacity from the beginning and therefore were not able to adapt the accountability policies. The authors did not report on the outcomes of the schools.

Two additional studies also reported internal school changes over time. A qualitative study by Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) retrospectively explored three decades of changes in eight secondary schools through Canada and New York. The schools represented a variety of settings, student demographics, and curricular emphases. The authors used a grounded theory approach and conducted interviews with cohorts of teachers from each decade and each school. They found five major change forces that affected the work of these schools over time: waves of external reform, leadership succession, student and community demographics, teacher generations, and school interrelations. The authors describe how the schools changed over time mostly to survive whatever change force was upon them. Capacity that may have initially existed in many of the schools was degraded as standardized reforms took

greater hold. Ultimately, the external emphases at any given time dictated the school's work, most often in ways that undermined any building of capacity.

Giles's (2008) study provided more in depth reporting on two of the urban schools studied by Hargreaves and Goodson. In her study, Giles sought to examine the resiliency characteristics that enabled these two schools to adapt over time as their contexts changed. She found several internal factors that enabled these "self-renewing" organizations to endure in their initial progressive visions, including a strong match in vision between the organization and the faculty, continuity of leadership and longevity of faculty, administrative fostering of faculty ownership and activism in the school, and internal and external network of partnerships. The evidence presented, however, does not make a strong argument that these schools were in fact self-renewing. For example, when faced with a demographically different student body over time, the faculties lamented the changes rather than inquiring how to change their pedagogy to meet new student needs. Additionally, the faculties reported a lowering of expectations for student success and an increase in their rote instruction. So while the progressive vision was maintained over time, Giles presented evidence that the vision perhaps constrained the schools' capacity to respond to their changing political and demographic contexts.

In sum, these case studies have revealed the following:

- Initial capacity dictates how a school uses resources and interprets policies regardless of the intention of the policies. Therefore schools with strong capacities will use resources and policies to grow even stronger or to expand their work. Schools with weak capacities will not be strengthened without intentional, informed internal leadership to do so.
- School leadership is essential to a school's work. When principals enter a school, they need to understand what the school is currently doing, for good or bad, before implementing a new vision. Principals coming into a school with an established agenda and imposing a vision results in fragmented professional development that

constrains capacity. Further, professional development in change and capacity may affect principal actions. None of the studies reported principals engaging in any type of targeted professional learning themselves.

- Streamlining school vision, programs, and professional development increases instructional coherence and student achievement.
- There is limited research in schools that have demonstrated improvement as measured by current accountability policies. Of the nine studies reviewed here, only five were of schools reported to have improved student learning. Of these five studies that examined student learning, only one examined how capacity was developed. The other four studies examined a framework of capacity at work within schools. No study examined differences in achievement for student sub-groups, a missing piece that Purkey and Smith (1983) advocated for in their review of effective schools research. None of the case studies reported on prior conditions before improvement.

Conclusion

This review of school change demonstrated that reforming schools is a complicated process that must happen from the inside. Schools must have the capacity to address continually changing demands and to utilize and create resources and structures that will enable their students to achieve at socially and academically high levels. Applying external reforms to schools that lack such internal capacity has characterized the history of reform policy. It has also resulted in underperforming students and schools remaining underperforming. The literature reviewed here posited five elements of school capacity: teacher instructional practice, teacher learning and leadership, school climate and professional community, school structures, and principal leadership. The model of capacity drawn from this research illustrates the interactional nature of all elements in affecting student achievement. It also illustrates how the potential of external policies or supports to affect student achievement depends on the school's internal capacity to interpret and utilize them.

Collections of studies in teacher learning and instruction and school change and reform informed the model. The majority of studies offered pieces of the bigger picture of internal school reform. That is, the current literature in whole-school reform mainly draws from studies of the individual elements of capacity. There is limited research studying all of the pieces in action in schools that have reformed, or are reforming, successfully. The research informing the model can be divided into four categories.

- *Studies of specific elements of the model.* For example, qualitative study of the dynamics of building community. These were typically studies of smaller groups within a larger school. Another example is the research in professional development that may or may not include participants from the same school site. The purpose of these studies is not necessarily focused on school reform, but is more so focused on the examination of a change.
- *Studies of specific elements of the model as they relate to each other.* These studies were mostly quantitative or mixed methods. An example of this research is quantitative study of how leadership affected various other elements of school capacity.
- *Studies of the characteristics of effective schools.* This research focused on discrete elements that are common to schools considered successful or improving. These studies rarely described the context of the school before it experienced significant change, other than to identify discrete elements that were present previously and then to identify those present after a period of time.
- *Case studies of whole-school change.* This research consisted of case studies focused on the close examination of an entire school. These studies were limited in number and in site selection. Some of these studies selected schools based on demonstrated achievement, but the majority of schools that were examined did not demonstrate marked academic improvement. They were selected due to their student demographics and/or participation in a given reform effort.

The lack of recent case study research examining internal whole-school capacity building with a “focus on results” (Levin & Fullan, 2008) is puzzling given the emphasis on its importance to school reform. Our current understanding of and faith in capacity building to improve schools and affect student achievement is built upon relatively disconnected evidence from the studies described above. This available research

enabled the construction of a model of school capacity, but what is missing from the research base is more rich and rigorous study of how schools develop that capacity. There is evidence that schools with low capacity and low achievement do not grow stronger in our policy climate and there is little literature evidence documenting the internal work of those that do (Riehl & Firestone, 2005). This study addresses that gap by studying how a chronically underachieving, high-poverty, minority-majority school with previously low capacity strengthened internally to transform its work and successfully affect student achievement. It offers an analysis of the school's progression from the perspective of those who participated in the changes. Through this analysis, the study also offers grounded theory that both supports and contributes to the model of capacity presented here.

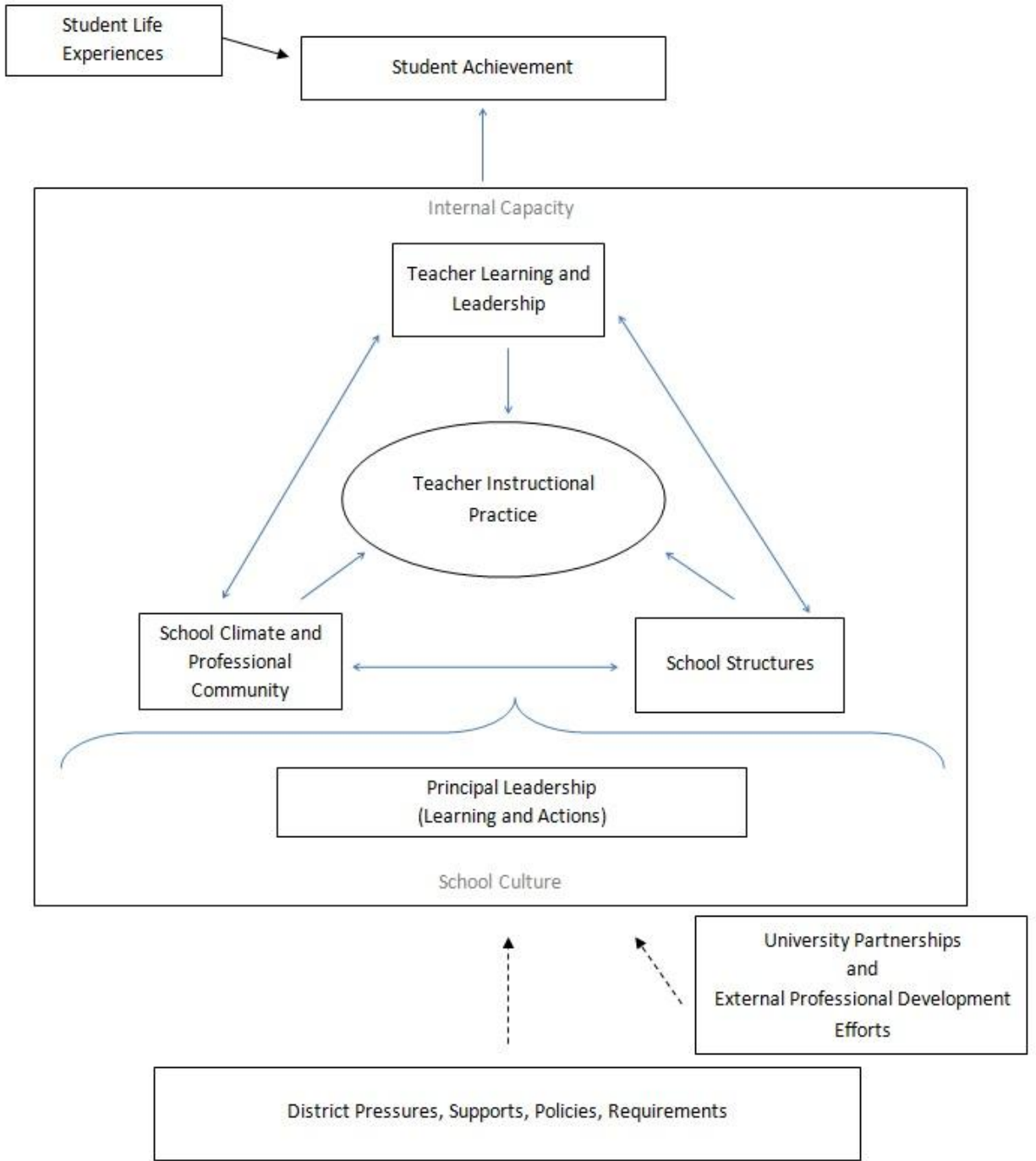


Figure 2-1. Dynamics of school capacity

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to analyze the internal school change process in a high-poverty school that experienced marked improvement in student achievement. By describing how and why the school changed from the perspectives of the stakeholders, a story of change is told that offers an explanatory theory of school reform. Using a qualitative approach, the study focused on the following initial research questions: 1) What are the changes that this school has experienced? 2) How did this school experience the changes? and 3) Why did this school engage in the changes that it did? Janesick (2000) asserted that qualitative research is suited to questions that explore whole systems such as schools, questions regarding the social context of an organization, and questions focused on the political, economic, or sociopsychological aspects of organizations. The questions for the current research therefore made qualitative inquiry the most appropriate choice for study. Additionally, qualitative research enabled a design, which “turns on the use of a set of procedures that are simultaneously open-ended and rigorous and that do justice to the complexity of the social setting under study” (p. 379).

This chapter describes the constructionist grounded theory research process that was used to address the research questions. It includes the theoretical perspective guiding methodological decisions, rationale for site selection, data collection methods, data analysis methods, and my role as researcher.

Theoretical Perspective

“All research is interpretive” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). Every research endeavor is guided by how the researcher considers the data and approaches the design of the study. These considerations are influenced by the researcher’s beliefs, which shape how he or she sees the world, interacts with it, and makes decisions regarding its study. Surfacing these beliefs, methodological decisions, and their effects on a study is a key responsibility of the researcher.

This study is situated within the interpretivist-constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and is informed by social constructionism. Social constructionism considers knowledge construction as a socially mediated process. Constructionism holds that people make meaning not through their unique individual interaction with a pre-existing world as in constructivism, but rather their understandings are constructed through the social processes in that world. Of importance to a social constructionist study are the “systems of representation, social and material practices, laws of discourses and ideological effects” of that social environment. Social constructionists have “concern above all with the production and organization of differences, and they therefore reject the idea that any essential or natural givens precede the process of social determination” (Fuss, 1989 as cited in Schwandt, 1997, p. 20). In sum, as Gubrium and Holstein (2008) maintain, “the constructionist challenge is to approach social worlds as realities assembled and sustained, not just as evidently available for documentation and analysis” (p. 9).

Social constructionism is a useful perspective for studying school change as it focuses the research gaze away from simply identifying discrete causal links within a successful reform as has been done in much prior research (for example, Borman,

Hewes, Overman, & Brown, 2003; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Louis & Marks, 1998; Rowan & Miller, 2007). Instead of this more reductionist approach, social constructionism focuses on understanding how the stakeholders within the change have made sense of it within their social world. Operating within this perspective will enable me to frame knowledge as both sustained and created by the social processes of the school and to consider how that knowledge and social action have developed together to construct the school's changes (Young & Collin, 2004). How people have interacted with and been shaped by their individual school's context is important to understanding the change a school has undergone and the processes by which it has done so.

As has been established, social constructionism was the interpretive lens used to design the study and identify and analyze data. Social constructionism is also important to the data analysis process in two ways. First, because the constructionist perspective considers knowledge construction a social process, the research process itself must be situated within this social world. Second, the role of the researcher must be scrutinized and the data attended to as a co-construction between participants and researcher (Charmaz, 2003). The interactional nature of interviews means that "the interview is more than a simple information-gathering operation; it's a site of, and occasion for, producing knowledge itself" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p. 4).

Additionally, as will be explained in more detail in the following sections, this study employed a grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis. It was the intent to construct a theory of change through this study. The theory will describe and explain how this school has transformed over the past few years. Grounded theory, however, is often considered to be a more positivist oriented approach to data analysis and the use

of a social constructionist orientation requires the traditional idea of *theory* to be reconceptualized. Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original conception of the grounded theory method emphasized an objective knowing which assumed that the resulting theory was more or less "discovered" in the data rather than constructed. This initially served as a way to advance qualitative research as a legitimate research approach by producing a generalizable theory that would hold stable over similar contexts. Through this method, however, the minutiae of a phenomenon tend to be ignored as unimportant to the larger discovered theory and the view that there is an objective truth to be known is reinforced.

Constructionist views of theory differ from this more positivist view. A study operating within a constructionist theoretical perspective considers theory as a construction, not as an objective given. This theory can be utilized for understanding contextual happenings and may generalize to other settings. As Sharon Turnbull (2002) writes:

Social constructionist theory building is derived from cases that are grounded in situated experience and practice and are inductively derived. Although such theories are potentially transferable and applicable beyond the cases from which they emerge, social constructionists... point to the complexity and variability of social relations to argue against any attempts to claim causality, generalizability, or repeatability in their theories. (p. 331)

Research Design

Case Study Rationale

This is an instrumental case study (Stake, 2005) of a Title I elementary school that engaged in transformation. An instrumental case study uses a case to provide insight into an external interest. In this study, the external interest under examination was successful school reform. This interest was explored through the in-depth study of

a particular school in a particular context. The hope was that this school would be instrumental to understanding the particulars of how a school can transform, what elements interrelate to effect substantial changes, and how the stakeholders themselves affect these changes.

This was not a search for causal explanation of school change, but rather as Stake (2005) described, it was the search for “sequence and coincidence of events, interrelated and contextually bound, purposive but questionably determinative” (p. 449). Because casual explanations and generalizability are not goals of this case study, or any case study, it will be up to the individual reader to determine what from this research can be applied elsewhere (Merriam, 2009). This is not a damning limitation, however, as there is much to be learned regarding whole school transformation from the particulars of this single case. In support of this point, Merriam references Erickson’s (1986) assertion that “the general lies in the particular” (p. 50).

Site Selection

This case study was conducted at a single school site. The school itself served as the bounded system of analysis for the case study, purposefully selected as an extreme case. The school was selected due to its potential for offering an information-rich case as a recently transformed school that is continuing to improve (Patton, 2002). To choose the best case for study, criteria were established which helped to guide site selection (Merriam, 2009). The selection criteria included:

- Being a high-needs school as characterized by identification as a Title I school and at least a 70% free-reduced student lunch rate
- Experiencing recent or current ranking within the state Differentiated Accountability system which indicates that the school is a high-needs school (i.e., is/has been struggling in student achievement)

- Recently experiencing a significant improvement in student achievement as indicated by the achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress for student subgroups
- Being identified by school stakeholders as having experienced a highly successful change over time

These criteria led to the selection of Gateway Elementary¹. This school met the first three criteria and also was identified by stakeholders as experiencing a transformation that was due to teachers and administration, not necessarily to externally imposed programs. Stakeholders preliminarily indicated that a series of interrelated factors influenced not only strong positive change in professionalization and school health, but substantially affected student achievement.

Site Description

Gateway Elementary is a prekindergarten to fifth grade school with approximately 600 students and 47 administrative and instructional staff members. As of the 2008-2009 school year, 80% of the students were on free or reduced lunch, 31% were English Language Learners, and 16% were classified as having disabilities. Thirty-one percent of students were absent more than 21 days in the 2008-2009 school-year. The school had never achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the current AYP criteria. In 2008-2009, they met AYP for all student sub-groups.

The student population of the school has changed dramatically in recent years. The percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, the percentage of English Language Learners (ELL), the percentage of minority students, and rates of absenteeism have all increased steadily each year. Between 2002 and 2008, the free and reduced lunch rate increased 15%, the number of ELL and minority students

¹ Gateway Elementary is a pseudonym.

increased 30% and 35% respectively. Additionally, the percentage of students absent 21 days or more increased from 5 to 31% by the 2008-2009 school year. If we consider the data indicating that higher percentages of students in poverty adversely affect school achievement levels (Planty, et al., 2009), then Gateway should still be struggling in achievement. Instead, the opposite has occurred. Although the student population has increased in need, achievement has significantly risen over the past three years. See Table 3-1 for an overview of student demographics and the accompanying AYP of student sub-groups.

At the start of this study, the school was in the Prevent I phase of Differentiated Accountability. While they met AYP for the 2008-2009 school year, their lack of AYP prior to that year means that they will need to achieve AYP for another consecutive year to be removed from this category. Schools in Prevent I are schools that are designated as Schools in Need of Improvement (SINI) for one, two, or three years, that have a school grade of A, B, or C, and that meet at least 80% of Adequate Yearly Progress criteria. In Prevent I, “these schools decide which interventions meet their needs and the district provides assistance in implementation. State department of education staff monitor compliance through desktop reviews and monitor student achievement through progress monitoring reporting” (FDOE, 2008). Per state policy, reform interventions are organized around nine areas: school improvement and planning, leadership, educator quality, professional development, curriculum aligned and paced, continuous improvement model, choice with transportation, supplemental educational services, and monitoring plans and processes. Appendix A additionally contains detailed information regarding the demographic and achievement history of the school.

Table 3-1. Overview of Gateway's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and student demographic history

	% of AYP criteria satisfied	Subgroups not meeting AYP criteria in reading	Subgroups not meeting AYP criteria in math	% Free/Reduced Lunch	% ELL	% Minority	% Absent 21+ days
2008-09	100	None	None	80	31	79	31
2007-08	87	Black, Economically Disadvantaged	Black	71	34	75	22
2006-07	87	None	Black, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners	72	26	69	24
2005-06	82	Black, English Language Learners	Black, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, English Language Learners	71	21	67	20
2004-05	83*	Black, English Language Learners	Black, English Language Learners	73	20	64	23
2003-04	100*	None	None	66	9	57	8
2002-03	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	65	1	44	5

Source: Florida Department of Education School Accountability Reports database

* percentages represent 30 criteria, all other years represent 39 criteria

Participants and Data Collection

This case study was largely retrospective in nature. Because of this, the primary sources of data were interviews with key faculty and administrators. Secondary archival data provided study context.

Participant recruitment. Participant selection took place in two phases: recruitment and snowball sampling. In the first phase, a group of potential participants was recruited by the researcher. To introduce the study to the faculty, an internet chat session was arranged during a school faculty meeting. In this session, I presented the faculty with a description of the research, emphasized confidentiality for all participants and their responses, reiterated that participation was voluntary, and informed them that I would be on campus in-person the next week to distribute consent forms and answer any questions. The next week, I brought and distributed consent forms to every faculty and administrative member of the school. Thirty-five consent forms were returned.

In the second phase, participants were then identified for participation through a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling is a sampling technique in which current informants identify further informants (Patton, 2002). Using questions such as, “who else should I talk to about _____?” (Insert element of their school that was identified by them and was a key element of the literature on high-poverty school reform), current participants recommended subsequent participants. Through this, I was able to ascertain whom stakeholders believed could help me to understand the school and what had changed. This provided an information-rich participant sample derived directly from intra-identified stakeholders. As the official leader of the school, the principal was the beginning of the snowball. His interview provided the initial

participants. As the snowball grew larger, it ultimately stabilized as people repeatedly identified the same key names.

Due to Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, I could not interview every person who was recommended by participants. All interviews had to be conducted with persons from only the initially recruited pool. This resulted in participants occasionally recommending people who did not initially consent to the study and who, therefore, could not be contacted. I was cautious not to reveal who had consented and who had not when participants offered their recommendations. Additionally, some recommended participants who originally consented to be interviewed were not available when contacted later for an interview.

