7-3-2012

A CASE STUDY OF RELUCTANT CHANGE AT A MIDDLE SCHOOL

Kathy Alexander

Kathy Alexander
Candidate

Educational Leadership and Organizational Learning
Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Allison M. Borden, Chair

Dr. Arlie Woodrum

Dr. Breda Bova

Dr. Stephen L. Preskill

A CASE STUDY OF RELUCTANT CHANGE AT A MIDDLE SCHOOL

BY

KATHY ALEXANDER

B.A., Psychology, University of Las Vegas, 1977
M.A., Counseling, Webster University, 1992
Ed.S., Educational Leadership, University of New Mexico, 1996

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Educational Leadership

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2012

DEDICATION

For my mother, who believed you could never have enough education.

For my father, who taught me to enjoy all the small things in life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is an honor to acknowledge Dr. Allison M. Borden, my advisor and dissertation chair, for sharing her expertise and humor with me during the past few years. She guided, prodded, comforted, and talked me through every word of my dissertation-many, many times. She came to chat during the months of my chemotherapy. She cheered every success. Truly, we share this dissertation. More than that, and most importantly, I am honored to call her my friend.

I also thank Dr. Arlie Woodrum for his thoughtful comments and the hours he spent helping me use my research in a more compelling way. His uncanny knack for finding just the right words was amazing. One of my first graduate courses was taught by Dr. Breda Bova. I thank her for the time she took to give input that improved my work and for being on my committee. Dr. Steve Preskill's warmth and excitement about learning was at the forefront with each critique of my writing. No student has ever had such a supportive, knowledgeable, caring committee!

I am so grateful for my friends, Fran Wilkinson and Mark Emmons. We committed to encourage each other on this journey. Thank you for the dinners, the conversations, and the friendship.

I gratefully acknowledge all the amazing teachers who shared their work and love of teaching with me. Your commitment to your students and their education is amazing. Your willingness to change what you do to create a more positive learning environment for your students is commendable. I continue to learn from you each day.

I have been blessed with an amazing family. Adam, Danielle, Matthew, Kelly, Evan, Joshua, and Jenny-thank you for encouraging and loving me. You give me life.

And finally, to my husband Dale, who was with me every step, every day. Your love and friendship keep me strong for whatever comes.

A CASE STUDY OF RELUCTANT CHANGE AT A MIDDLE SCHOOL

by

Kathy Alexander

B.A., Psychology, University of Las Vegas, 1977
M.A., Counseling, Webster University, 1992
Ed.S., Educational Leadership, University of New Mexico, 1996
Ed.D., Educational Leadership, University of New Mexico, 2012

ABSTRACT

This is a single bounded case study, which investigated reluctant change in one restructuring middle school in a large urban school district in the Southwestern United States. Three research questions were addressed in this study. How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring? What are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies? What are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment? Data were collected via an electronic questionnaire, face-to-face interviews, and document analysis. Teachers saw change as mandated and punitive. When presented with opportunities to make decisions at the school level, teachers believed they could better meet the needs of their students. Teachers saw school change as the evolution of teaching practices based on research as well as on experience and collaboration with peers. When afforded the opportunity for discussion and questions about mandates and policies, they made connections between what they were being required to do (through federal, state, and district mandates) and the classroom. Teachers value communication and the time to communicate. They found the collaborative learning communities at the school to be valuable and expressed favorable

reactions to being provided time to work together. By being heard and contributing to the school's direction, teachers believed they were becoming a more cohesive group that worked well together in a more positive, creative learning environment.

Keywords: restructuring, middle school, understanding change, positive learning environment, policies and mandates that affect teachers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Schools change for all kinds of reasons. Sometimes a new school is built and the population is divided and both schools need to find new identities. Sometimes it is a change in leadership. Sometimes the community undergoes ethnic and economic changes. Sometimes an outside occurrence forces a school and the community it serves to take a look at current culture and environment and then create change that benefits both students and instruction. Culture is defined in this research as organizational culture. Culture develops over time. It is an organization's shared philosophy and actions and new members to the organization are trained to respond to issues and solve problems in the same way (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004).