Participant characteristics. A total of fourteen participants were interviewed. A fifteenth participant, who was not interviewed, participated in a member check of the findings. This is approximately 30% of the instructional and administrative staff and 50% of the eligible pool from participant recruitment. Of the fourteen participants interviewed, nine were classroom teachers, four were members of the school leadership team, including the principal, and one was a district appointed specialist who had worked with the school for six years. The fifteenth participant, who only participated in the member check, was a classroom teacher. Participants' ages ranged from 30 to 60 years old. Participants had been working at Gateway between 1 and 18 years. Eleven participants were female and four were male. Twelve participants identified themselves as White or Caucasian, and one participant identified as Hispanic. The ethnicity and age of two participants is unknown. The classroom teacher participants represented kindergarten through fifth grade in their most recent teaching positions; two participants taught

kindergarten, two participants taught first grade, one participant each taught second, third, and fourth grades, two participants taught fifth grade, and one participant taught a range of grades.

For the purposes of identifying participants with codes, all non-classroom teacher participants are coded as LTM for Leadership Team Members. All classroom teacher participants are coded as CT. An arbitrary number follows the letters to maintain distinction between participants. For example, CT-1, CT-2, and so on. The principal's code is LTM-P.

Interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted with fourteen key informants. The purpose of the interviews was to understand how the participants socially constructed their engagement with, and understanding of, the school's changes. In grounded theory, multiple sequential interviews with participants enable a "stronger basis for creating a nuanced understanding of social process" (Charmaz, 2003 p. 318). As new areas for examination emerge, this type of data collection structure enables moving closer to the operating processes by allowing for follow up, which when done over time, can strengthen the "depth, detail, and resonance" (p. 318) of the participants' stories.

Upon beginning the snowball, participants identified by the principal were interviewed using a semi-structured version of the initial interview questions. Not only were those who responded positively or who had been leaders of the changes sought for interviews. Those who were resistant or skeptical of the school's direction also provided key information related to how the school changed and why.

All participants were interviewed using the interview guide presented in Appendix B. These questions were constructed to allow for a breadth of participant responses. As

Charmaz (2006) asserted, in grounded theory “we cannot assume to know our [theoretical] categories in advance, much less have them contained in our beginning research questions” (p. 100). In line with this approach, as data collection and analysis progressed, more specific follow-up or sub-questions were asked. These questions were intended to confirm, refute, or expand tentative theories that were emerging from the data. Theoretical sampling procedures are discussed later in this section.

The interviews were used in part as DeVault and McCoy (2003) described in their discussion of interviews for institutional ethnography. They stated “they are used not to reveal subjective states, but to locate and trace the points of connection among individuals working in different parts of institutional complexes of activity” (p. 371). The individual interviews sought not just the perspectives of the individual participant, but also to place that participant in the larger change of the school. Through the interviews, a constructed piece by piece view of the school’s change process was built (p. 375).

All interviews focused retrospectively on how and why the participants perceived the school had changed over the past few years, but as more data were gathered, the interviews focused on specific areas and dynamics of that change. All but one participant was interviewed once for approximately 45 minutes. The principal was interviewed twice. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. To keep organized and track data collection, two tables were created and maintained throughout the interview process. The first table included the purpose of each interview, the interviewee as identified by code, the date, the location, the interviewee’s participant and archival data recommendations, and key questions or thoughts that the interview immediately prompted. The second table included characteristics of each participant

including age, sex, ethnicity, position, total number of years teaching, number of years teaching at this school, and type of preservice preparation. The chart of participant demographics is included in Appendix A.

Archival data. Secondary data sources were identified using the same snowball technique. Questions, such as “where could I look to find evidence of _____?” identified documents that informants believed would provide rich information related to how the school had changed. These documents did not serve as primary data for analysis, but rather added to the contextual description of the site. The only documents that participants identified as potentially useful were those showing achievement difference over time. This information is included in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

I employed data analysis methods consistent with those of constructionist grounded theory. While Holstein and Gubrium (2003) maintain that social constructionism typically informs the more practical *what* and *how* of a process, Charmaz (2008) sees a social constructionist approach to grounded theory as allowing for the additional addressing of the “*why* questions while preserving the complexity of social life” (p. 397). It is the what, how, and why questions of the site’s experienced change that this case study addressed

The constructionist grounded theory approach “places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Any research process itself is a social construction, and constructionist grounded theory embraces and recognizes the significance of this. The version of grounded theory utilized for this study offers a richly contextualized “plausible account” which provides insight into our understanding of how

participants in this school experienced and interpreted change as they reformed. This approach was employed in much the same way as Glaser and Strauss' (1967) more positivistic conception, although, critical differences laid in how the research process was constructed. Constructionist analysis "resists the tendency in objectivist grounded theory to oversimplify, erase differences, overlook variation, and assume neutrality throughout inquiry" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 408). Consequentially, this research "analyze[d] positionality and partiality" while still being able to "invoke the generalizing logic of objectivist grounded theory" (p. 408); during the process, there was an understanding that as contingencies unfolded, my interpretation and "the studied scenes" could change as I interpreted the data.

The graphic below (Figure 3-1) represents the general process of the analysis. Interviews and analysis took place in "rounds". The first four interviews conducted were initially coded. Examples of initial coding included such codes as "communicating expectations directly", "being pushed to do more", and "holding students to high expectations- no excuses". Using a technique of constant comparison, initial codes and their accompanying data were reread, compared with one another, and refined to form focused codes. This meant grouping similar codes together under a common, more theoretical code. For example, the codes above became the focused code of "breaking barriers of success". The focused code gave a broader view of the process being described. Focused codes then enabled the beginnings of memo-writing.

Successive and ongoing memo-writing throughout the analysis process facilitated the creation of theoretical categories by providing a "space and place for making comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes of data and other codes,

codes and category, and category and concept and for articulating conjectures about these comparisons” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 73). The content of these early memos described the processes represented by the focused code and created the beginning of theories explaining why and how actions were engaged. While writing and rereading these early memos, the focused codes became emergent categories as codes were combined, reconceptualized, or expanded during the constant comparative analysis.

At this point, a further two interviews were conducted. These interviews were used to “test” the emerging categories. Through their coding, I looked for new threads of analysis that could be used to expand the emerging theories. The interviews were coded first with initial codes that closely described the action in the data. They were then coded with the more theoretical, focused codes. During this process, the newly coded data were integrated into the emergent categories. This deepened the properties and description of each category. The school’s changes, the reasons for the changes, and how the changes were enacted started to take form. Though, not everything fit naturally into the emergent theoretical categories. When a focused code or category did not seem to accurately capture a piece of data, that conflict provided a point for theoretical sampling.

Theoretical sampling is the process of “seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in emerging theory” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). I theoretically sampled in two ways. The first way was by going back to previously coded data. As conflict arose between new data and existing categories, I went back to relevant codes to compare the new data with the old data. This enabled me to review and reconsider how I understood a given process in the school’s changes. Sometimes, I

realized that the data were different parts of the same whole and used that to expand the category. Other times, I realized that what I initially interpreted was not supported with the new data. This led into the second means of theoretical sampling. Here, subsequent interviews were used to elicit data relative to a weak category. The same basic questions were posed from the interview guide, however, the content of follow-up questions often depended on the category conflict. This iterative data collection and analysis process continued throughout the study. In the later interviews, the categories stabilized and I reached “theoretical sufficiency” (Dey, 1999 as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p.114). I then sorted my categories, created a rough diagram depicting their relationships, and began the first draft of the findings. Of note, is that the analysis did not stop once writing began. I used the category memos to drive the organization of the findings; this meant constant comparison of categories. Through this process, categories were further refined and linked with one another.

A final step to the data analysis process was member checking. A summary of the findings was emailed to all fourteen participants asking for their input regarding the alignment of the findings with their perspectives. The findings summary was also sent to a fifteenth participant who did not participate in the interviews due to time constraints. It was assumed that if the findings were representative of the experiences of the school as a whole, then this participant would share this constructed version of the school’s changes without having participated in an interview. Seven participants responded to the member check. Their feedback was compared to the data and integrated into the findings. The data analysis process resulted in a refined diagram depicting the process of school reform. This diagram is presented in Chapter 4. The next section details my

role as researcher and the steps that were taken to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

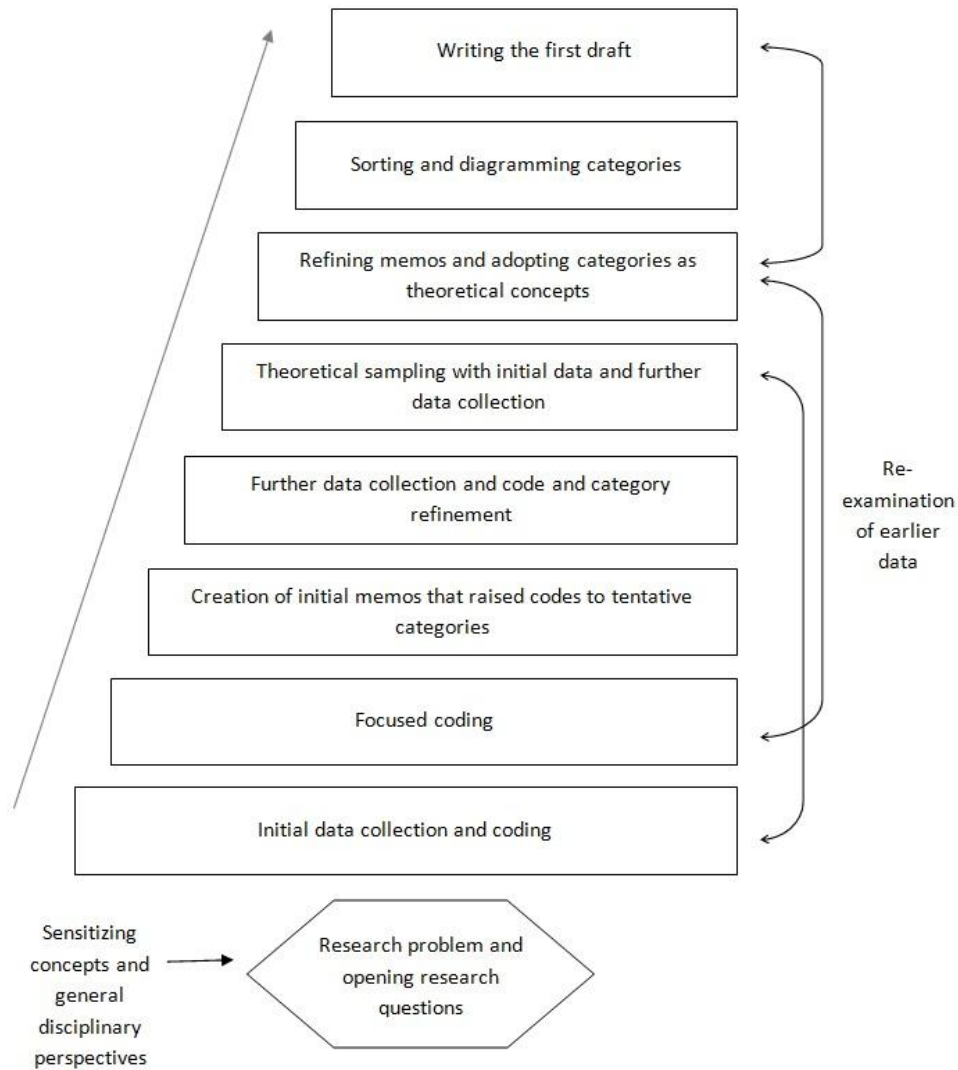


Figure 3-1. The employed grounded theory process adapted from Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Researcher Role and Credibility

My role of researcher in this study is not a neutral one. Interview data are the result of an interactional co-construction of knowledge between participant and

interviewer (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). My choices of questions, my responses to participants during the interview, and my interpretation of their responses were all value-laden decisions that affected the resulting data. I constructed their story with them, just as much as I sought to understand their experiences. Because of this, I cannot assume a sense of neutrality in my role, as it did not exist.

Approaching the interview as an interactional process means that I was necessarily attentive at all times to how my role affected the data; I had to always treat it as a co-constructed truth. It also means that I needed to nurture relationships with participants prior to and during the interview (Dunbar, Rodriguez, & Parker, 2003). As an outsider to the school, former insider of the district, and unfamiliar member of a familiar university partnership, I immediately held roles that influenced how participants responded to me and to the interview process

In addition to the more explicit roles that affected how participants responded to the study, I have entering perspectives that inherently affected my interpretation of the data. These entering perspectives were influenced by my personal beliefs, experiences, and interests. In line with Glesne's (2006) recommendation, I did not suppress these subjectivities, but rather used them "to inquire into [my] perspectives and interpretations and to shape new questions through re-examining [my] assumptions" (p. 120). Initially surfacing how the "research topic intersects with [my] life" (p. 120) enabled me to attend to how these perspectives might "shape, skew, distort, construe, and misconstrue what [I] make of what [I] see and hear" (p.123).

The strategies that were used for monitoring this subjectivity as well as ensuring a thorough research process so that research credibility was enhanced are described

below. These strategies are: triangulation with multiple sources of data, member checks, expert audit review, and reflexivity. Each strategy is defined and its role in the study is described below.

- **TRIANGULATION WITH MULTIPLE SOURCES OF DATA** (MERRIAM, 2009; PATTON, 2002). Triangulation with multiple data sources is “cross checking data collected from people with different perspectives or from follow-up interviews with the same people” (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). This was done throughout the study as data and codes were subjected to constant comparison and memoing.
- **MEMBER CHECKS** (MERRIAM, 2009; PATTON, 2002; GLESNE, 2006). Member checks are the solicitation of feedback from participants regarding their responses, their experiences, and the subsequent interpretations of them. As co-constructors of the data, participants had an important role to play in how the data was interpreted. A summary of the findings was provided to all participants for their review and feedback.
- **EXPERT AUDIT REVIEW** (PATTON, 2002). An expert audit review is conducted by research experts who assess the quality of the research methods and analysis process. This was conducted by my doctoral committee before, during, and after the study’s completion.
- **REFLEXIVITY** (MERRIAM, 2009). Reflexivity involves the researcher reflecting critically about his or her entering biases and assumptions and then making publicly available how they intersect with the research. Engaging in reflexivity throughout the research enables 1) the use of strategies to consistently monitor the self’s role in the research, and 2) to make known to readers how the researcher’s values and expectations have come to bear on the study’s decisions and conclusions (Maxwell, 2005 as cited in Merriam, 2009). This was conducted prior to the start of the research through the creation of a reflexivity statement. Reflexivity was also conducted throughout the process through the use of an ongoing researcher’s log. The log included explicit identification of subjectivities that surfaced and how they were attended to. The reflexivity statement and researcher’s log are included in Appendix C.

Summary

To study the internal processes of successful school change, this study employed a constructionist grounded theory approach. This approach relied on participant perspectives to tell the story of high poverty school reform. The data collection and analysis process was iterative and engaged until the final draft was penned.

Constructing and comparatively attending to memos at each step of the research, enabled me to continually explore the data as it was collected, thus making the “analysis progressively stronger, clearer, and more theoretical” (Charmaz, 2003, p. 326). Data collection and analysis became intertwined in this process as theoretical sampling was conducted to explore and expand categories that seemed weak or incomplete. This constant comparison of data, codes, and memos leading to category refinement informed an ultimate explanatory theory of school reform. This explanatory theory is presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 4 THEN AND NOW

Introduction

Over the course of two years, Gateway Elementary engaged in a transformation. They changed their leader, their organizational culture, their way of work, and their student achievement. They changed without a loss of teachers and without external intrusion. They worked to meld initiatives within their context and to redefine the role teachers played. They followed a leader who they saw as having the best interests of their students at heart and who could help them rise to the expectations held at more affluent schools. Gateway faculty worked hard, sweat blood, and came back for more. Most significantly, they never gave up on their students. A teacher new to the school illustrated this commitment in the following story.

I really think [the veteran teachers] take such pride in being a teacher from Gateway. You know I went on a field trip with my kids to [a performing arts center in a more affluent area] ... and here come the Gateway children. Shoes that don't match, no socks, dirty shirts. Getting off the bus. Not straight little soldiers [but] like you know what? Happy children getting off the buses, laughing, smiling. Are they a little noisy? Yes. Are they getting out of line? Yes. Are they being respectful? Yes. And a teacher turns to another teacher and says "That's got to be Gateway" and I said "That's right we are. We are Gateway" and walked into [the performing arts center] with those children. So that perception of these poor children, lower class, that is why [the teachers] are tough. That is why they want you to work hard to fit in because they have gone -- they have gone through a lot. Just like the children. (CT-7)

This study is the story of what happened within this school, why it happened, and how it happened. Before we can understand the present, we have to understand the past. The building of Gateway into an organization that valued learning and change, that placed students as first priority, and that embraced a communalist spirit began on ground that held fresh memories of isolation and toxicity. This chapter is the description

of the school's cultural context before and after they engaged in school-wide change. The following sections of this chapter will detail how participants viewed the context before they began to change and then will describe how they viewed the school's culture at the time of this study. The following chapter, Chapter 5, is the story of how they engaged in that change.

To describe the school before the change, ten of fourteen participants' accounts were analyzed. Nine were teachers who worked under the previous principal; one was the new principal who reported on the context he found at the beginning of his tenure at the school. All nine participants spoke of the lack of administrative involvement by the prior school principals. Eight of the nine participants viewed the low level of administrative involvement by the prior administration as a problem. The ninth participant recognized that the prior principal's "laid back" style of management did not result in progress for the school, but attributed low performance on achievement tests to the students, not the administration. The following quote exemplifies this participant's perceptions.

The previous administrator, I had her for two years and I could see she was very laid back. It was a little bit looser, but not like loose in a bad way. You know, obviously the school didn't get the best grades, because that kind of goes back to [the district's desegregation program]. Because [Gateway] was the kind of the school that people [chose] when the [more desirable schools were full]. [Gateway] got, I don't want to say *stuck* with certain kids So, it wasn't that it was loosely run, it was just that the kids we had here weren't as focused as if you go to a school [in a more desirable area]. (CT-8)

The tenth participant, the incoming principal, also reported on what he found upon entering the school. As the incoming administrator, he studied the entering context so that he could determine his next steps as the school leader. His perspectives of the state of the school are included along with the teachers who experienced the prior

administration. The beginning of this story is built around these ten participants' accounts.

The Cultural Context: A History

Participants described the prior culture of the school as complacent. They noted that several aspects of the administration were dysfunctional and disconnected.

Participants' perspectives indicated two overwhelming characteristics of the context before transformation: an absent administration and a faculty of untapped potential.

An Administration Absent: A Latchkey Faculty

The prior administrations of Gateway were described as absent. They were absent not just physically, but mentally. Going back at least two principals, participants reported a history of hands-off leadership. they noted that the previous principals did not visit in classrooms, seldom held meetings, and did not interact with students. Without observing in classrooms, the administration did not know what was going on instructionally. Without a principal who knew what was going on, teachers felt no push to improve.

Before I just had my little class and I did what I thought and nobody really checked in and there was not a lot of accountability. And there was nobody to say, "You know, you can push these kids even this much further". (CT-4)

I think our teachers felt [the prior principal was there to] put in her few more years until she could retire. She didn't want to make any waves. You know what I mean? She... did what she needed to do, and like I said she was there when Reading First began and ... was supportive of me doing the training, but she wasn't one that would come to me and say "Hey Ms. Reading Coach, try this". Where the principal now [says] "Hey [Reading Coach], I want you to give this training to our teachers, I want you to take our teachers to go see this". [The prior principal] wasn't like that. (LTM-3)

Teachers reported that the principal established no expectations for content, for teaching practices, or for teacher professional duties. The district implemented a

county-wide pacing guide and encouraged best practices in literacy and math education, but teachers noted that there was no school-level accountability to monitor their practices. Teachers reported that teaching varied across the campus. Although a laissez-faire administration might be thought to lead to a welcomed level of professional autonomy, instead teachers indicated that the opposite happened. An absentee administration undermined teacher growth and meaningful autonomy. The saying “we don’t know what we don’t know” describes the teachers during this time. Opportunities for professional learning and success were lost because teachers were not directed to them. As shared below, the reading coach tried to enhance teacher learning, but many felt they needed instructional leadership that they did not have from the principal.

Nobody had been in anyone’s classroom [to observe]. Nobody was telling people, “Hey fix your ____”. I mean [the Reading Coach] was. You know she was coming in and coaching but if somebody was really not following through on what they were being taught, the principal wasn’t going to follow through on it, so they let it go. (LTM-2)

I mean...when you’re not worried about your administrator coming into your classroom, you kind of can just never be on your toes. (CT-3)

Best practice... such as the architecture of the mini lesson wasn’t there. Teaching points weren’t there... Flow of the day was not there... Differentiating instruction wasn’t there. So some of those key practices that good teachers do weren’t happening. It was void, it wasn’t there, there was no emphasis on it. (LTM-P)

As one participant described it, “you could basically do anything or do nothing and nothing happened (CT-1)”. Teachers were not held accountable for professional responsibilities such as arriving on time to work, fulfilling instructional intervention monitoring tasks, or working to develop teaching skills. As a result, teachers reported that they were “left to their own devices” (LTM-2). Ineffective habits became status quo.

I was hired in January. My first day on the job I noticed that [if] school was being dismissed at...for example 2:50, kindergarten students were lining up

at 2:25 and being dismissed twenty minutes prior [to the end of the school day]. I was like “Well what about the teaching and learning that can happen in twenty minutes?” So those are the things [that I saw]. There was no camaraderie with regards to the curriculum or the direction of the school that was happening. (LTM-P)

Repeatedly teachers reported that problems were not addressed and in many cases not recognized. Participants did not indicate that the principal struggled to effectively solve problems, but instead indicated that they did not see the principal as recognizing that there were problems to solve. This lack of active problem posing served to stagnate the school’s progress. The status quo left ineffective teachers and unsuccessful students unchanged.

She interviewed me and...it was a silly interview. It was [just], “Yes you have the job.” ...But I never saw her in my classroom. She came to observe me once my first year teaching and put a paper in my box that said I did a great job and that was it. She never came, she never -- I mean I -- I never saw her. (CT-3)

Actions such as brief interviews and seemingly indiscriminate hiring practices demonstrated to teachers a lack of care related to the quality of instruction available to students. This resulted, as one teacher put it, in “collect[ing] a lot of not very effective teachers” (CT-2). Such practices denied students optimal educational opportunities. The following participant described lowered expectations for students who had prior history of low-achievement and/or came from low-income families.

What used to bother me about ... administrations we had in the past [was that] they would say, “Oh, our FCAT scores aren’t really good this year, but you guys know the kind of kids we’re teaching. Man, we have got our backs up against the wall.” You know, hearing them say that was like almost also giving teachers an excuse to slack. (CT-6)

A few years into the previous administration’s tenure, a group of teachers felt that a hostile workplace was being intentionally created by the principal and filed a district grievance against her. This grievance seemed to cause the principal to retreat even

further from management and participants reported that they felt an even greater disconnection between the administration and the teachers. The teachers reported that they were subsequently left almost completely alone and that isolationist tendencies were reinforced. Over several years this resulted in the teachers being in what I will describe as a state of teetering. They teetered on the edge of change, desiring to do better, but that change never happened due to obstructed potential and a seeming sense of ennui. This was a conflicting time for the faculty of Gateway.

A Faculty with Untapped Potential

Despite a seeming lackadaisical approach to their jobs by some teachers, in general participants described teachers as a young group with potential just waiting to be released. Participants described a conflict between what they wanted for themselves and their school and the available opportunities to make it happen. They wanted to do better; they wanted to try new things. But their potential went unrealized and remained untapped. Even the faculty who had positive relationships with the principal recognized that her lack of energy and attention to teachers' professional growth hindered possibilities for change.

[The prior principal] didn't support our teachers as far as them being young and being go-getters and needing more than what she could give them. You know what I mean? I think what I'm trying to say probably is because our teachers were newer they were like cutting edge; they want to learn the new things and find out what the research says and she wasn't one that was pushing towards all of that. (LTM-3)

Not only were faculty members not encouraged by their administration to improve, the haze of apathy that had settled over much of the school veiled their own view of possibilities. They felt there was more, but did not know how to move beyond the haze to something different than their current state. Many reported lingering in a limbo of a

complacent minimalism, where teachers felt dissatisfied, but did not complain because 1) it did no good, and 2) there was a sense of freedom and comfort that a lack of oversight brought. The following quotes represent this limbo.

With the old principal I think people were disgruntled; they didn't like [that] their boss never came in, but people weren't complaining... because nobody was holding them accountable, I believe, as much as they are now [being held accountable]. (LTM-2)

I can honestly say there are people who were happy that nobody was coming around. You know like "thank God they're not coming into my room". (CT-2)

Without firm guidance or resources to support change, the teachers teetered on the edge of nothing, yet on the edge of everything. Without a leader to provide direction, they were unable to provide it for themselves. They needed guidance and a shared purpose to move beyond their current state and to realize their obscured potential. This is supported in their actions as they were able to change rapidly once presented with the opportunity.

The Catalyst for Transformation

When the previous principal retired, a new one came aboard. This was the catalyst for a transformation that would tap the teachers' potential and redefine the school. With sweeping changes to the school's structures and ways of working, the school moved from a state of complacency, self-management, and isolation to a culture characterized by innovation, raised teacher voices, and communal responsibility. An active and firm reliance on data led to constant examination of student progress and attention to needs; an embedded principal led to increased accountability to district and school responsibilities; a negotiation of external initiatives pushed growth that was relevant to their context; and although instructional consistency was expected, it was

negotiated in ways that honored teachers as professionals. The next section describes the transformed culture of the school.

Now

The culture described here was conveyed directly and indirectly through participants' stories. Every description of the current culture included three common elements: continuous innovation, reliance on and belief in data use, and collective responsibility for student learning. This chapter provides a brief introduction to the cultural characteristics of the school. Chapter 5 illustrates the processes of change as the school moved from "then" to "now". In doing so, a more detailed picture of the current culture and the transition to this new culture is provided.

Continuous Innovation

Continuous innovation represents the proactive process used to find problems and craft solutions, both at the school and classroom levels. Continuous innovation is an active learning process that is manifested in the culture by problem posing, generating inventive solutions, and then implementing, evaluating and tweaking or discarding solutions, and renewing the search. All of these processes are undergirded by a shared sense of high expectations for both teachers and students. The process of continuous innovation is initiated by repeatedly asking the question, "Is there a better way to do something? Can I do it better? Can I move forward?" (LTM-P).

Consistently looking for areas to improve led the principal and faculty to be continuously innovating for student success. The following quote captures how continuous innovation often played out in daily work.

So we went to [the principal] and said, "You know, [looking at the reading data] obviously something is not working. We need to be able to get these kids to read lists faster because we know they can and we know that

reading a list of words is also a very good reading indicator”. So at second grade we said, “What do you think if we changed our fluency [instructional strategy] that we’re using now to teaching the kids to practice Great Leaps’, which is another program that we have. And he’s like “Okay, let’s give it a shot. We’ll see how it works”. (CT-2)

The attitude of “let’s give it a shot” was present as the school engaged in a wide variety of new school-wide initiatives, such as Response to Intervention, Walk to Instruction (a reading intervention), and implementing two transition classes for students who met only minimum requirements for promotion. Teachers and administrators gained ideas as they engaged in learning experiences such as a school book club, district trainings and meetings, or a formal graduate program. These learning experiences pushed participants to try new things and to be attentive to their effects. For example, when changes in the school population led to an increased number of students who were struggling in reading, faculty looked for ways to innovate. The administration considered the benefits that redesigning their reading instruction would have for student learning, presented information about the benefits to the faculty and solicited for their input, and then chose people at each grade level to pilot the new program. Such actions demonstrated that exploring possible changes in order to enhance student success became a staple in the work of the school, even if the process was not always linear.

It seemed like we went a roundabout way to get to certain points and a lot of trial and error kind of things. But we always seemed to get where we wanted to be. It’s just sometimes it took a little longer to get there... Maybe [we had] to try three or four different things before we got what we wanted. (CT-9)

Sometimes the culture of continuous innovation was challenging, causing teachers to feel there was little stability. Negotiating the tension between innovation and stability is still a work in progress for the administration and the teachers.

Sometimes it can be a bit much [to implement new programs so frequently], instead of sticking to what we know. Like now, this year, [the administration] is all about the vocabulary because last year our vocabulary scores were poor. So now, they're like really into the vocabulary, where I think last year, I forget what we tried last year, but I'm pretty sure we tried something different last year. Also now is the oral reading, the oral story telling. We didn't talk about that last year, but now it's a big deal. We started Walk to [Instruction] two years ago and now we're still doing that. It's like the only thing that we actually are still doing. (CT-3)

And sometimes we would joke [to the principal], "We can't do every single thing that is out there. Like, you can't volunteer us for all of this stuff". (CT-4)

Participants' responses indicated that the process of continuous innovation developed as a natural consequence of holding high expectations for students and teachers. Continuously innovating around teaching practice was a response to the increased internal accountability driven by their shared understanding that students can and will be successful, and that the school has a strong influence in enabling that success. As one participant stated, "[We think now] 'Hey, these are our kids. Maybe they are struggling. But [they don't have to]. We can change that'" (CT-6).

Reliance on and Belief in the Use of Data

Innovation was driven by a reliance on data. Continuous innovation was never innovation for innovation's sake, but was always tied to evaluation. Participants communicated that data were a strong element of their culture. The beliefs that "data do not lie" (CT-8) and that using data to guide instruction is an essential and ongoing piece of their "way of work" (LTM-P) were evident in all participants' responses. Consistent monitoring of student learning, both academic and behavioral, drove school and classroom level decisions.

I think it's really, the [internal] accountability for teachers has changed and the shift in thinking has really [become] you have got to assess your kids. You have to assess them before you teach. You have to assess them after

you teach. You have to observe them while you're teaching, and then make sure that you go back and hit those kids that didn't get it and make sure that they do get it in your differentiated time. (CT-6)

The culture of data also meant that participants viewed judgment and bias as potential obstacles that could interfere with the equity of instruction for students. Relying on data was a way to ensure that school decisions and classroom decisions were based in evidence, not in whim. The second quote highlights how evidence enabled teachers to move past passive acceptance of student progress to reflective action.

You can't just make a decision based on, "Oh yeah we should just make that decision" and not for any other reason. Because then you get to playing favorites and that type of thing, and it doesn't really work out well for anybody. (LTM-4)

And in order for us to help these kids needs we have to sit down and look at the data... we stay focused on what we're looking at and with some of the [conversation] protocols when you say "Just tell me what you see, keep your judgment out of it", that makes people see [student progress] differently. Which has really been helpful, especially for me, just to say, "Oh, I see that they're doing this" instead of [only] saying "Oh, I wonder why [some kids seem to be struggling and not looking closer]. (CT-2).

The cultural belief in the power of data impacted every facet of teaching and learning in the school.

Collective Responsibility

The communal attribute of the school's transformed culture is characterized by a widely shared sense of responsibility for student learning driven by collective accountability for all students in the school Teachers broadened their sense of responsibility beyond themselves and their own students; they felt a responsibility to their school. The administration and the teachers were all perceived as members of one team, working for the same goal of student achievement. As one participant stated

when talking about participating in departmentalized teaching, “[Although I selfishly love teaching all of the subjects], it’s the big picture for the school. It’s what’s good for the kids. It’s what is good for the school” (CT-7). Collective responsibility meant considering how a change would affect not only their practice, but how it would affect the students as a whole.

Teachers shared student data in professional learning communities and relied on their peer teachers and coaches for expert advice. The shared commitment to the learning of all students meant that faculty opened their classroom doors to share data, problems, and successes.

[If I was having a dilemma] I would say [to my team] “I’ve tapped into everything I have got. Who has something else that they can give me? What can we [do]?” It kind of was empowering in a way because I knew I was going to the experts at my school to help me. It wasn’t just finding a program or putting them on a computer for x amount of minutes. I had my colleagues and my coaches saying, “Okay, well what about if I take [your student] and I helped him?” You know, it increased the responsibility [we felt for students besides those in individual classes]. [My team member] would have another kid and I would say “Well, why don’t you bring him in, I’m doing this at this time, maybe we can use that”. (CT-4)

Opening that door and engaging in a culture that was characterized by collective responsibility also meant collective accountability. Data were shared freely by the administration with grade level teams, and data were examined for instructional areas that could be improved.

It is Gateway school, it is not individual classrooms of Gateway. It’s Gateway elementary school. We’re ONE force that needs to be reckoned with... you’re affecting every other [teacher] with regards to [your] data because that third, fourth, and fifth grade teacher holds kindergarten, first, and second grade’s fate [with regards to the school grade]. We make an “A” as a school, we fail as a school. If we’re failing as a third grade because one teacher is not implementing [effective teaching practices] then that pressure [they] put upon themselves is tough and it’s a tough pill to swallow. Nobody wants to let down their peers or their friends and when you’re not implementing some of those things, maybe it’s time to have

some of that self reflection saying 'Wow I'm not doing some of the things I should be doing'. (LTM-P)

While collective responsibility is a key attribute of the school's organizational culture as a whole, there are pockets of faculty still transitioning to stronger communal actions. Some teams are stronger than others, some individuals are stronger than others but all participants described elements of collective responsibility that characterized their work and their roles.

Conclusion

Participants described the school as previously being isolating, hostile, and complacent. They reported their administrators were absent. The faculty was not challenged to improve their instruction or student achievement. The student population became increasingly more high-needs and yet teachers were left unguided in addressing this change. As a result, teachers settled into a steady state, some effective and some not, but there was no impetus for change. Student achievement remained stagnant and low.

With the exit of a principal and the entrance of a leader, the status quo was finally disrupted. The faculty and administration of this school transformed their culture into one where learning was valued and problem-posing was encouraged. Their culture became defined by continuous innovation, reliance on and belief in data, and collective responsibility. They developed the capacity to evaluate their needs, adjust in response, and positively affect the achievement of their students.

Transformation required more than a new principal, however. There were key actions that altered ways of thinking and impacted how the school started doing the business of schooling. I deconstructed these actions within the school in my analysis. In

Chapter 5, I reconstruct them to offer a theory explaining this school's process of capacity building. The immediate actions of a new principal paved the way for teachers' voices, changed pedagogy, the creation of strategic structures, and negotiation of external mandates; the interaction of which resulted in a recultured and restructured school. By engaging in such a transformation, the faculty of the school positioned themselves to be able to meet the changing demands of a changing world.

CHAPTER 5 THE PROCESSES OF CHANGE

Introduction

This chapter is intended to bring life to the processes of change that moved through the school as they recultured themselves. In Chapter 4, I introduced the transformed culture of the school as collective, data reliant, and continuously innovative- all of which align with research on successful high-poverty schools. How this culture was transformed is the topic of this chapter. Participants indicated five linked processes that affected their transformation: taking immediate action, valuing and empowering teachers' voices, changing pedagogy, developing strategic structures to systematize processes, and negotiating external initiatives.

Findings indicated new cultural tendencies were initiated through intentional actions by school leaders to enact changes. The newly emerging culture then influenced future actions and a momentum took hold. What follows is a description of the six processes that served to reculture the school. While I attempt to describe these in terms that position them within the time and space of the school, the messiness of such a reality cannot be underestimated (Clarke, 2005). Often these processes developed simultaneously as parallel actions. Factors influencing the processes overlapped. What started to happen as the new culture took root adds to the complexity as the school's culture and the school's actions became symbiotic. Figure 5-1 illustrates how the school level actions, organizational culture, and external influences operated within the school.

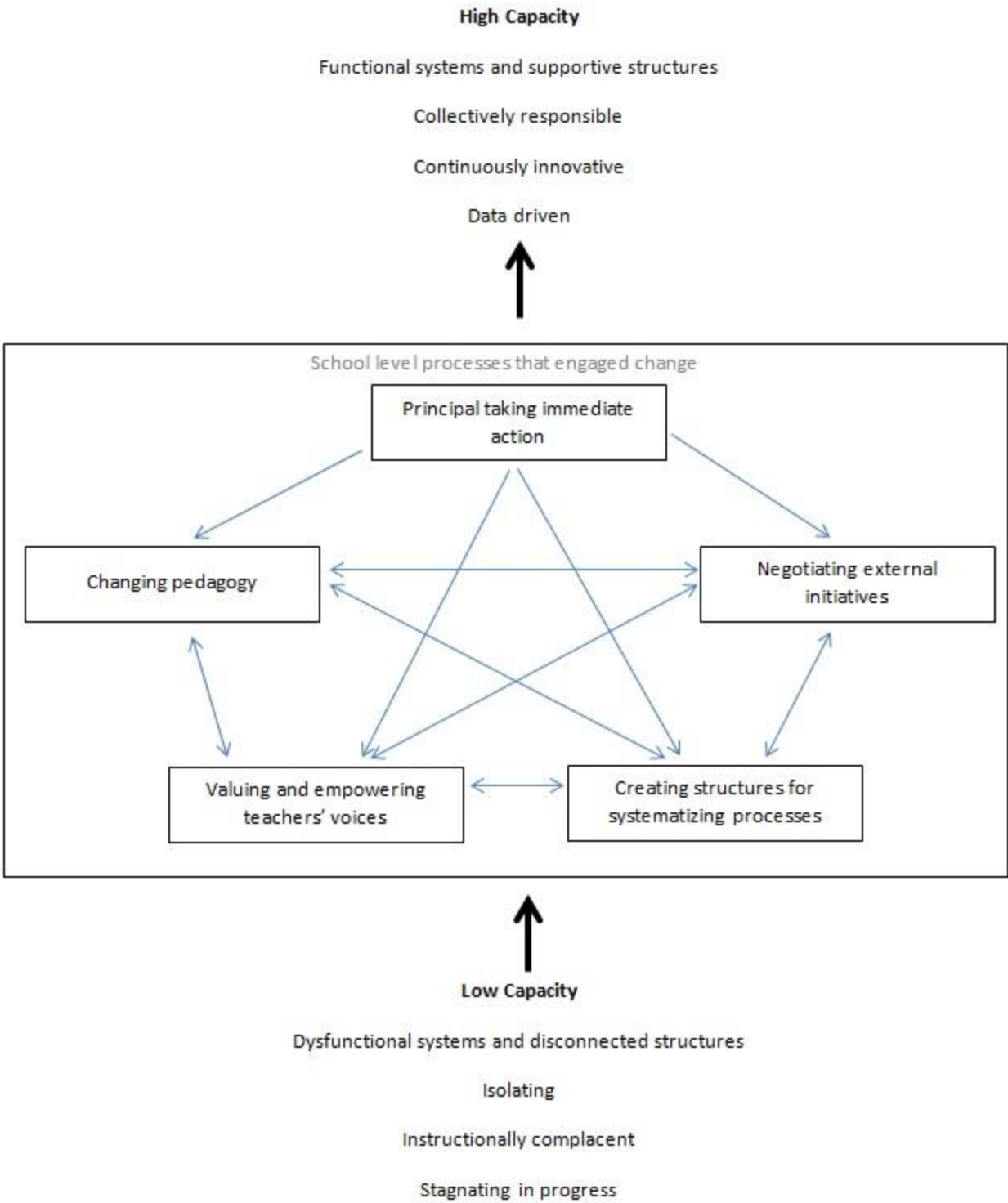


Figure 5-1. The processes of change in Gateway

Taking Immediate Action

The new principal joined the school in January 2007. He immediately took action to learn about the school, about the teachers, and about the students. As he examined the context, his essential first steps included mobilizing leaders, becoming embedded in the context, immediately attending to teachers, and pulling back the curtain to reveal urgency and extend invitation. These first steps served to get the school moving, but also established how future actions would come to be framed.

Mobilizing Leaders

One of the principal's first actions was mobilizing leaders. The new principal created a leadership team comprised of a core group of like-minded school level leaders. These included the reading coach, Title I facilitator, and assistant principal. He additionally surrounded himself with a group of like-minded teacher leaders who were influential among their peers. The new principal did not know all of the details related to the prior school organizational leadership structure, but he did not need to. He was able to fill in the gaps by creating these core groups of leaders. He also relied on them to help move changes.

I came here and I surrounded myself with people who thought the way I thought, who wanted to work the way I work and move that forward... I'm not going to surround myself with individuals who are negative or aren't team players or that [don't have] the best interests of kids at heart. I'm not going to surround myself with those things, so you know of course I'm going gravitate towards those people [who want to improve outcomes for students] and those people are going to gravitate towards me. (LTM-P)

Both of the leadership teams he created, one formal and one informal, worked to establish his trustworthiness and expectations for teachers and for the school. An expectation that "I don't have time for negativity. I don't have time for you if you aren't going to work for the kids" was moved into the leadership and teaching staff through this

immediate action. Participants reported learning quickly that the new principal's first priority was the students. In fact, the new attitude was described as positioning students first, then the school, and then the teachers. The following leadership team participant highlights this priority.

His vision comes from doing what's best for our kids, [so] our teachers would have to go along with that... If he wants all of our kids to succeed and you're a teacher in our school, how would you not want that as well? If you don't want that, then you're not here for the [right] reason and maybe you should go somewhere else. (LTM-3)

This expectation was established during this very first step of mobilizing leaders and was sustained by intentionally and strategically building trust with and among the teachers. Additionally, mobilizing formal and informal leaders readied the context for the parallel action of raising teacher voices.

Becoming Instructionally Embedded

As the new principal mobilized leaders to promote a new way of working, he established the beginnings of his position as an active *member* of the school, embedded within the instructional context rather than external to it. This strong connection to teaching and learning was enhanced as the new principal actively learned about teachers and their practices by being visible in their classrooms, getting to know the students, and examining student data with the teachers. He learned which teachers were effective and which were struggling. He learned the kinds of teaching practices that characterized the school and individual teachers. Statements such as the one below demonstrate how embedded the principal became in the instructional life of the school.

And then when [the new principal] came in he was like the total opposite [of the previous principal]... He was in the classrooms and he was constantly looking at data and he could figure out which teachers were helping their

kids progress and which teachers were not. He knew the kids and he knew what was going on. And he knew the pacing guide so he knew what was expected to be taught at any given time. It was just like a culture change, a big culture change and a lot of that I think was good. (CT-1)

Statements such as this one indicated that becoming embedded meant more than knowing the instructional practices and the data. It also meant knowing the pacing guide and the district expectations for teaching and learning. Pairing knowledge of school and district practices, the new principal ramped up the instructional and professional expectations for teachers.

I think it did [affect things on a daily basis to have the principal be visible]. I think it did. Well, I think he just had more input to [share]. But he set expectations for us, like this is what I expect first grade to be doing. I expect them to have a 90-minute reading block; 90 minute reading blocks might have started before he came; I can't remember. But I don't think they ran as smoothly as they did once he came. (CT-3)

See he came on in like December. He came on middle of the school year and then so that transition [began] that second half of the school year and then the start of the next year when his first school year started. That is when ... everything was just kind of like 'whoa'. Because like I said, [the prior principal] was here for ... 10 or 12 years, and there were teachers who have been here since [she began], so ... going from her to him was ... almost like [going to] a drill sergeant. Everybody [said] we've never [done] things like that. We've never had to do this/that, and it was just a lot of things thrown at once. (CT-8)

The second teacher quote here describes the shift in expectations between the school's two administrators. As the new principal became embedded in the instructional life of the school, he was able to institute greater expectations for teaching and learning. Because the prior principal was not described as being visible in the school, the increased expectations were a drastic shift in how the school operated.

Immediately Attending to Teachers to Build Trust

Part of becoming instructionally embedded meant learning about the context and what was needed and desired by those within it. As the new principal took immediate

action, he used what he learned while becoming embedded to attend to the teachers. These actions nurtured the development of a sense of trust. The actions also seemed to set the stage for the changes to come. The following quote from the new principal illustrates the connection he perceived between attention to the teachers now and the work that was to come.

There was no camaraderie with regards to the curriculum or the direction of the school So that was my biggest thing and I think they knew that but teachers you know when I spoke to them they wanted someone to come in here and say this is where we're going to go. Take us to the promise land. Lead us to what we need to do because we know some great things can happen, and it was just there was no binding of the souls to make sure that was happening and that's what ... they were looking for. They were looking for that missing link to go forward. Not that I'm the missing link at all, but ... in my position I was able to say "Let's go, let's put this forward, and let's move it forward and go from there". (LTM-P)

Hearing that teachers wanted a leader to guide them and wanted a more united approach led the new principal to act in ways to support them. Future actions such as *valuing and empowering teachers' voices* and *changing pedagogy* provide evidence that attending to teachers from the very beginning had long-range effects.

An additional action that helped to establish the message he was listening to teachers and that the students' best interests were the primary goal was reinstating a school program that had been abandoned by the prior principal for reasons unknown. When the new principal heard from teachers that the prior program was important to them and students, he reinstated it. The following quote sums up this action.

When the new administration came, the PE teacher said I really want to bring this [swimming program] back and they were all for it and you know we were happy because we know that's the only way these kids are going to learn how to swim. You know they're in [a state with a lot of water] They need to know how to swim. But that was like one thing that was done away with. She wanted that out. She didn't want anything to do with that and as much as we tried to fight to keep it, it was like no we're not doing it. Then when [the new principal] came, he was like "Oh no, we're doing this". (CT-2)

While only one teacher mentioned this specific program as being an instrumental action, it is representative of listening to teachers, an action that helped to foster trust and build the beginnings of a culture where teachers' voices mattered.

Pulling Back the Curtain to Reveal Urgency and Extend Invitation

The school's structures and ways of work began to be characterized by accountability, transparency, urgency, and collectivism. The beginnings of such characteristics were fostered within the new principal's on-going actions, but they were birthed during one pivotal event. As the new principal took action to mobilize leaders, become instructionally embedded, and attend to teachers' perspectives, there was one event that helped to solidify his place in the school and provide the teachers with motivation to be on board with change. This event additionally served to establish how future work would be conducted. This event can be described as pulling back a curtain that would reveal the school's position in the state accountability system. By meeting with the faculty and explaining that without change, they would go further into corrective action and have to re-interview for their jobs, the principal revealed an urgent situation. In some schools this might be defined as a threatening meeting, but participants did not describe feeling threatened. Instead they described an invitation to generate solutions and to move forward together. The following two quotes demonstrate the cause and effect of this action.

None of us knew the shape we were in until [the new principal and assistant principal] came in and said "Do you realize if we don't make AYP we go under review?". You could have heard a pin drop that day. None of us were aware of that... Because of that grievance [teachers filed against the former principal], she was so [withdrawn that] she wouldn't do anything. She wouldn't let us know that. You can tell nobody had any clue. (LTM-2)

I think the biggest change happened [as we prepared for] the following year. We were able to get together over the summer to plan- kind of "This is

our game plan that we're going to implement. These are the things that I expect from you to move forward. This is our direction. This is our strategic plan of what's important". [One] of the things that the staff didn't know was how bad the situation really was. You know we kind of had to have a "come to Jesus" and say "These are scores. We're going to go under restructuring if this doesn't happen. This is where we're coming from and what are we going to do to correct it or to prevent this from falling into worse hands?" You know for lack of better words. So [before that meeting] there was no temperature check being done, the state of the union wasn't being addressed. I don't think the staff really knew [what] dire straits the school was really in with regards to academic achievement. (LTM-P)

Letting teachers into the decision-making process at this early point in the new principal's tenure gave the teachers a common, immediate goal to bind them together. The new principal did not come in instituting arbitrary changes. He came in and invited teachers to work with him to make changes in order to push students toward success and to keep teachers from having to re-interview for their jobs. This participant continued in her perception of how defining this openness was.

Once we found out we were in restructuring, THAT is what made the difference [between changes attempted by the previous principal and new principal]. People then were like "What!?" And then when they heard they had to re-interview for their jobs, they were like "Wow" and they were ready. I think people were ready for a leader because there was no leader. The teams were leading themselves. I think there were a lot of pockets and subgroups of teachers who started running the school and the [former] principal was okay with that. Then when [the new principal] came in, I think people realized that "Wow we need to get this done or you know chances are we won't have a job". So that I think was a good thing for [the new principal] that we were where we were at because if not, you know it might have made a more hostile work environment for him, like people may have fought him a little bit more. (LTM-2)

This event served to solidify the idea that change was necessary. It meant a realization that the current and previous ways of doing things were not getting the job done. Within this event, the new principal established a direction for the school, while simultaneously asking teachers for their help. Such a behavior would come to

characterize how the school did future business. Within this event, a sense of urgency was created that underscored all future actions.

Valuing and Empowering the Teachers' Voices

Valuing and empowering teachers' voices refers to actions by the administration that communicated that he valued teacher input and encouraged problem solving. This process subsumes all actions related to soliciting faculty input, encouraging independent problem solving by faculty, and the promoting a team approach to making decisions. In eliciting and valuing teacher voices, the principal actively brought teachers into a decision-making role in the school and disrupted a rigid hierarchy of leader-subordinates. By raising teacher voices, the principal voice was simultaneously "lowered" to become one of several voices of a team. Part of this category of change is the enabling of teacher instructional decision-making. This action/effect overlaps with the process of *changing pedagogy* and is also evident in the *creating structures to systematize systems* process.

There was an intentional effort on the part of the leadership to raise teacher voices, voices that, while instrumental in the education of the students, were previously marginalized. Like all of the school's changes, participants indicated that this process was precipitated by the change in principal. Where some leaders might impose the solutions, instead this leader empowered teachers by bringing them to the table for conversation and evaluation and modification of ideas, while also empowering them to identify problems and craft solutions within their sphere of direct influence.

The impact was lasting and pervasive in how decisions were made inside and outside of the classroom. There are three pieces of this process that stand out in the analysis as vital to the empowerment of the teachers' and staff's voices. They are

soliciting input, invoking elements of team strength, and encouraging independent problem solving. By themselves, these pieces would not have affected the faculty as powerfully as they did together. The process of soliciting input enabled teachers' access to school decision making and also relied on them as expert resources for pervasive instructional dilemmas. If the principal had stopped here in fostering teacher voice, teachers would have had only a reactive role. Rather, by invoking elements of team strength, faculty was further positioned to actively push themselves and their colleagues to seek problems and generate solutions. Encouraging of independent problem solving moved the faculty from giving input to proactively approaching their work. These three sub-processes are detailed below.

Soliciting Input

Upon entering the school, the principal stated that he understood from teachers that they wanted to give input and be heard. This initial understanding drove how he approached decisions. Teachers were encouraged to share their opinions, ideas, and frustrations. Some felt more comfortable to do this than others. There is indication that newness to the school and level of personal connection/relationship affected this comfort. That a new teacher would feel apprehension about sharing his/her perspective is not too surprising, and neither is apprehension by a few veteran teachers still feeling out their new leader. Nevertheless, the call to share opinions was offered and a number of teachers answered. An experienced teacher new to the school shared that when she started at the school at the beginning of the principal's second full year, she was taken aback by the level of engagement and the willingness of the staff to put themselves "out there" and openly share ideas (CT-7).

Input was solicited in two ways. From the beginning of the principal's tenure, staff were asked for feedback related to ideas for potential change. Over time teacher input became the key element in how the school structured their School Based Leadership Team (SBLT) meetings for their Response-to-Intervention (RtI) model.

Feedback elicited prior to changes. Administration presented ideas for school level changes. Presentation of potential ideas typically occurred after a problem was identified and a possible solution brainstormed by the leadership team. The idea was then presented to the staff for feedback. Transparency in decision-making was created by presenting the staff with ideas for programs or processes and then asking for feedback regarding their implementation. Soliciting teacher input opened potential changes to scrutiny. Not every decision was made with teacher input, and not every decision was transparent, however a significant number were. These opportunities for input were significant enough that participants described transparency as a core way of working in the school. There clearly was a leadership team and a principal with final decision-making authority, but teachers were more involved in the decision making process than they had ever been before.

I think I felt like [the administration] did still lead, but I think it was more of -- it's hard to describe because I don't want to say collaborative with us, but we were brought in on more decisions with his administration than any other administration that I had been involved with. Not to say that every decision we were brought in on, but because there some that still felt secret, still felt those kinds of things, lack of communication, but there were more [times] that he would like to listen to other people's ideas. (CT-5)

An example can be seen in the administration's desire to institute a new way of working with RtI Tier 2 students. The administrators strategically chose a healthy team to potentially implement the new plan; then approached the team with it.

We would get input from the teachers because we said to the teachers, “This is going to be a huge undertaking... Are you guys interested in this? This is what it would do for you, this is how it’s going to help you meet the needs of the kids, and this is how it’s going to help you differentiate, and this is how it’s going to help us get the kids where they need to be”. (LTM-4)

Presenting a new idea or plan to teachers in such a fashion as this served to demonstrate that 1) the teachers were valuable and deserving of the opportunity to evaluate something that they would be responsible for implementing, 2) teachers had a voice in their school, and 3) teachers were indeed operating as the team that the school espoused being.

Rtl: Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) redefined. During the last year that this study concerns, the school changed the structure of their Professional Learning Communities to better fit their Rtl needs. PLCs were already a school structure per district mandate. What happened in them, however, was variable depending on individual team interpretations of their purpose. In redefining their use, one grade level PLC meeting a month was transformed into a School Based Leadership Team (SBLT) meeting that involved all administrators, service providers, and teachers for a given grade. This meeting focused on trends in the assessment data. Teachers were solicited for ideas to improve weak areas in student learning. Essential to this new structure was opening the floor to all members. The principal, instructional coaches, assistant principal, school psychologist, behavior specialist, and Title I facilitator brainstormed ideas for improvement before the meeting. Once identified problems were initially explored, then an idea for improvement was presented to the grade level. The following quote sums up this process and the effect of soliciting input.

Then at the SBLT [meeting], [the principal] says “Now we’re taking it to the teachers”. So when the school based leadership team kind of comes to consensus about something, then we bring it up to each grade level at

those meetings. And the same thing happens, everybody shares. [The principal] says “What are you thinking about this [proposed idea]?”. We show them the data we have and what we’ve problem solved and say “Ok guys here’s our hypothesis, here’s what data we have, here’s the intervention we’re thinking and this is how we’re going to measure it”. And it’s kind of huge, because sometimes I will say [the grade level teams] add a lot more to it and then sometimes it really does tweak what our problem solving circle looks like and what we’re going to do. (LTM-2)

This respected and empowered teacher voices by providing clear opportunities for discussion related to issues across the grade level. Teachers were pushed to act in expert roles based on the fact that they are “in the trenches, everyday in that classroom” (LTM-4). This new structure treated them like the experts they are by asking them for help. This also served to push responsibility beyond individual classroom walls as teachers were examining data trends across their grade level, not only in their classroom.

Invoking Elements of Team Strength (Leader vs. Ruler)

Raising teacher voices also flattened traditional hierarchical notions of principal as Ruler. The principal was direct in stating that he does not know it all and therefore relied heavily on the teachers and leadership teams to help make decisions. Where he had strength in vision, they had strength in details. Where he could pinpoint a problem, they could brainstorm effective strategies for approaching it. Teachers began to see themselves as integral members of the school team because they could bring everyday classroom experiences to the decision making table. So while they still saw the principal and leadership team as more or less removed from the classroom, they started to see themselves as being able to help fill in the gaps between grand plans and the reality of classroom life. As these teachers illuminated, what they often noticed in an issue or plan often escaped the principal’s radar.

[The principal] was a great leader, but he was- and I'll preface this by saying I'm a detail person. I'm very detailed. I kind of have a type-A personality and he doesn't. So sometimes he would just look at me [when I asked a detail question about a plan] like, "You're asking me that question?" [because he hadn't considered those details of the plan in action]. (CT-4)

[The principal] was very big picture and some of the others of us are very detailed. [We might be like] "Okay, well you want to do this big picture thing, but I need your details to get me there". And so he would bring the big picture and we'd figure out the way to get there. (CT-5)

The teachers were able to offer perspectives that otherwise would have gone unnoticed. The broad stroke approach of the principal and his constant flow of ideas relied on team members who could reign in big plans to make them manageable and team members who could refine plans both before and during implementation. By invoking elements of team strength, the principal's role came to be redefined more as leader than ruler.

Encouraging Independent Problem Solving

Valuing and empowering teachers' voices also incorporates a strengthening of teacher problem solving skills. The principal as leader had faith that teachers could do great things and directly communicated that by prompting them to use their expertise to craft solutions to their classroom problems. As is discussed in the *changing pedagogy* category, there was a level of encouragement for teachers to pose problems about their practice and about student learning and to do something to help solve those problems, even if that meant looking beyond their pacing guide. The following participant, who was in her second year at the school, spoke of how risk-taking and learning were at the core of the school's work.

It's scary, scary, scary, scary, but you know, what do we tell our children about learning? "You're going to feel uncomfortable. It's not going to always be fun". Teachers need to be in that position. If you're going to grow, you have to challenge yourself and it's not always comfortable. So you have to

put yourself out there and [the principal] allowed teachers to do that. He had the safety net for sure. (CT-7)

A long-term teacher at the school echoed this and described how she was empowered to look for problems and pose solutions.

And if you had a problem with other administrations that I had, it was you bring the problem to them and they would solve it. With [this principal] he said, "I don't know everything, I can't solve everything, so if you have something that you think could solve a problem, come to me". He said "I'll be more than willing to listen to you, if you say 'hey I've got this problem, BUT I want to try this as a solution'". And he was very open to those things. If you just came to him with a problem, he's like, "how am I going to fix it?" But if you came to him with a possible solution and something you'd like to try, he was very much behind you on that. I think it did [have an effect on the staff]. It helped people to think outside of the box of from what they had always done and not just doing it [because], "Oh well that's the way we have always done it", and to try new things because he was willing to listen, and I think more and more people started to say, "Hey, you know what, I want to try it like this" or "Hey I want to do this". Before it was, "Okay, I'm just doing it this way because this is how I'm told to do it". (CT-5)

The new principal redefined his role and the teachers' roles. It was made clear that he did not have all of the answers and he could not solve all of the problems. The teachers needed to develop skills to identify and examine issues. The faith placed in teachers to problematize their practice and make instructional decisions for their students instilled a confidence that enabled them to express and use professional knowledge. There is evidence that the established urgency to improve drove the principal and he intentionally fostered independent problem solving to push teachers out of complacent behavior. As a result, an increased problem posing stance in teachers developed, as is highlighted in the quotes below.

He was very challenging... He was always challenging us to think outside the box. "What can we do?" and "We have got to think about this". You know, "We have got to work smarter". (CT-4)

[The principal] saying to me 'I trust you as a teacher; I trust your judgment. If you need to veer from the pacing guide and you don't want to use your

textbook and you think you can come up with better ways to teach your kids, go for it'. Him saying that to me and giving me the latitude to really get to know my kids and really get to create lessons that were meaningful for me and therefore meaningful for my kids, him giving me the latitude to do that was big -- it was a big push to give me the opportunity [to problem solve for my kids' needs]. To know that [the administration] had the trust in me to be able to do that was huge, and I'm sure I'm not the only one he had that conversation with. (CT-6)

The valuing and empowering of teacher voices could be characterized as a significant push toward teacher leadership in the school. This array of actions affected how teachers were valued and how their role was defined. A reliance on teacher input, team approaches, and independent problem solving extended teacher's professional responsibilities and enhanced their instructional skills.

Changing Pedagogy

Changing pedagogy refers to changes in actions and beliefs by teachers. It encompasses how teachers construct their practices and how they view the influences on those practices. When describing changes in pedagogy, participants saw distinct shifts in how they collectively taught previously and how they teach now. They saw differences and recognized that those differences had marked impact on their students. Seeing pedagogy as more than the day-to-day teaching, participants tended to talk in terms of changing their *approach* to instruction. It transcended *what* they do. Changing pedagogy was about *how* and *why*.

Participants told an intertwining story of external influences and administrative emphases that pushed their teaching and in most cases redefined their roles and responsibilities for instruction. Changing pedagogy is characterized by four pieces: Aligning school practices with district expectations, holding high expectations and acting

accordingly, becoming more data centered, and targeting essential areas with resources school-wide.

Aligning School Practices with District Expectations

The district tightened their expectations for content and instructional practices. They distributed curriculum pacing guides and advocated “best practices” for instruction. As this happened, changes occurred at the school level as teachers began using the pacing guides to lead their instruction. As the reading coach described it, instruction was no longer “just them winging it” (LTM-3). With the increased district expectations, teachers expressed a common critique that their curriculum had become more focused yet narrowed. They additionally had a ninety-minute reading block dictated by the Reading First initiative. During this block, teachers were to implement “best practices” in reading. As introduced in Chapter 4, these expectations were communicated by the district, however, implementation across classrooms was inconsistent due to a lack of school level expectations and accountability. Teachers did not start consistently aligning instruction with district guidelines until they received the school level push to do so.

When the new principal came on board, he expected the teaching in classrooms to reflect the district expectations. Teaching became more aligned with district advocated practices, such as the architecture of the mini-lesson. However, as represented in the next piece, this alignment was not hard and fast. Rather there was a flexibility that enabled teachers to make professional decisions regarding their students’ learning.

Holding High Expectations and Acting Accordingly

The administration explicitly expressed high expectations for students, and as a result, such thinking started to pervade the faculty. It affected how teachers thought about student learning and that subsequently affected how they approached instruction.

It was not lip service by saying “all students can learn” but it was about action connected to the common goal that “*our* students will learn and we will take action to make it happen”. Pairing action with high expectations meant that teachers were expected to veer from the district pacing guide when needed. They were expected to know their students personally and to use students’ lives to teach them in meaningful ways or to adjust instructional strategies to meet students’ needs. In other words, encouraging instructional decision making by teachers enabled them to teach to *their* specific group of students- not just teach a group of students. This is illustrated in varying ways such as using picture cues to teach vocabulary for ELL learners, using realia to teach about experiences that students have not had, or adjusting the timeframe given in the district pacing guide to hit certain skills harder before moving on¹.

Administration established the explicit expectation that students *will* learn and then acted to enable it to happen by empowering teachers’ to make professional decisions.

An example was revealed when a teacher talked of her visit to a student’s home with the principal. What started as an assignment for a common graduate program led to an immediate desire to “hook” her students through their personal strengths. Because the principal was involved with her in this learning experience, instituting high expectations for students took on a new meaning, one that meant instruction needed to reach *who* students were.

One of the classes that we did was a cross-cultural class called funds of knowledge and it required us to go do home visits. And [the principal] and I actually went together and visited this home and we could not get enough of listening to this family tell their stories. And when we came back to the

¹ This was expressed to varying degrees by participants. One participant (CT-8) indicated that he has previously created a separate type of curriculum for non-English speaking students, but otherwise did not indicate strong emphasis on students affecting teaching decisions.

school and told our staff about it, they, I mean, to think about going into some of the homes that our kids live in is a very scary thought -- but more people are interested in it. Like they want to know these kids and it's just amazing to me because I really think that's how we're going to hook them and how we're going to get them to succeed... one of my ESOL teachers, she just mentioned to me that we've got to get into these homes. We have got to find out about these kids and I think we'll probably start with like the lowest kids so we can find what to build on for them and then progressively go from there. I'm thinking of a perfect kid in my class right now. His name is [Juan], and he is very, very low [academically]. And I'm thinking, boy if I can get in his house and find out what it is he likes to do; you know, what are things that the family does that I could try to find books or try to find activities that can possibly get him interested. (CT-5)

Such actions recognized the powerful effect of the teacher on student learning. In holding students to high expectations, teachers took on an active problem posing role. Making teaching and management problematic forced teachers to ask "What can I or we do to change this? Or to help students reach expectations?". These questions put the onus of responsibility for student learning clearly on the teachers. It was not their sole responsibility, for teacher responsibility began to expand to team responsibility, but clearly the responsibility for student learning belonged to teachers. High expectations for students meant failure to meet them was unacceptable. Teachers celebrated their incremental successes, but kept pushing students to reach the expectations. Constant assessment paved the way for the questions of "What can I do better?" and provided a means for evaluating those efforts.

The sense of urgency imposed on the school to meet AYP to avoid restructuring left no time to be wasted by excuses. *Teachers* had to meet students' needs and they had to do it now. As one teacher stated, "We always try to keep the focus on the kids and making sure the kids who are falling behind get extra help pretty quickly" (CT-1). To place this trust in teachers to make instructional decisions for students meant that there needed to be work done in how those decisions would be made. The culture

established by the principal and maintained by the rest of the leadership team involved strategically implementing systems of action and expanding responsibility within a culture steeped in accountability and structure. This was particularly driven by a reliance on data.

Becoming Data Centered

The school adopted a “numbers don’t lie” approach to instruction and data. The approach rested on the assumption that if instructional practices were effective, students would be learning in line with the county and state expectations, and that learning would be demonstrated on assessments. This assumption, in part, enabled the administration to trust the teachers, for if they were effective with their decisions, it would be visible in their data. It was a two way process. Trust enabled the teachers to take risks and problematize their teaching. Additionally, data-centered teaching enabled students to be successful which in turn increased the trust the principal had in the teachers to make those decisions. Risk taking was never separated from data.

The influence of being a Response to Intervention (Rtl) district pilot school helped to frame how teams and individual teachers used data. By examining data in teams and analyzing trends across students, teachers began using data to guide their instruction, the approach that was emphasized in the school’s Rtl planning. The quote below is a snapshot of how this approach was implemented.

So, as a second grade team, [our reading coach] would call us together and she would say, “Okay, here is what we’ve got”. We would assess [the students] and then she would say, “Okay, this is what I think we have got going on in the second grade... Okay, what can we do to get these kids to achieve at above level” basically. If we’re doing X and we need to be doing Y, how can we do that? (CT-4)

The teachers moved from using assessment data infrequently, haphazardly, and/or inconsistently to using data frequently and systematically. In addition, the approach encouraged and facilitated follow through. Faculty gathered data *to be used*. For the RtI process, that meant the team used data to identify where kids were falling behind and brainstorm possible interventions or shifts in instructional strategies. Teachers then implemented the strategies and collected more data for progress monitoring. As one participant stated, the process helped teachers approach data as a tool to help move kids forward “as opposed to just coming [to a meeting] and complaining [that students were not succeeding]” (LTM-3) or in other words, “one thing that RTI really taught us is that we need to have data. You know -- no longer are teachers saying this isn’t working in my class. We’re asking them, ‘Show me the data’” (LTM-P). All participants recognized the impact that data have on the school and on their approach to instruction, even teachers who expressed that they had already been using data to drive their instruction. The comments below are representative of teachers’ views of the impact of data on teaching.

Where before I was like ‘Oh maybe I’ll try that. Maybe that will work. What do you think?’ [said in a sing-song way of speaking] (CT-4)

Numbers obviously don’t lie, and I would look at the numbers anyways and I would break them down and do what I had to do. So [having data conversations] was beneficial to the point where obviously you’re sitting in the room with your administrator so it looks good and it feels good that he cares and we say that we care – “Hey these are our scores. Johnny and Bill need to improve What are we doing for him? They’re low”. So it’s kind of like you bounce ideas off of each other, but in the end, like I said, I probably would have done that anyways... But like I said other teachers might not have [been using data]. Obviously you look at your test scores and you figure “Okay 20 kids missed question number three. I’m going to go back and see what question number three was and reteach it or figure out why. Why did they miss question number three?” So it was beneficial. (CT-8)

Relying on data to make instructional decisions additionally influenced the development of the teacher as key in student learning- or to put it another way, asking questions around data pushed the widespread development of a powerful type of teaching where the teacher became instrumental in student success.

Targeting Essential Areas with Resources School-wide

Using research indicating that early reading success is predictive of later achievement, the principal began to build strong primary teams, implement a clear emphasis on reading for all grades, and focus the majority of data analysis on reading for primary grade students. Additionally, first and second grade teams implemented the Walk to Instruction differentiated skill model. This strong emphasis on reading for primary grades was viewed as intentional.

[The principal's] main goal, one of the main goals [the principal] took from the district but kind of internalized it in our building is basically he wanted and still wants every third grade student to be at or above level entering the third grade, knowing that third grade is the big FCAT year where they have to take all that. He wants every student at our school to be on or above level going into the third grade. I mean he read us some statistic about how if they enter the third grade on or above that their rate of success is better. So that was our goal. Get these kids caught up before they get to third grade. (CT-4)

The other big mind shift that changed was I was very proactive in what was happening in the primary grades. I knew that if we were going to solve some of our issues in the intermediate grades with kids failing I had to cut the bleeding at the primary grades. You know, kids can no longer go to third grade below third level. There is no [way] teachers can recoup from that, and that was tough... I wanted to build a momentum, a shift from primary to intermediate so kids would go to third grade at or above grade level. (LTM-P)

If we can take care of all of the phonics issues, because that seemed to be our biggest problem, even with some of our older kids - if we can take care of that and really hit it hard it in the primary grades by the time they get to third grade - really the hope is [that] by the time they get to second grade we can really start focusing on the comprehension and the fluency. So

really it is like taking those things and doing them very well as opposed to just doing a bunch of different things okay. (LTM-4)

Participants indicated that the effect of this strong focus on reading and on the primary grades was a noticeable strength for students who were at the school for multiple years. Third grade teachers reported that students were coming into third grade as better all-around readers, although perhaps still struggling in some areas of phonics. When the school underwent a drastic change in student population, participants reported that the differences in students who had grown with the school and those who were new were highly visible. Yet once again, there was no time to lament this fact. The school staff continued to examine the reading data and pose questions to try to pinpoint areas to improve.

Creating Structures to Systematize Processes

Transforming the school into a learning organization that had the capacity to improve student achievement involved structural, as well as cultural, changes. Creating structures to systematize processes captures how structures were implemented to foster greater operational effectiveness. Creating structures was accomplished in three key ways: immediate and strategic action (ready, fire, aim); maximizing school resources; and formalizing processes.

Immediate and Strategic Action (Ready, Fire, Aim)

Gateway's way of work became defined by a strategic process of continuous innovation. In creating structures, faculty identified needs and immediately implemented structures to address them. This was represented in the ways that district emphases and programs were interpreted by the principal and leadership team and implemented by teachers. At the core of immediate and strategic action was consistent attention to

what structures were working or not working and how they could be made better. Professional learning resources were often catalysts for the examination of existing structures. The principal offered the following regarding how the school approached structural innovation. Just like was introduced in the valuing and empowering teachers' voices process, innovation relied on collective problem solving to identify problems and potential structural solutions.

I mean anything we've done has been from the brain power of the group, of my [School Based Leadership Team] coming together and saying "We've got to do something different" and just trying to put services for kids closer to where they belong...you know there are a couple of things, we've been reading a book called [Annual Growth for All Students, Catch-Up Growth for Those Who are Behind]. It's by a school district in Washington State and how they've reformatted, revamped the way of work of providing kids resources with the amount of minutes they have. So we did read that but everything with our structures in place has been kind of from our own our own brainchild. (LTM-P)

The principal here is taking care not to attribute their changes to any one source or to discount what they have done themselves locally. Instead he acknowledges the role of learning resources in spurring or guiding their ideas, always with the understanding that whatever they implemented was because of their context and strategically adapted to build their capacity for improvement. The quote below regarding their RtI process is representative of this attention to structural capacity.

And it just hit us huge that day like wow we have about three people [who understand RtI], [I mean] people know stuff, but three of us *really* know stuff and we need to build our capacity and our infrastructure to strengthen our shoulders so that it's not just three people. (LTM-2)

Fullan's (2007) "ready, fire, aim" metaphor captures the process of the school's innovations. It could be characterized school-wide as: see a need, implement a structure to address it, see an issue in the structure, implement a change to address it. Similar to how pedagogy was changed to become more problem posing and responsive

to change, school structures were treated with the same approach. Evaluation of effectiveness was ongoing. There is suggestive evidence that the urgency with which the school began to operate forced this immediate way of work. As one participant noted, “we don’t have the luxury of just sliding by anymore” (CT-5).

It is important to note that the immediate implementation of new programs was still strategic. Even with the immediate action that characterized change, new programs were not implemented arbitrarily. An informed leadership influenced how new programs were structured. This is best illustrated in the Walk to Instruction program. The program was initiated in stages by one grade level at a time with careful attention to how the program would fit into existing initiatives. The participant below described this rational and informed process of systematizing the school’s interventions.

There were a couple of other schools that decided to jump on board and do [Walk to Instruction] at the same time, but we just took one grade level [at a time] because we really wanted to focus and get it right, and we were also in the middle of the RtI pilot program. So we were looking at that and saying “How can this work with RtI and how can this meet our kids’ needs? and “How can we do it effectively [and] efficiently, if we’re talking about needing 14 people to run a 30 minute intervention?” [We thought about] logistics. “Where are you going to do it? Who is going to do it? What are [we] going to use?” That type of thing. So we’re like we need to just start with one grade. Whereas there were other schools that decided “Oh yeah, we’re going to do it K-5”. Well, it’s a lot of work. And some schools have even retracted and [decided] not to do that K-5 anymore. Because in theory if you get kids where they need to be before they get to third grade, you don’t need to be doing it K-5. You’re going to fill those holes and fill those gaps before they get to third grade and you’re not going to need it in the upper grades. Or if you do, it’s such a small population that requires that intense of intervention, you wouldn’t need to do the entire grade level. (LTM-4)

Immediate but strategic action is evident in such major structures as Response to Intervention, Professional Learning Communities, a transition class for struggling first and second graders, and Walk to Instruction. Strategic action to implement new ideas involved deliberate phased implementation as well as the strategic use of resources.

Strategically Using Resources

Resources were strategically utilized for the benefit of student learning. The principal confirmed this intentional use of resources as he stated he was “being creative because my resources are only dwindling... if I use the resources I have and I just manipulate them [we can be more effective]” (LTM-P). Participants indicated that human and structural resources were strategically utilized at the school level to support capacity building.

The first way that this was accomplished was by strategically using specialists in order to ensure that students’ learning was being supported. The following quote captures the strategic use of human resources.

And we give them a lot of support, you know with the ESOL program and the Title I programs and we try to make sure those teachers are always working with kids instead of you know doing I don’t know clerical or administrative type of things. (CT-1)

Additionally, teaching partners funded through Title I funds began being used strategically based on data analysis of need. This was another way that the school began moving from a lackadaisical approach to instruction to one that was intentional.

I remember going back three, four, five years ago. I would have Title I come in my room. I would be like, “Hey, what’s up. Nice to see. Hey, um, why don’t you read with these guys today. Pull this group today. Alright cool. Let’s talk for a little bit. Alright cool. Why don’t you help me hand this out. Great. Alright leave”. And that is literally how we used to use our Title I resources because we didn’t know any better. And now instead of attaching Title I and extra teaching partners to teachers during specific times, they’re actually now really trying to attach title one to *kids* that really need them, and I think part of that is Walk to Instruction and part of that is Rtl. [It’s] hugely successful, hugely successful. (CT-6)

Further, as this participant introduced, when the school implemented their Walk to Instruction program to address the Tier 2 requirements of Response to Intervention, everyone was considered an instructional part of the school. Walk to Instruction used

data to cluster all students across a grade level into flexible reading groups. Teachers with a given skill expertise taught a group of students for thirty minutes in that targeted skill area. Implementing this structural intervention meant utilizing staff such as the media specialist, coaches, and even office staff for instruction with students. It also fostered the development of the team ethos in the school.

They have a Walk to [Instruction] program that they have initiated the past several years in [Gateway], and the guidance counselor is involved in that and ...like the data prep clerk, she is involved with that and that is really nice to see. That the staff as a whole, including support personnel matter. (CT-7)

Second grade had a Walk to Instruction, and it took a lot. [The principal], his theory was, you know, everybody can help. Put the most highly effective teachers with the kids that you know need the most, but if you have a child that is exceeding expectations, it's okay for the librarian to take those children. So we had [the] librarian and Title I people and a lady in the office. We have a lot of hands on deck during that time, I do have to say. We had a lot of hands on deck helping us to make that work. It wasn't just the first grade teachers. We had a lot of support. We had a lot of people helping us out. (CT-4)

By strategically utilizing all available personnel for instruction, Gateway was able to implement their structural innovation to offer targeted reading instruction to all students in grades one and two.

Resources were also used strategically to maximize the professional expertise of the local faculty. This was seen in how faculty and staff's instructional strengths were utilized in Walk to Instruction. It was also evident in actions such as relying on the district appointed specialists. The school psychologist, in particular, became an active member of the school based leadership team to help teachers understand the RtI process and also to provide her intervention expertise. She no longer felt like a district person on the periphery; she felt valued as a member of the school and became a

valuable asset. This maximizing of her expertise to help build capacity is evident in her quote below.

[The principal] last year said he wanted me to go to PLCs ... And I sat in with him and an administrator on it because he wanted me to hear and understand [the process] so that I knew what was going on. [It] was just a phenomenal idea. I mean that just really helped me to see if I'm going to help change something, I need to know really what's going on, which helped the teachers to get to know me a little more and [they] respected the fact that I was in the room hearing what they had to do. [Previously] they had a hard time with me coming in suggesting things when they felt like I had no clue what they were doing. So as I sat in these hour and half PLCs I got to hear them plan, I got to hear what was going on. So during that [time] is when I could slowly educate the teachers on Rtl... and then this year we've continued that and it's just made a big difference because we're looking at THEIR data, so we're educating them on Rtl with their data versus talking theory. And I think it's made a huge difference.

Strategically capitalizing on her potential contributions enabled the school to engage further in structural and cultural development. The communal way of work was furthered while the faculty engaged in procedural and structural changes.

Local expertise was also utilized for faculty professional development. This was expressed most intensely by the assistant principal and the reading coach. The assistant principal described a developing reliance on local expertise due to dwindling district resources, such as money for substitutes for professional development workshops or observations at other schools; through this, a realization struck that they had experts on their campus. She described how she adapted the structure of the school schedule to accommodate for local professional development opportunities.

And that's why when I set the schedule up, I try to stagger some of the reading blocks and put some of the -- like I purposely put some of the veteran teachers into two different time frames and split the new ones because I want the new ones to be able to -- and I purposely may put their music right during the veteran teacher's reading block. Because then I know at least once a week for 40 minutes she can go down to that other teacher's room and watch what is going on. (LTM-4)

A similar intention was echoed by the reading coach. Within her description of local professional development, she additionally highlighted how the principal was active part of the professional development process.

Again that's been evolving the last couple years with the different staff development that the teachers get on their own, some teachers are more likely to go out and get more training, some teachers teach Summer Camp, and then so other teachers hear about the different things that they're doing and they're like "Oh I want to go watch what she's doing!" Or sometimes that will even come from us or my administrator. [The principal] will say "I want this first grade teacher to go watch something that the second grade teacher's doing because I've seen it. So set that up for her". So it could start from many different ways. But yeah we do that a lot. I've covered classes, we'll get subs, sometimes our Title I partners will cover the classes, sometimes we try to schedule it when maybe one teacher's kids are at PE and another teacher's teaching her reading block. They also have their music and art so we try to do that many different ways. (LTM-3)

The professional development strategy of utilizing peers' classrooms for learning opportunities was emphasized most greatly in the primary grades. This emphasis aligned with the leadership's goals of strengthening primary reading instruction for the students' benefit as they progressed into the later grades. Additionally, innovating and strategically utilizing resources relied on formal processes to be effective. School level leaders developed formal systems of operation to monitor new structures and support the school's ongoing work.

Formalizing Processes

Formalizing meant that operations within the school were crafted into defined structures and expectations. Processes became formalized with an emphasis on purpose and accountability. As the following two-year veteran of the school indicated, the formalized processes established efficient systems of operation.

Last year was very structured. [The principal] kept everything on a very structured path. So, [that] made things go smoothly most of the time. (CT-9)

Leadership team meetings, grade level team leader meetings, faculty meetings, and professional learning communities were engaged in each month. Each meeting had a specific purpose for the school's goal of improvement. For example, a meeting between the principal and leadership team occurred weekly to provide status reports regarding pending issues and to determine the "game [plan], or way of work for that week" (LTM-P). The principal additionally met with the grade level team leaders once a month to disseminate district information. Professional Learning Community meetings were held twice a month. These meetings provided a space to "look at data, [enable] grade levels [to] collaborate or talk about student achievement, talk about behavior, [and] talk about the Rtl process" (LTM-P). The purpose of the monthly staff meeting differed from the school's other meetings. It provided an avenue for furthering the school's team ethos.

My staff meeting is my vehicle or my method to talk to the staff, to find out what's happening. It's kind of my cheerleading time that I have to kind of pump my staff up. I don't usually use it for more informational [type of things] or to disseminate information. It's just kind of a "how the state of the union is doing" in regard to what we can do [and] some of the great things that are happening. It's more a kind of touchy-good-feeling kind of meeting, because that's really the only time I have with my staff is once a month that I have them as a captive audience. So I tend not to use that precious forty-five minutes to disseminate information that could be done at [the] team leaders [meeting]. It's kind of my time to celebrate [and] we talk about all the good things that are happening and what we're doing differently. We highlight teachers that are doing some great things. (LTM-P)

Systematizing team structures, procedures, and meetings helped to move the school's operations from haphazard to intentional. Another example of systemization is found in how self-contained special education teachers changed their process for mainstreaming students into general education classes. This action became less

personally controlled and more communally systematized. The activity became part of a larger system of operation. The participant quote below highlights this change.

When it was just between me and the teachers and I could go to them and ask them, “I want to start mainstreaming this student. Would you like to take them?” Some apprehensiveness, but usually they would say yes... And right now they want us to go through a series of different meetings to discuss this child and if he’ll do it and if he can manage it, then figure out which teacher we’re going to do and then [the team will] recommend “yes we’re going to do it”. (CT-9)

Such a movement to “a series of meetings” where the entire team of teachers and the school based leadership team considered the needs of a given student reinforced the communal ethos developed in other parts of the school’s changes. It also strengthened the valuing of teachers’ voices. No longer were individual teachers on their own making decisions, but it became a larger team phenomenon. Responsibility was expanded beyond two people. Having stakeholders at the table as part of a systematized process fostered coherence in process implementation. It also increased broader stakeholder knowledge of what was happening and provided a means for stakeholders to influence what *would* happen. A teacher participant shared the following related to the consequences of formalizing the intervention process into a consistent and team-oriented approach.

It was very comforting to me to have more than just my “eyes” on my struggling students. I found it to be effective to have the Rtl team look at the data and help me to arrange groups based on like needs and track their progress with data. I also liked that it was more than just me taking accountability for the students’ academic progress. (CT-6)

As meetings were strategically structured and the school’s processes became more formalized, there was a noticeable shift in responsibilities. For at least one teacher who self-identified as a more laid-back teacher and for teachers identified by peers as having “taught for 20 years”, the shift reportedly created resistance. They perceived that

the movement to formal structures intensified their workload. There was more to do “on top of teaching the kids” (CT-8) as one participant put it. However, this shift was intentional on the part of the principal as he attempted to focus the school’s work on instruction and achievement. When the school changed the RtI structure, he cancelled extraneous committees that met during working hours (such as the Hospitality Committee), “and made what was important for kids a priority” (LTM-P). The strategic structures that were put in place were intended to strengthen teachers’ abilities to help students. These actions were in sharp contrast to what the faculty was accustomed to with the previous administrations.

The result of creating structures to systemize processes was that it created efficient systems of operation. This enabled greater streamlining of timelines and tasks, as well coherence among and within programs. Because structures were implemented that enabled a common understanding of the school’s goals and programs, further structures were implemented that aligned with current work. Creating strategic structures by implementing purposeful meetings and making informed implementation decisions created the structural capacity necessary to support the implementation of external initiatives. It also provided space for the improvement of instructional practice.

Negotiating External Initiatives

Gateway did not operate separately from a larger educational system. They had external initiatives that they were responsible for implementing. Participants described the implementation of external initiatives not in terms of direct application- taking an initiative and just doing it- but rather they described implementation in terms of negotiation. This meant that they interpreted each external initiative for their internal context. At the same time, their developing understanding of their internal needs was

actively influenced by each initiative. A consistent part of the negotiation was questioning how the initiative would fit into what was already being done and how what was already being done could be improved by the initiative. Participants described five main external initiatives as significant: District instructional mandates, Reading First, Response to Intervention, Professional Learning Communities, and a university partnership graduate program. This section details how school leaders engaging in and encouraging professional development influenced the implementation of these external initiatives.

Active and communal learning is at the core of negotiating external initiatives. Through this process, school administration and faculty were able to utilize these initiatives to meet their needs and to restructure their work. As was introduced in Chapter 4, external reforms were happening with the previous administration. For example, faculty teams were doing PLCs, they were implementing Reading First conditions, they were collecting district assessment data, and they were following the pacing guide. But “doing” those externally mandated things did not necessarily make a difference; the level of implementation was superficial or sporadic across teachers. Without obvious care or deep understanding demonstrated by the formal leadership, the structural initiatives did not have any meaningful effect on the faculty’s work. The school merely maintained its status quo with extra responsibilities. The learning and meaning of the initiatives were absent. For example, an instructional coach illustrated how the district mandate of Professional Learning Community meetings was first implemented at the school.

Well you know what we didn’t [know what to do in PLCs] at first and that was a big thing because when [PLCs] first came along I don’t even think our

administrator, I don't even think SHE knew really what it was supposed to look like. Our district had a vision and I don't know that the principals were clear on the district's vision. So I think the teachers thought at first that was almost a scheduled team meeting. And then I remember the principal giving us almost like a sheet to fill out [that said] "What kids did you talk about? What data did you talk about?" I think [the teachers] felt like at the beginning they were being told what to talk about because it was new. And the teachers I want to say they were comfortable with that at first because they didn't know what to do so they would rather someone give them a script and say "Ok this is what you want us to do. This is what you want [us] to fill out and we're going to turn this in at the end". (LTM-3)

While documenting PLC activity was a way to hold the teams accountable for discussing student progress, it was accountability without collective understanding of the PLC purpose. With the entrance of the new principal and the beginning of a university partner graduate program in teacher leadership, the externally mandated reforms got a new spin. The structures were treated differently because of a commitment to professional learning by the school leadership. Four teachers, an instructional coach, and the principal engaged in the online graduate program. As a result, the leadership team was able to conceptualize PLCs, professional development, and teaching practices in new ways. Professional learning was shared with team members and this affected how the school negotiated the external initiative. Leadership engaging in and sharing professional learning also influenced the school's operational structures and organizational culture. This professional development led to an expanded understanding of school change and student learning. The following quotes exemplify how the administration and faculty negotiated external initiatives by being active learners with the faculty.

I think that [moving from a guessing game to progress monitoring] is probably just a movement in, you know, a new way of thinking, not necessarily the university way of thinking, but just new information that we learned [related to] how to make decisions. Especially when we took the data driven decision making class [in our graduate program], I mean, we

started making decisions [based] on data before this but that really kicked it into high gear. And because our principal was in the program with us, I think that is why a lot of these things started to happen. I think if it would have just been five teachers, it might not have evolved as quickly, but because he was there, that he could make those decisions for our school, I think that is the primary reason why. Plus we were also one of the pilot schools from the Rtl process, so we had to have something as proof for why we were doing things with those kids that needed that extra help. Especially with [the new principal] being in on it because at every meeting, and at every single meeting ... something that we learned within the program came up and we talked about it. With any staff meeting we had or PLC or anything like that, it would always come up. (CT-5)

The other thing that was huge has been the [university] work that we've been working with. A lot of the things that we're putting in place, this whole empowering teachers [for example], I'm a really firm believer of empowering teachers. A lot of these teachers have the answers to our problems and by empowering them and giving them the opportunity to have their voice or having input has been huge. I've had six teachers that are going through the [university program] right now. So the classes that we've been working with at the [university] and learning here has been crucial. You know the backwards design, the data driven decision making, the inquiry, the funds of knowledge... So I mean all those classes have been have had direct impact on our way of thinking. My reading coach was also getting her masters, my ESOL teacher was getting her Ed.S. too. So those are three crucial people on my leadership team that were experiencing that kind of brain stimulation. Being such active voices on our leadership team and having that input, that was huge. (LTM-P)

The external initiative of Reading First additionally affected the teachers' and the school's work. As one participant said, "When we started to become a Reading First school, that's when our way of work changed and I would say for the better" (CT-4). But, there is evidence that the full potential of Reading First for instructional improvement was not realized until combined with the leadership's commitment to professional learning. A member of the leadership team highlighted this in her discussion of how the school changed. Although she stated that the former principal supported Reading First, she emphasized the impact that the new principal had on professional development.

We had a different principal back then when we first became Reading First so you know she was a big supporter of that but then I would say even

more since [the new principal] has become our principal. You know he's been a big advocate for professional development and he understands how to teach in the architecture of the mini lesson, because he did that so he's a big pusher of wanting everybody to teach like that. So that's probably another big thing you know him supporting what [the reading coach is] giving the teachers for professional development. (LTM-3)

Additionally, Response to Intervention (Rtl) brought with it a heavy reliance on data for progress monitoring students throughout their interventions. The use of data became something more than just this process- it became vital to how the school made decisions in all areas. The principal and leadership took advantage of the externally imposed emphasis on data and wove it into the culture of the school. Formal inquiry promoted by the school's university partnership and encouraged by the principal reinforced this use of data to drive decisions. Previously, data was something collected but not necessarily analyzed. As represented in the quote below, taking advantage of the PLCs and having data specific meetings enabled stronger conversations about practice.

Well, the process has changed with the Rtl, so it is a little bit different now because before it might be just a group of children where we used data, but it wasn't a real formal process, but now with the Response to Intervention and the school based leadership team then we're using the data and we're coming up with a team approach with everybody working together [to discuss kids' behavior and learning]. (LTM-1)

A district-assigned Rtl facilitator worked with the leadership team to help them engage in a necessary "mind-shift" in how student progress was approached. Rtl is a process that requires teachers to deeply investigate student learning and alter their instruction or environment to meet the needs of struggling students. This runs counter to the teachers' prior understanding of interventions, which were considered a minor detail in getting to the ultimate psychological and academic testing for special education eligibility.

[Rtl] makes people focus on the data. Like [this child is] an outlier because he has four referrals. He's not an outlier because he's driving me crazy every day in class. Because you can't quantify that. Everybody has a student or somebody that is kind of off or [they] might be having concerns with, but this kid is sticking out and above everybody else. And the team [knows who he is]. Basically you can say a name and the team knows who that kid is, because they have all at some point in time touched him. And if they touched him in Walk to [Instruction] because he's having problems in that room then the quickest and easiest thing that we can do is change his classroom for Walk to [Instruction] to see if that change in environment helps him. [We can] see if he is a kid that needs to be moved around. Or maybe we need to look at maybe it's the other group of kids within that classroom. (LTM-4)

The shifted understanding of instructional interventions led to structural changes in PLCs. This was also directly affected by the school's movement to communal practices, as "it has created more of a team approach to all the kids within that team" (LTM-4). Not only did the leadership translate external initiatives based on their growing understanding of the initiatives and teacher leadership practices, they utilized available resources such as their early release days, their peers, their human resources, and their data in order to effectively implement external mandates to address their needs. For example, the district wanted staggered scheduling within teachers daily schedules so that district staff developers could "get into classes" (LTM-3) across grade levels. The school then used this staggered schedule for their own purposes for enabling peer observation.

Negotiating external mandates for the school's context was driven by active learning by both informal and formal school leaders. Negotiating the initiatives for their needs enabled the school to adapt their structures and mold new ways of thinking among the faculty. In short, negotiating external mandates meant making the external relevant for internal change.

Conclusion

Gateway engaged themselves in a transformation. It was a transformation of culture and structure. Teachers adopted new levels of responsibility; they redefined what teaching and learning meant to them and they became responsible for students outside of their individual classrooms. They also became accountable to one another for continuing to improve their instructional practice and student learning. Gateway became a team that positioned the students and the school above all else.

This was not an easy transformation and not every participant agreed with every change. Like any team, there were ranges of skills, opinions, and effectiveness. There were still issues that they were working to improve, such as communication or school-wide student behavior during unstructured times. The key was that there were more successes than not and more inquiry into those issues than ever before. Through five concurrent yet interactive processes, the conditions were created for this transformation. The following briefly summarizes those processes.

- **TAKING IMMEDIATE ACTION.** Developing the capacity for change was initiated by a new principal taking immediate action to embed himself in the life of the school and establish motivation to improve together.
- **VALUING AND EMPOWERING TEACHERS' VOICES.** Teachers' voices were valued and empowered through explicit solicitation for input and the establishment of structures to support such involvement.
- **CHANGING PEDAGOGY.** Pedagogy was altered as data and problem posing became central to acting on high expectations for students.
- **CREATING STRUCTURES FOR SYSTEMATIZING PROCESSES.** Structures were developed by continuously yet strategically innovating and maximizing resources.
- **NEGOTIATING EXTERNAL INITIATIVES.** Constant in all changes was a negotiation of external initiatives to meet internal needs by engaging in constant learning.

These five processes strengthened the capacity of the school to meet their students' academic needs. As a culture characterized by collective responsibility, data, and continuous innovation based in high expectations took root in the school, they moved themselves from a school with limited capacity to positively affect student achievement to one with high capacity for meeting changing demands and needs. The effect of their capacity development was evident in student achievement as all student sub-groups improved to meet Adequate Yearly Progress.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to create a grounded theory of school reform built from the experiences of one school. Gateway Elementary School provided an extreme case (Patton, 2002) of a high-poverty school that successfully built capacity and transformed school culture and student achievement. Through rich description of the participants' experiences pre and post change, Chapters 4 and 5 presented a story of their reform. This chapter explores the substantive theory developed from that examination and connects it to the literature presented in Chapter 2.

Review of the Study

The sensitizing concepts (Charmaz, 2006) reviewed prior to the study's design revealed three key issues in the educational literature. One, there is a persistent and significant gap in the achievement of students in high poverty and low poverty schools. Students in high poverty schools, the majority of whom are African American and Hispanic, are not achieving success on measures of instruction at the same rates as their low poverty or White counterparts. Retention rates, graduation rates, and standardized test scores demonstrate a vicious cycle of reproduction by race and economics (Haycock, 2001; Kozol, 1992; NCES, 2007, 2008; Rothstein, 2007). Despite decades of reform efforts purporting to address this issue, little has changed for the better in the equitable education of students. In fact, many scholars argue that educational opportunities have grown even more inequitable for historically marginalized students (Ravitch, 2010).

The second key issue is the discrepancy in the school level characteristics of high performing and low performing schools. Internal problems affecting low performing, high

poverty schools include high teacher and administrator turnover, low faculty and student morale, ineffective and inefficient systems of operation, and often a culture of excuses (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps, 1995; Clotfelter, Ladd, Vigdor, & Wheeler, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Ingersoll, 2004). Such an environment is not conducive to providing a rigorous education based in high expectations for student learning. Additionally, schools with these characteristics are not well-positioned to adapt neither to changes in the policy context of our public education system nor to changes in the student population of the United States. Therefore, low performing, high poverty, minority majority schools with unhealthy systems of operation are at a distinct disadvantage when charged with implementing instructional reforms.

The third key issue is that we actually know a great deal about the characteristics of high performing, high poverty schools- those schools where students achieve and maintain learning expectations as typically demonstrated by standardized testing- but we do not know as much about how they effectively develop those characteristics. Characteristics include high student expectations, positive relationships, strong instructional foci, collaborative decision-making, and systematic assessment and use of data to drive instruction (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010; Elmore, 2004; Kannapel & Clements, 2005). Research has indicated that these characteristics are part of a larger school organization, one that involves the capacity of a school's work to ebb and flow as demands change. A review of the literature in Chapter 2 revealed five elements of a school's capacity to positively affect student achievement school-wide: teacher instructional practice, teacher learning and leadership, school climate and professional community, school structures, and principal leadership. The

issue with the extant research in school capacity, however, is that there is limited research related to how schools *develop* capacity. We know more about what schools look like when they have this capacity and less about how to help schools develop this capacity. Additionally, there is little research that richly describes whole-school contextual conditions prior to a reform.

Driven by these three issues, I designed the study to delve into the complexity of a single high-poverty school's change process from the perspectives of those who participated in the process. This study contributes to our understanding of whole-school change by offering a theory of capacity building in a high-poverty, low-achieving school that is validated by demonstrated student achievement.

For this constructionist-oriented study, I conducted interviews with members of the kindergarten through fifth grade faculty and administration, as well as one district specialist assigned to the school for the past six years. I additionally reviewed the school's academic and demographic achievement data from the past seven years. The constructionist grounded theory design of the study dictated very broad research questions that would provide ample opportunity for a substantive theory of whole school change to emerge from the data. This approach is in contrast to a design that might have intentionally looked for specific areas of change from the outset, something common to reform research (For example, see Anderson & Kumari, 2009; Copland, 2003; Hollins, Gunter, & Thomson, 2006; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2000, 2003; Malen & Rice, 2004; Mulford and Silins, 2003). Because this was a grounded theory study, it was essential not to limit the scope of participants' responses and to follow trends as they emerged in the data. To understand how this high-poverty, chronically underachieving

school transformed, the study's broad research questions were: 1) What are the changes that this school experienced, if any? 2) How did this school experience the changes? and 3) Why did this school engage in the changes that it did? To address these questions, I engaged in constant iterative analysis of the interview data during data collection and used that analysis to guide each subsequent interview. This process of theoretical sampling allowed me to explore themes as they emerged by intentionally seeking data from new participants that would confirm, refine, or refute themes as data collection progressed. Finally, summaries of the findings were presented to participants for review, as well as to a fifteenth school faculty member who was not interviewed. The result was a grounded theory that offers an explanation of the school reform process in this school.

Discussion of Findings

The explanatory theory generated from this study reaffirms the argument that internal school reform is ultimately about capacity building. Findings indicated that the school began as an organization with limited capacity to positively affect student learning. The school then strengthened its capacity to respond to external policies and student needs. They strengthened their school by affecting each area of capacity identified by the literature to date: school climate and professional community, teacher learning and leadership, school structures, and principal leadership (see Figure 2-1 for the graphic of internal capacity derived from the literature). Through intentional actions to change the "way of work" in the school, their reform efforts ultimately affected instructional practice, which in turn affected student achievement. The findings revealed five interlinking processes, each made up of clusters of actions that had effects on multiple elements of capacity. Table 6-1 presents a summary of these processes and

actions as described in Chapter 5. Figure 5-1 presented the dynamics of those processes as the school moved from low to high capacity. Three theoretical assertions drawn from this analysis follow below. The assertions both support and expand the existing literature in school change.

Table 6-1. Summary of findings

Process	Actions of the Process
Principal taking immediate action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilizing leaders Becoming instructionally embedded Immediately attending to teachers to build trust Pulling back the curtain to reveal urgency and extend invitation
Valuing and empowering teachers' voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soliciting teacher input Invoking elements of team strength Encouraging independent problem solving
Changing pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning school practices with district expectations Holding high expectations and acting accordingly Becoming data centered Targeting essential areas with resources school-wide
Creating structures to systematize processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acting immediately and strategically Strategically using resources Formalizing processes
Negotiating external initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership engaging in and encouraging professional development

Theoretical Assertion 1: Building Capacity in a School is a Complex Interplay of Actions that Are Influenced by Contextual Conditions.

There is no prescription for reform. What is offered by this study is an explanatory theory of how a school can strengthen its capacity to achieve cultural transformation and student achievement. Significant to this theory, however, is that contextual

conditions matter. Several contextual conditions influenced how and why the school transformed as it did, when it did. Three of the conditions stand out as particularly influential. First, the presence of a group of strong veteran teachers who knew they could do better as a school readied the context for accepting the necessity of change. Second, a new principal was assigned to the school at the same time that the achievement situation was at its worst. The new principal was able to use that situation to bind the faculty in a common goal. Third, the implementation of two related initiatives, Response to Intervention and a university partnership, influenced the approach to change and instruction. In tandem, these two initiatives both aided transformation and their implementation was affected by the broader changes within the school.

It cannot be known whether or how the school would have reformed without these conditions. However, the history of the school as presented in Chapter 4, provides strong evidence that transformation may not have happened at all. While these factors created a context for how and why reform progressed as it did, by themselves they would not have been enough to engage such drastic change. They provided the backdrop, but not the actions. Although one participant likened their transformation to the “stars align[ing]” (LTM-3), their transformation was more than just the sum of its parts. Although context matters, it is important to remember that it merely provides or constrains opportunity. It is up to the actors to mold that opportunity.

The critical difference between this school’s success and failure was how the actors molded that opportunity. As presented in Chapter 2, rich study of whole school pre-change conditions is lacking especially in regards to successful change in achievement. When it is examined, findings indicate that capacity rarely improves when

it is not already strong from the outset. The current research suggests that contextual conditions play a critical role in improvement efforts, and that the interplay of contextual conditions is so complex that it must be considered when attempting reform.

Theoretical Assertion 2: Capacity Building Is Dependent on the Principal's Actions; Because those Actions are a Necessary but Not Sufficient Condition for Change, Change Should Be Informed by Collective Professional Development in Capacity Building.

The changes in this school were sparked by the entrance of a new principal. All participants, without prompting, linked the beginning of their transformation to this event, and the power inherent in the principal's position was evidenced throughout the study. The principal was not the source of change, but he was the catalyst for it. The actions of the principal had the power to maintain the status quo or disrupt it. In this study, the principal intentionally chose to disrupt it. Enacting power in that way had meaningful effects on strengthening the school's ability to meet student and teacher needs. The school employed most all of the same teachers who as a group had previously been unable to meet the needs of the students. Other work has shown similar findings related to the key role of the principal in school improvement and the difference that initial principal actions can have on the school's work (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000; Scribner, Hager, & Warne, 2002). While essential to the process of transformation, these initial actions did not stand alone but rather influenced and interacted with the other elements to strengthen the school's capacity.

By positioning himself as a learner, the principal positioned himself *with* the faculty in a unique and powerful way. The principal did not have all of the answers for improvement and the school's success relied on the collective power of the faculty to examine and change their work. This finding supports leadership research that in recent

years has moved away from a “Hero Principal” conception of good leadership and moved to the idea of transformative leadership for capacity building. This study supports capacity building as a collective effort unleashed by the principal and advanced by the faculty.

The findings demonstrate that because the impact of the principal can be so great, professional development for the principal can have a significant effect on the direction of school change. In the case of this school, because the principal is part of the larger system of the school, all potential impact of his professional development was enhanced by a critical mass of influential faculty who were engaged with him in a university partner graduate program focused on school improvement, master teaching, and teacher leadership. The program’s courses also included work focused on the dynamics of change. Data from the principal’s interviews indicated that this involvement had marked impact on his decisions, and interviews with other participants revealed that the communal involvement resulted in frequent utilization of program learning in school and team decisions. The shared professional development by this critical mass of administration and faculty enabled stronger and quicker adoption of shared vision than perhaps could have occurred otherwise. It also created an authentic model for continuous learning.

Theoretical Assertion 3: The Potential Effects of External Policies and Intended Supports Are Mediated by the School’s Internal Characteristics.

As evidenced in Chapter 2, the literature abounds with arguments asserting the need for internal capacity building before external efforts will be effective at altering the work of schools. These arguments are built solidly on a history of failed reform efforts where new initiatives are superficially implemented over existing work (Baldrige, 1983).

This study further supports this literature and also extends our understanding of internal change by examining a school operating in our current wave of policy initiatives.

Through in-depth analysis of the school's context prior to reforming and then after, the findings demonstrated differential effects of the same external policies. In other words, many of the same externally derived initiatives were in place prior to transformation and yet the school maintained a low level of capacity that stagnated its ability to positively affect student achievement. It was not until the internal capacity was strengthened that the outside world could contribute to their improvement efforts. Perhaps the greatest example of this was external versus internal accountability initiatives. A low school ranking based on achievement testing was not sufficient for change; it was not sufficient for motivation, and did not create conditions for improving practice. Pairing the low ranking with the conditions for collegial learning and the development of collective responsibility for all students' success was necessary for the core work of the school to change.

Fullan (2010) discusses this phenomenon in terms of "positive pressure" where transparent work and data analysis within a community of peers capitalize on "organic" peer pressure. As part of this internal accountability strategy, outcome data are used not punitively, but rather to identify "*causal* relationships between particular instructional actions and specific student engagement and learning" (p. 125). This is exactly what this school demonstrated. Their "driven by data" approach within communities of learners created conditions of positive pressure, collective responsibility, and continuous problem posing that enabled them to strengthen their teaching. The literature has demonstrated that high performing schools rely on data to guide

instruction. This study demonstrates how they can develop that ability and addresses calls in the literature for more investigation into how internal accountability is developed in challenging school contexts (Firestone and Shipps, 2005).

Implications

Based on analysis of the findings and the assertions above, this study suggests several implications for future research, educational policy, teacher education and professional development.

For Future Research

This study fills a gap in the literature by describing and explaining how a chronically underachieving high poverty school successfully transformed as measured by improved student achievement. It offers insight into how this can be accomplished in a limited amount of time with the same group of teachers who as a group had previously been unsuccessful at meeting their students' academic needs. It offers rich description from the perspectives of participants that led to an explanatory theory of school reform. There is a wealth of information to be learned from this school regarding how participants constructed their changes. That said, it is a single-school case study. Just as there was much to learn from this particular school, there is much to learn from looking across several schools. Future research should explore successful internal reform in several similar schools.

Future research should also examine transformation over time. Sustaining change is always an issue in a complex organizational setting. So many factors can affect how work proceeds or recedes. For example, this study demonstrated that capacity building relies on the principal to provide guidance and to create the formal organizational support structures necessary for action. How do transformed schools sustain their work

when a new principal enters? Additionally, the school in this study was at the beginning of their transformed work. How do such schools respond when they experience a sudden change in student population? How do they continue to meld their work with changing policy initiatives? Longitudinal study of recently reformed schools would provide insight into such questions.

This study expands our current conceptions of school change that are focused on altering teachers' work. Teacher leadership is a field of research growing in popularity for its focus on empowerment and emphasis on the importance of breaking the isolation of teachers' work (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Lieberman & Miller, 2004). The majority of this literature however is focused on individual teachers or teams of teachers within a school and operates on the assumption that the influence will spread. The theoretical assertion described here calls into question the ability of that limited focus to affect broad change on a school-wide level. This is not to discount the power of teacher leader work, but rather I am arguing the opposite. It is so powerful that to maximize its effect, it must be supported and fostered by school administration. I presented evidence in Chapter 2 regarding the difficulty inherent in changing individual teaching beliefs and practice and how this difficulty is magnified when attempting to spread change across teachers. This study supports those findings and adds evidence that reform efforts targeted simultaneously at teachers *and* leaders hold promise for developing whole school capacity. The study suggests the importance of the principal's involvement in structured professional development with members of the faculty. Additionally, a key factor was that this professional development was focused on teacher leadership and school improvement which scaffolded the development of a

shared vision and shared understanding of change. This collective professional development and growth helped the school transform quickly and pervasively. Future research should explore the effect of teacher leadership work school-wide, with particular focus on how the principal's co-engagement with teachers affects the outcomes.

Finally, these teachers were described as having untapped potential that was released by the right kind of leadership at the right time. The rapidity of the school's transformation for student success leads to a question of how potential can be identified and harnessed in similar underachieving schools. How many low performing, high-poverty schools have core groups of teachers whose potential is obstructed by contextual conditions? Are we overlooking this resource in school reform? Is there a way to identify that potential and use it to build capacity? Teacher leadership research is built on the assumption that there is a sleeping giant of teachers whose expertise and motivation to change is just waiting to be awakened (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009). Exploring this connection further in studies of whole-school reform could offer important insight regarding how to utilize this inherent resource in high-poverty schools.

For Teacher Education And Professional Development

Although this study did not focus on the role of novice teachers in school improvement, there are key implications for teacher education, particularly surrounding the importance of teacher leadership. As Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, and Cobb (1995) stated:

“[teachers'] fuller professional role enables them to learn and lead continuously as they inquire together into ever more responsive practice. This professional conception of teaching relies on greater knowledge for teachers as the basis for responsible decision making and is thus related to

teachers' preservice and in-service learning opportunities as well as the kinds of tasks they engage. (p. 91)

Findings from this study indicated the development of a habit of problem posing linked to data. Data were shared and analyzed so that the community of teachers could engage in problem solving around pedagogical issues. Data drove all school and pedagogical decisions. Given the significance of this type of stance to student achievement and the ability to engage with peers in a community, preservice teachers should be prepared for such work. Developing such a stance during their preparation would greatly increase the likelihood of immediate application in their beginning teaching context. It would prime them for engaging in such work themselves and with peers. Novice teachers are placed disproportionately in high poverty, low performing schools. Their ability to be agents of change for their school and their students holds significant promise for aiding larger internal school improvement efforts.

Additionally, the capacity of high poverty, low performing schools would be enhanced by targeted, shared professional development for teachers and their principals surrounding capacity. New conceptions of teachers as knowledge generators and active decision-makers position teachers as essential to school operations. The critical role that teachers play must go beyond the individual decisions they make in their own classrooms. As such, engaging with their principal in professional development surrounding school change, school community, capacity, and teacher leadership could quicken the rate of, and deepen the meaning of, change within a school. The ideas related to capacity building should not be reserved for administration alone.

For Education Policy

Change in this school was deliberate and led by those within the school. External regulation provided ultimate goals and pedagogical direction, but it was the conditions that the faculty created that enabled them to internalize that regulation for improved student achievement. This finding has great implication for education policy.

Education policy that assumes teacher motivation to be at the core of failing schools is misguided. As Payne (2008) described, our current standards-based movement relies on holding schools and teachers accountable for student achievement. It is driven by the assumption that teachers can do better and that the application of pressure will motivate them to do so. Unfortunately, research on the effects of government-based accountability policies have shown that they have had unclear or, at best, small effects on the achievement gap (Harris & Herrington, 2006). Such policies also often undercut morale which negates whatever extrinsic motivation the policy might have initially spurred (Finnigan & Gross, 2006). The current study provides insight into this by demonstrating that it is not lack of teacher motivation to improve that stands in the way of student achievement, but rather lack of guidance regarding *how* to improve. Despite accountability policies designed to hold schools to high-standards, the teachers in this school were not able to move forward without local administrative direction.

The findings imply that school grades or merit pay do not inherently result in teachers' generation of knowledge related to better instructional practice. Teachers need an administration that can provide internal positive pressure, cultivate collective responsibility, and help all teachers in the school become problem posers so that they can learn how to continuously innovate their instructional practice. Districts should be charged with placing transformative principals within schools needing to strengthen

capacity. Without such internal consideration, high poverty, underachieving schools are unlikely to improve pervasively.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the knowledge base regarding effective school reform in high-poverty, underachieving schools. The findings of the study demonstrated that spurred by a new principal, the faculty of the school engaged in internal changes that affected every facet of the school's work. By engaging in these changes, they developed the capacity to respond to the demands of their high-needs student population. The explanatory theory generated by this single-school case study offers insight into school capacity building and expands our knowledge regarding how a school cultivates capacity in our current policy context.

APPENDIX A
GATEWAY AND PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Table A-1. Achievement data by entire school

School Year	AYP?	Grade	% Meeting High Standards in Reading	% Meeting High Standards in Math	% Meeting High Standards in Writing	% Meeting High Standards in Science	% Making Learning Gains in Reading	% Making Learning Gains in Math	% of Lowest 25% Making Learning Gains in Reading	% of Lowest 25% Making Learning Gains in Math
2008-09	Y	A	64	69	96	34	67	69	74	68
2007-08	N	C	56	58	86	27	57	58	58	61
2006-07	N	B	64	55	81	29	77	58	80	68
2005-06	N	C	63	60	56		55	61	63	
2004-05	Provisional	A	63	66	78		69	78	70	
2003-04	Y*	B	61	56	83		64	72	57	
2002-03	N	C	61	45	82		64	61	64	
2001-02		B	66	54	80		68	57	68	
2000-01		C								
1999-00		A								
1998-99		D								

Source: Florida Department of Education School Accountability Reports database

*AYP criteria increased in 2005

Table A-2. Student demographic and attendance data

	% Female	% Male	% Hispanic	% White	% Black	% Asian	% Multi-racial	% Am. Indian	% SWD	% Gifted	% ELL	% F/R	Total students	% Absent 21+ Days
2008-09	51	49	35	32	22	4	7	0	16	2	31	80	597	31
2007-08	50	50	38	31	21	5	6	0	17	1	34	71	537	22
2006-07	48	53	34	33	24	4	5	0	16	1	26	72	535	24
2005-06	45	55	30	36	25	3	7	0	18	1	21	71	558	20
2004-05	47	53	24	44	24	4	5	0	15	1	20	73	555	23
2003-04	46	54	18	51	22	1	6	1	17	2	9	66	566	8
2002-03	45	55	9	58	28	1	4	0	19	2	1	65	456	5

Source: Florida Department of Education Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement Database

Table A-3. Teacher education and experience

	% Bachelors Degree	% Masters Degree	% Spec. Degree	% Doc. Degree	Avg Yrs Tching Exp
2008-09	81.4	18.6	0	0	10.0
2007-08	87.8	12.2	0	0	11.2
2006-07	82.9	17.1	0	0	11.7
2005-06	83.3	16.7	0	0	10.6
2004-05	86.1	13.9	0	0	10.4
2003-04	87.5	12.5	0	0	10.6
2002-03	85.2	14.8	0	0	11.5

Source: Florida Department of Education Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement Database

Table A-4. Staff movement by year

	Staff type	Total number	Number newly hired	School % of new staff	Lost	Gained	New positions added	Turnover
2008-09	Instructional Staff	45	10	22.2	8	10	2	17.77%
	School-Based Administrators	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%
	Total	47	10	21.3				
2007-08	Instructional Staff	43	3	7	3	3	0	6.97%
	School-Based Administrators	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%
	Total	45	3	6.7				
2006-07	Instructional Staff	43	7	16.3	3	7	4	6.97%
	School-Based Administrators	2	1	50	1	1	0	50%
	Total	45	8	17.8				
2005-06	Instructional Staff	39	4	10.3	4	4	0	10.25%
	School-Based Administrators	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%
	Total	41	4	9.8				
2004-05	Instructional Staff	39	10	25.6	7	10	3	17.94%
	School-Based Administrators	2	0	0	0	0	0	0%
	Total	41	10	24.4				
2003-04	Instructional Staff	36	9	25	3	9	6	8.33%
	School-Based Administrators	2	1	50	0	1	1	0%
	Total	38	10	26.3				
2002-03	Instructional Staff	30	2	6.7				
	School-Based Administrators	1	0	0				
	Total	31	2	6.5				

Source: Florida Department of Education Division of Accountability, Research and Measurement Database

APPENDIX B INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview questions will be flexible and emerging throughout the study. The following are the initial questions that will be asked of participants.

1. Let's start by having you give me a bit of description about your school. I want to get your sense of the school today and as we talk you can help me understand if the way you are describing the school today is similar or different from the way you would have described it a few years ago. I'll ask you about several specific things and then if there are others you think are important in understanding your school, you can add.
 - a. How would you describe curriculum and teaching in your school?
 - i. How is this similar to or different from the way things were a few years ago? [Probe for specific examples]
 - b. How would you describe the structure and organization of the school?
 - i. How is this similar to or different from the way things were a few years ago? [Probe for specific examples]
 - c. How would you describe the attitudes, beliefs, or dispositions of school personnel?
 - i. How is this similar or different from the way things were a few years ago? [Probe for specific examples]
 - d. In your view, do faculty in general have a common perspective about the things you just told me or are there individuals or groups who think differently? [Probe for examples, assuring the participant that she/he need not name individuals].
 - e. Is there anything else that you think is important for me to know about how your school is today and what it was like a few years ago? Probe for specific examples.
2. [If changes were described] Why do you think these changes have occurred?

Probe for:

- a. What programs or policies have been influential? (and how) [Probe for specific examples]
- b. What supports have been influential? (and how) [Probe for specific examples]
- c. What people have been influential? [Probe for specific actions taken by these individuals]
- d. Are there other factors that help explain why changes occurred in your school? If so, what are they?

3. Were there any changes that have been attempted or initiated over the past few years than just “didn’t take”?
 - a. If so, What do you think explains why these changes did not occur or were not sustained? That is, what programs, policies, or other factors seemed to constrain change? [Probe for specific examples]
4. Were there any changes in the school [implemented or not] that caused concern for a sub-group of the personnel?
 - a. If so, what were these changes? Why were people concerned? What happened? [probe for specifics]
5. How would you describe your role(s) within the school? [Probe for any role descriptions beyond that of teacher or principal]
 - a. Have you seen any changes to your role(s) over the past few years? [probe for specific examples] If so, to what do you attribute this change?
6. How would you describe the typical role of “teacher” within the school?
 - a. Have you seen any changes in teachers’ roles over the past few years? If so, to what do you attribute this change?
 - b. Without naming the teacher, provide a description of one teacher who you think is a clear example of the typical role teachers play at your school.
 - c. Without naming the teacher, provide a description of one or two teachers who you believe define their role within the school differently than the teacher you just described.
7. How would you describe the administration’s role within the school?
 - a. Have you seen any changes in administrator roles the past few years? If so, to what do you attribute this change?
8. Who else could tell me about ____?
9. Who is someone in the school who has a different perspective about the school and/or change in the school than you do and who you believe might be open to talking with me?
10. What school related documents could tell me more information about ____?

APPENDIX C REFLEXIVITY STATEMENT AND LOG

Reflexivity Statement

As previously stated, my own identity is not absent from my research. In order to monitor its influence in my study and to aid reader understanding of how my self has impacted my decisions and conclusions, I will explore how my identity intersects with this research.

Upon critically thinking about my past experiences and my values, it seems that there are three main pieces of 'me' that will potentially and undoubtedly color my interpretations and affect my decisions. These include 1) being a former teacher in the current accountability environment, 2) being interested in high needs school reform because of that experience and my more recent higher education learning, and 3) working closely with and for the university partner of the case study school.

My experiences teaching in a high poverty school during the current accountability wave affects my perspectives of school reform and high poverty school achievement. I have direct experience with the demands placed on teachers and schools during this time. My affiliation with the university partner also exposes an immediate and explicit bias. I work closely with this university organization as a graduate assistant by facilitating their institutes for partner schools, collecting school culture and instruction data, and working on research teams investigating how their programs affect participants. I am an advocate for school reform through their methods of working with partner schools and counties. Because the case study school is a partner school, I must be on guard to not skew the effects of their involvement on the changes within this school. This is a grounded theory study in which I seek to understand how this school

has experienced successful change from the perspectives of the participants. As such, questions must not lead participants in a given direction. If university support structures emerge from participants based on the general initial questions posed to them, then the data will lead me in that direction. I must follow the data, not my interests.

Table C-1. Researcher's log

Date	Subjectivity description	What was its effect?	How was it or is it being addressed?
7/5/10	Previous experience as a teacher	During the interview colored my perceptions of what was respondents were saying. Assumed I understood certain responses based on my past experiences.	Took note of this during the interview. Asked clarifying questions to ensure my assumed understanding matched what participants were intending/describing
9/20/10	Hard to revise constructed conceptions	After a category is defined, it is difficult to revise it, especially if it is defined after a seeming breakthrough in understanding. In other words, it is difficult to think about a category differently even in light of new evidence that contradicts it or shows new side. Its effect is a wrestling match between me wanting to keep newly established categories and wanting to revise understanding.	Awareness that this is the case. Awareness and vigilance to reframe. Constant comparison of codes and categories.
9/22/10	Not subjectivity issue: revised understanding of theoretical sampling	I had planned on multiple interviews per participant, however, because I revised my understanding of theoretical sampling, this became unnecessary. I no longer needed to revisit already interviewed participants to work out theories, I used further participants to do so.	----
Ongoing	Not leading during theoretical sampling	When looking for theory confirmation/expansion/refutation, I am finding it difficult to not ask leading questions. For example, I was theorizing that the new principal's actions toward teacher leadership was the main reason for teacher redefining of their role. When asking CT-3 about why she feels her role as a teacher has changed over the past few years, her response had more to with personal confidence and understanding of self as integral advocate for students. I wanted to ask "did [the new principal] affect this development?" but because she did not lead me there. I didn't lead <i>her</i> there.	Constant evaluation of questions being asked and how they are impacting participant responses. Evaluating questions mentally for this before asking them.

REFERENCES

- Aguirre, J. & Speer, N. M. (1999). Examining the relationship between beliefs and goals in teacher practice. *The Journal of Mathematical Behavior*, 18(3), 327-356.
- Alexander, K. L., Entwisle, D. R., & Kabbani, N. S. (2001). The dropout process in life course perspective: Early risk factors at home and school. *Teachers College Record*, 103(5), 760-822.
- Anderson, S. & Kumari, R. (2009). Continuous improvement in schools: Understanding the practice. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 29(3), 281-292.
- Argyris, C. & Schön, D. A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, M., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., & Drake, L. (2010). *The condition of education 2010* (NCES 2010-028). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC
- Baldrige, J. V., Deal, T. E., & Ingols, C. (1983). *The dynamics of organizational change in education*. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.
- Ball, S. J. (1997). Policy sociology and critical social research: A personal review of recent education policy and policy research. *British Educational Research Journal*, 23(3), 257-274.
- Battistich, V., Solomon, D., Kim, D., Watson, M., & Schaps, E. (1995). Schools as communities, poverty levels of student populations, and students' attitudes, motives, and performance: A multilevel analysis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 627-658.
- Berends, M., Goldring, E., Stein, M., & Cravens, X. (2010). Instructional conditions in charter schools and students' mathematics achievement gains. *American Journal of Education*, 116(3), pp. 303-335.
- Bevans, K., Bradshaw, C., Miech, R., & Leaf, P. (2007). Staff- and school-level predictors of school organizational health: a multilevel analysis. *Journal of School Health*, 77(6), 294-299.
- Borman, G. D., Hewes, G. M., Overman, L. T., & Brown, S. (2003). Comprehensive school reform and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 73(2), 125-230.
- Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2008, May). *Who leaves? Teacher attrition and student achievement* (NBER Working Paper No. 14022). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).

- Brookover, W. B., Schweitzer, J. H., Schneider, J. M., & Beady, C.H. (1978). Elementary school social climate and school achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 15(2), 301-318.
- Bryk, A., Camburn, E., & Louis, K. S. (1999). Professional community in Chicago elementary schools: Facilitating factors and organizational consequences. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(5), 751-781.
- Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E. M., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press.
- Buczynski, S. & Hansen, C. B. (2010). Impact of professional development on teacher practice: Uncovering connections. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 599-607.
- Caprara, G. V., Barbaranelli, C., Steca, P., & Malone, P. S. (2006). Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs as determinants of job satisfaction and students' academic achievement: A study at the school level. *Journal of School Psychology*, 44, 473-490.
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. A Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 331-346). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2005). Grounded theory in the 21st century: Applications for advancing social justice studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 507-536). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand, Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Charmaz, K. (2008). Constructionism and the grounded theory method. In J. A Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 397-412). New York: Guilford Press.
- Christle, C. A., Jovilette, K., & Nelson, C. M. (2007). School characteristics related to high school dropout rates. *Remedial and Special Education*, 28(6), 325-339.
- Clarke, D. & Hollingsworth, H. (2002). Elaborating a model of teacher professional growth. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 18(8), 947-967.
- Clause, K. W., Aquino, A., Wideman, R. (2009). Bridging the real and ideal: A comparison between learning community characteristics and a school-based case study. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(3), 444-452.

- Clotfelter, C., Ladd, H. F., Vigdor, J., & Wheeler, J. (2006). High-poverty schools and the distribution of teachers and principals. *North Carolina Law Review*, 85, 1345-1380.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. L. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: teacher learning in communities. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 249-305.
- Cohen, D. K. & Ball, D. L. (1999 June). *Instruction, capacity, and improvement* (CPRE Research Report Series RR-43). University of Pennsylvania: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Cole-Henderson, B. (2000). Organizational characteristics of schools that successfully serve low-income urban African American students. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 5(1/2), 77.
- Coleman, J. S., Cambell, E. Q., Hobson, C. J., McPartland, J., Mood, A. M., Weinfeld, F. D., & York, R. L. (1966). *Equality of educational opportunity* (Report of National Center for Education Statistics). Washington, D.C: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education.
- Cooper, R. & Jordan, W. J. (2003). Cultural issues in Comprehensive School Reform. *Urban Education*, 38(4), 380-397.
- Copland, M. A. (2003). Leadership of inquiry: Building and sustaining capacity for school improvement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(4), 375-395.
- Correnti, R. & Rowan, B. (2007). Opening up the black box: Literacy instruction in schools participating in three Comprehensive School Reform programs. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(2), 298-338.
- Cosner, S. (2009). Building organizational capacity through trust. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 45(2), 248-291.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1993). Reframing the school reform agenda: Developing the capacity for school transformation. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 74(10), 752-762.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1995). Rethinking teacher leadership through professional development schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96(1), 87-106.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1999, December). *Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence* (Document R-99-1). University of Washington: Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21st-century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 57(3), 300-314.

- Darling-Hammond, L., Bullmaster, M. L., & Cobb, V. L. (1995). Rethinking teacher leadership through professional development schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 96(1), 87-106.
- Datnow, A., Borman, G. D., Stringfield, S., Overman, L. T., & Castellano, M. (2003). Comprehensive School Reform in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts: Implementation and outcomes from a four-year study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(2), 143-170.
- Datnow, A. (2005). The sustainability of Comprehensive School Reform models in changing district and state contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 41(1), 121-153.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Desforges, C. (1995). How does experience affect theoretical knowledge for teaching? *Learning and Instruction*, 5(4), 385-400.
- Desimone, L. (2002). How can comprehensive school reform models be successfully implemented? *Review of Educational Research*, 72(3), 433-479.
- Desimone, L., Porter, A. C., Garet, M. S., Yoon, K. S., & Birman, B. F. (2002). Effects of professional development on teachers' instruction: Results from a three-year longitudinal study. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 24(2), 81-112.
- DeVault, M. L. & McCoy, L. (2003). Institutional ethnography: Using interviews to investigate ruling relations. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 369-394). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Dooner, A., Mandzuk, D., & Clifton, R. A. (2008). Stages of collaboration and the realities of professional learning communities. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(3), 564-574.
- Dunbar, C., Rodriguez, D., & Parker, L. (2003). Race, subjectivity, and the interview process. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 131-152). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Eilers, A. M. & Camacho, A. (2007). School culture change in the making: Leadership factors that matter. *Urban Education*, 42(6), 616-637.
- Elmore, R. F. (1995). Structural reform and educational practice. *Educational Researcher*, 24(9), 23-26.

- Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out : Policy, practice, and performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Epstein, J. L. (2005). A case study of the Partnership Schools Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) model. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 151-170.
- Erickson, F. (1987). Transformation and school success: The politics and culture of educational achievement. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 18(4), 335-356).
- Fink, D., & Stoll, L. (2005). Educational change: Easier said than done. In A. Hargreaves (Ed.), *Extending educational change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 17-41). New York, NY: Springer.
- Finn, J. D. (1993). *School engagement and students at risk* (NCES Report). Washington, D.C.: National Center for Educational Statistics.
- Finn, J. D. & Rock, D. A. (1997). Academic success among students at risk for school failure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(2), 221-234.
- Finnigan, K. S. & Gross, B. (2007). Do accountability policy sanctions influence teacher motivation? Lessons from Chicago's low-performing schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 594-629.
- Firestone, W. A. & Shipps, D. (2005). How do leaders interpret conflicting accountabilities to improve student learning? In W. A. Firestone & C. Riehl (Eds.), *A new agenda for research in educational leadership* (pp. 81-118). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Florian, J. (2000). *Sustaining education reform: Influential factors* (Report for US DOE Office of Educational Reform and Improvement). Aurora, CO: McREL.
- Fullan, M. (2000). Return of large-scale reform. *Journal of Educational Change*, 1, 5-28.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. (4th Ed.) New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fullan, M. (2010). Positive pressure. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Educational Change* (pp. 119-130). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Garet, M. S., Porter, A. C., Desimone, L., Birman, B., & Yoon, K. S. (2001). What makes professional development effective? Results from a national sample of teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38(4), 915-945.
- Geijsel, F., Slegers, P., van den Berg, R., & Kelchtermans, G. (2001). Conditions fostering the implementation of large-scale innovation programs in schools: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(1), 130-166.

- Giles, C. (2008). Capacity building: Sustaining urban secondary schools as resilient self-renewing organizations in the face of standardized educational reform. *The Urban Review*, 40(2), 137-163.
- Glaser, B. G. & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Transaction.
- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Goddard, R. D. & Goddard, Y. L. (2001). A multilevel analysis of the relationship between teacher and collective efficacy in urban schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(7), 807-818.
- Goddard, R. D., Hoy, W. K., & Hoy, A. W. (2000). Collective teacher efficacy: Its meaning, measure, and impact on student achievement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37(2), 479-507.
- Gross, B., Booker, T. K., & Goldhaber, D. (2009). Boosting student achievement: The effect of comprehensive school reform on student achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 31(2), 111-126.
- Guarino, C. M., Santibañez, L., & Daley, G. A. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(2), 173-208.
- Gubrium, J. F. & Holstein, J. A. (2008). The constructionist mosaic. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 3-12). New York: Guilford Press.
- Guskey, T. R. (1986). Staff Development and the Process of Teacher Change. *Educational Researcher*, 15(5), 5-12.
- Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional Development and Teacher Change. *Teachers & Teaching*, 8(3/4), 381-391.
- Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. H. (2010). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School Leadership and Management*, 30(2), 95-110.
- Hannay, L. M., Erb, C. S., & Ross, J. A. (2001). Building change capacity within secondary schools through goal-driven and living organisations. *School Leadership & Management*, 21(3), 271-287.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. London: Cassell.

- Hargreaves, A. (2001). A capital theory of school effectiveness and improvement. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(4), 487-503.
- Hargreaves, A. & Goodson, I. (2006). Educational change over time? The sustainability and nonsustainability of three decades of secondary school change and continuity. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42(1), 3-41.
- Harris, A. (2001). Building the capacity for school improvement. *School Leadership and Management*, 21(3), 261-270.
- Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership as distributed leadership: Heresy, fantasy, or possibility? *School Leadership and Management*, 23(3), 313-324.
- Harris, A. (2010). Improving schools in challenging contexts. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Educational Change* (pp. 693-706). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Harris, A., Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., & Hopkins, D. (2007). Distributed leadership and organizational change: Reviewing the evidence. *Journal of Educational Change*, 8(4), 337-347.
- Harris, D. N. & Herrington, C. D. (2006). Accountability, standards, and the growing achievement gap: Lessons from the past half-century. *American Journal of Education*, 112(2), 209-238.
- Haycock, K. (2001). Closing the achievement gap. *Educational Leadership*, 58(6), 6-11.
- Holmes, M. (2005). Change and tradition in education: The loss of community. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *The roots of educational change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 230-248). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J. F. (2003). Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Inside interviewing: New lenses, new concerns* (pp. 3-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Hoppey, D. & McLeskey, J. (2010). A case study of principal leadership in an effective inclusive school. *The Journal of Special Education*, 1-12.
- Hoy, W. K. & Hannum, J. W. (1997). Middle school climate: An empirical assessment of organizational health and student achievement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 33(3), 290-311.
- Hoy, W. K., Sweetland, S. R., & Smith, P. A. (2002). Toward an organizational model of achievement in high schools: The significance of collective efficacy. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(1), 77-93.
- Huffman, D. & Kalnin, J. (2003). Collaborative inquiry to make data-based decisions in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 19(6), 569-580.

- Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). *Why do high-poverty schools have difficulty staffing their classrooms with qualified teachers?* Report for Renewing Our Schools, Securing Our Future: A National Task Force on Public Education.
- Ingram, D., Louis, K. S., Schroeder, R. G. (2004). Accountability policies and teacher decision making: Barriers to the use of data to improve practice. *Teachers College Record, 106*(6), 1258-1287.
- Janesick, V. J. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design: Minuets, improvisations, and crystallization. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 379-400). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Johnson, B. & Stevens, J. J. (2006). Student achievement and elementary teachers' perceptions of school climate. *Learning Environments Research, 9*, 111-122.
- Kannapel, P. & Clements, S. K. (2005). *Inside the black box of high-performing, high poverty schools*. Lexington, KY: Report from Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence.
- Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2009). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Leadership development for teachers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- King, M. B. & Newmann, F. M. (2001). Building school capacity through professional development: Conceptual and empirical considerations. *International Journal of Educational Management, 15*(2), pp. 86-94.
- Kitzinger, J., & Barbour, R. S. (1999). *Developing focus group research: Politics, theory, and practice*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Kozol, J. (1992). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: HarperPerennial.
- Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Lambert, L. (2002). A framework for shared leadership. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 37-40.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership and Management, 28*(1), 27-42.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (2000). The effects of transformational leadership on organizational conditions and student engagement with school. *Journal of Educational Administration, 38*(2), 112-129.
- Leithwood, K., Leonard, L., & Sharratt, L. (1998). Conditions fostering organizational learning in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 34*(2), 243-276.

- Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(5), 671-706.
- Levin, B. & Fullan, M. (2008). Learning about system renewal. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 36(2), 289-303.
- Levine, D. U. & Lezotte, L. W. (1995). Effective schools research. In J. A. Banks. & C. A. M. G. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 525-547). New York, NY: Macmillan Pub.
- Levine, T. H. & Marcus, A. S. (2010). How the structure and focus of teachers' collaborative activities facilitate and constrain teacher learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(3), 389-398.
- Little, J. W., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Lieberman, A. (2005). The growth of educational change as a field of study. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *The roots of educational change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 1-8). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (2004). *Teacher leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lortie, D. C. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Louis, K. S. & Marks, H. M., & Kruse, S. (1996). Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 757-798.
- Louis, K.S. & Marks, H. M. (1998). Does professional community affect the classroom? Teachers' work and student expectations in restructuring schools. *American Journal of Education*, 106(4), 532-575.
- Ma, X. & Klinger, D. A. (2000). Hierarchical linear modelling of student and school effects on academic achievement. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 25(1), 41-55.
- Malen, B. & Rice, J. K. (2004). A Framework for assessing the impact of education reforms on school capacity: Insights from studies of high-stakes accountability initiatives. *Educational Policy*, 18(5), 631-660.
- Marks, H. M. & Louis, K. S. (1999). Teacher empowerment and the capacity for organizational learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(5), 707-750.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (2005). Listening and Learning from the Field: Tales of Policy Implementation and Situated Practice. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *The roots of educational change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 58-72). Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer.

- Meirink, J. A., Meijer, P. C., Verloop, N., & Bergen, C. M. (2009). Understanding teacher learning in secondary education: The relations of teacher activities to changed beliefs about teaching and learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(1), 89-100.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miles, M. (1965). Planned change and organizational health: Figure and ground. In R. O. Carlson (Ed.), *Change Processes in the Public Schools* [Monograph]. University of Oregon Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration.
- Miles, M. (2005). Listening and learning from the field: Tales of policy implementation and situated learning. In A. Lieberman (Ed.), *The roots of educational change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 25-57). Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer.
- Miller, A. (2005). Redefining teachers, reculturing schools: Connections, commitments and challenges. In A. Hargreaves (Ed.), *Extending educational change: International handbook of educational change* (pp. 249-263). Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer.
- Morgan, D. L. (2002). Focus group interviewing. In J. Gubrium & J. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Muijs, D., Harris, A., Chapman, C., Stoll, L., & Russ, J. (2004). Improving schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas: A review of research evidence. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 15*(2), 149-175.
- Mulford, B. (2010). Recent developments in the field of educational leadership: The challenge of complexity. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Educational Change* (pp. 187-208). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Mulford, B. & Silins, H. (2003). Leadership for organizational learning and improved student outcomes: What do we know? *Cambridge Journal of Education, 33*(2), 175-195.
- National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. An open letter to the American people*. A report to the nation and the Secretary of Education. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
- Newmann, F. M., King, M. B., & Youngs, P. (2000). Professional development that addresses school capacity: Lessons from urban elementary schools. *American Journal of Education, 108*(4), pp. 259-299.

- Newmann, F. M., Smith, B., Allensworth, E., & Bryk, A. S. (2001). Instructional program coherence: What it is and why it should guide school improvement policy. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(4), 297-321.
- Nir, A. E. & Bogler, R. (2008). The antecedents of teacher satisfaction with professional development programs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(2), 377-386.
- Nolan, J. F. & Meister, D. G. (2000). *Teachers and educational change: The lived experience of secondary school restructuring*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Scientifically based research and the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Program*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/compreform/guidance/appendc.pdf>
- Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(3), 307-332.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Payne, C. M. (2008). *So much reform, so little change : The persistence of failure in urban schools*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Education Press.
- Penuel, W. R., Fishman, B. J., Yamagucki, R., & Gallagher, L. P. (2007). What makes professional development effective? Strategies that foster curriculum implementation. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(4), 921-958.
- Planty, M., Hussar, W., Snyder, T., Kena, G., KewalRamani, A., Kemp, J., Bianco, K., & Dinkes, R. (2009). *The condition of education 2009* (NCES 2009-081). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.
- Purkey, S. C. & Smith, M. S. (1983). Effective schools: A review. *The Elementary School Journal, 83*(4), 426-452.
- Putnam, R. T. & Borko, H. (1997). What do new views of knowledge and thinking have to say about research on teacher learning? *Educational Researcher, 29*(1), 4-15.
- Richardson, V. (1990). Significant and worthwhile change in teaching practice. *Educational Researcher, 19*(7), 10-18.
- Richardson, V., Anders, P., Tidwell, D., & Lloyd, C. (1991). The relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices in reading comprehension instruction. *American Educational Research Journal, 28*(3), 559-586.

- Riehl, C. J. (2000). The principal's role in creating inclusive schools for diverse students: A review of normative, empirical, and critical literature on the practice of educational administration. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(1), 55.
- Riehl, C. & Firestone, W. A. (2005). What research methods should be used to study educational leadership? In W. A. Firestone & C. Riehl (Eds.), *A new agenda for research in educational leadership* (pp. 156-170). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Rivkin, S. G., Hanushek, E. A., & Kain, J. F. (2005). Teachers, schools, and academic achievement. *Econometrica*, 73(2), 417-458.
- Rothstein, R. (2004). *Class and schools: Using social, economic, and educational reform to close the Black-white achievement gap*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Rowan, B., Camburn, E., & Barnes, C. (2004). Benefiting from Comprehensive School Reform: A review of the research on CSR implementation. In C. T. Cross (Ed.), *Putting the pieces together: Lessons from Comprehensive School Reform research*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Comprehensive School Reform.
- Rowan, B., & Miller, R. J. (2007). Organizing strategies for promoting instructional change: Implementation dynamics in schools working with comprehensive school reform providers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44, 252-297.
- Sammons, P., Hillman, J., & Mortimore, P. (1995). *Key characteristics of effective schools: A review of school effectiveness*. London, England: International School Effectiveness and Improvement Centre.
- Sanders, W. L. & Rivers, J. C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future student academic achievement* (Research Progress Report). Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.
- Sarason, S. B. (1971). *The culture of the school and the problem of change*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Schnellert, L. M., Butler, D. L., & Higginson, S. K. (2008). Co-constructors of data, co-constructors of meaning: Teacher professional development in an age of accountability. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(3), 725-750.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Scribner, J. P., Cockrell, K. S., Cockrell, D. H., & Valentine, J.W. (1999). Creating professional communities in schools through organizational learning: An evaluation of a school improvement process. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(1), 130-160.

- Scribner, J. P., Hager, D. R., & Warne, T. R. (2002). The paradox of professional community: Tales from two high schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(1), 45-76.
- Senge, P. M. (1994). *The fifth discipline fieldbook: Strategies and tools for building a learning organization*. New York: Currency, Doubleday.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. & Starratt, R. J. (2007). *Supervision: A redefinition*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Silins, H. C., Mulford, W. R., & Zarins, S. (2002). Organizational learning and school change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(5), 613-642.
- Smylie, M. A. (1988). The enhancement function of staff development: Organizational and psychological antecedents to individual teacher change. *American Educational Research Journal*, 25, 1-30.
- Smylie, M. A. (1996). From bureaucratic control to building human capital: the importance of teacher learning in education reform. *Educational Researcher*, 25(9), 9-11.
- Spillane, J. P., Halverson, R., & Diamond, J. B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: a distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 36(1), 3-34.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Stewart, E. B. (2007/2008). Individual and school structural effects on African American high school students' academic achievement. *The High School Journal*, 91(2), 16-34.
- Stipek, D. J., Givvin, K. B., Salmon, J. M., & MacGyvers, V. L. (2001). Teachers' beliefs and practices related to mathematics instruction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 17(2), 213-226.
- Stoll, L. (2010). Connecting learning communities: Capacity building for systemic change. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second International Handbook of Educational Change* (pp. 469-484). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change*, 7(4), 221-258.
- Thrupp, M. & Lupton, R. (2006). Taking school contexts more seriously: The social justice challenge. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 54(3), 308-328.

- Turnbull, S. (2002). Social construction research and theory building. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 4*, 317-334.
- Van Eekelen, I. M., Vermunt, J. D., & Boshuizen, H. P. A. (2006). Exploring teachers' will to learn. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*(4), 408-423.
- Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(1), 80-91.
- Waldron, N. L., & McLeskey, J. (2010). Establishing a collaborative school culture through comprehensive school reform. *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation, 20*(1), 58-74.
- Wilhelm, T. (2009). Structural and cultural shifts to change the status quo. *Leadership, 38*(4), 22-38.
- Wilkins, J. L. M. (2008). The relationship among elementary teachers' content knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education, 11*(2), 139-164.
- Wright, S. P., Horn, S. P., & Sanders, W. L. (1997). Teacher and classroom context effects on student achievement: Implications for teacher evaluation. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 11*, 57-67.
- York-Barr, J. & Duke, K. (2004). What do we know about teacher leadership? Findings from two decades of scholarship. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(3), 255-316.
- York-Barr, J., Ghore, G., & Sommerness, J. (2007). Collaborative teaching to increase ELL student learning: A three-year urban elementary case study. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 12*(3), 301-335.
- Young, R. A. & Collin, A. (2004). Introduction: Constructivism and social constructionism in the career field. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 64*(3), 373-388.
- Youngs, P. & King, M. B. (2002). Principal leadership for professional development to build school capacity. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(5), 643-670.
- Zigarelli, M. A. (1996). An empirical test of conclusions from effective schools. *Journal of Educational Research, 90*(2), 103.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stephanie Dodman was born on June 16, 1980 in Clearwater, Florida to Robert and Frances Dodman. She grew up in Pinellas County and graduated from Tarpon Springs High School in 1998. After graduating from high school she went on the University of Florida. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 2001 and a Masters of Education in 2002.

The first few years of her career were spent teaching in St. Petersburg, Florida where she fell in love with teaching, but grew weary of the educational institution, which she felt confined her and her students to mere followers and rote learners. She tried to pursue avenues other than education, but found that her passion for public schooling was not to be dampened. After spending a year on a team coaching Head Start teachers in science and literacy, she knew where to channel her passion- teacher education and professional development. It became her goal that no other teacher should feel the helplessness that pushed her out of teaching and she would dedicate her research and teaching career to empowering other educators with the skills to empower their students.

Stephanie earned her Ph.D. from the University of Florida in August, 2011. She then continued her work in and for public education at George Mason University as Assistant Professor of Elementary Education.