Change happens rapidly in the schools of today. Planning for school change does not include the luxury of time as schools compete with one another for dwindling resources. Schools must learn to develop positive, strategic plans that lead to a clear vision of the action necessary for implementing change (Miller, 2002).

Change can be the result of a planned action. In education, research continuously gives us new ideas for change. This may place schools at the mercy of politicians who prescribe new changes and programs that produce contradictory results and lead to contradictory goals. Change leaders within schools are given either a direction to follow without being asked for input or, at the other end of the spectrum, must choose from an overwhelming buffet of plans, programs and services, which may or may not have a proven track record (Zimbalist, 2001).

Leaders need to determine a school's capacity for incorporating change (Normore, 2004). It is appropriate to consider: (1) costs, both long and short term; (2) how well the staff understands the vision that the change is working toward; (3) the consequences of the changes; (4) how hard it will be to change; (5) what information will need to be learned; (6) personal and professional changes that may occur; (7) resources for implementing the change and the time needed to make the change; and, (8) how the change will be communicated (Normore, 2004, p. 6). For change to be successful, the school must have the capacity to change or a leader that is willing to build that capacity. That leader must also have the ability to help a school create a shared vision.

This middle school has been affected by all of the above stated circumstances within the past decade, and probably affected by more changes than more systematic research, rather than simple observation, could unearth. Ten years ago, this school had high test scores, a population that was characterized as upper class, and a budget that allowed the staff to purchase any materials or curriculum they wanted to try. In addition, teachers had the luxury to teach as they wanted, with few guidelines or outside interference.

Today this middle school continues to be buffeted by multiple outside influences. A new middle school opened in the area in a neighborhood that caters to families whose homes cost three and four times more than those in the neighborhood. Some influential, moneyed families moved to the newer neighborhood from this neighborhood. With the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), those who could not afford to move were able to request transfers to the newer school in a neighborhood that was perceived by families to be better due to its higher test scores on state mandated tests. A significant

number of families who considered education to be a critical part of their families' lives were suddenly no longer at this school.

Additional families, many African American and Hispanic, moved into the neighborhood, families that differed from those that had lived there in the past. Many of the families held the same educational values as previous families, but some did not. The school continued to educate students in the same manner that had worked for years. The school also took in some transfer students to maintain its budget since schools received budget allocations based on student numbers.

In 2005, the large urban school district where this middle school is located moved closer to requiring additional high stakes testing. The middle school staff and community believed that by maintaining the same teaching environment, the school's students would be able to maintain the same test scores. Student scores seemed to be dipping each year, but not by much. State warnings to the school were not discussed and were only acknowledged in reference to the changing student and parent population. Staff members did not attend the district's professional development. As the number of students enrolled in the school also diminished, the staff chose to invest money in individual curricula based on teacher strengths and not necessarily on student need or on student data.

Neither teachers, students, nor the community could understand how a middle school that used to do so well academically now seemed to be unable to meet the needs of its students as determined by state mandating testing. Families that could afford to move out of the neighborhood did so and the number of students that qualified for free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) began to grow, along with the number of students

requiring special education services. As the number of students at the school continued to fall, so did the test scores.

By spring of 2009, students had been unable to score high enough on state mandated tests to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) and thus, the school was designated a failing middle school and its status was changed to Restructuring 1 (R1).

I define restructuring for the purposes of this paper as a change process that was messy, required collaboration, and needed to be constantly assessed, with adjustments made as needed. In addition, school leaders needed to look for emerging patterns during the restructuring process that would lead to sustainable change (Fullan, 1993; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Scherz, 2004).

This school's members needed to learn how to describe what they believe about teaching and learning and what students need to know and be able to do to be successful. The staff also needed to find ways to set goals and establish processes to reach those goals by changing what they were currently doing to what needed to be done based on data generated by staff and students. Schools in restructuring must begin to build capacity, but how? Schools like this one also needed to learn to use data for meaningful change.

Across the United States, including in this urban district, school administrators felt more and more pressure as schools changed and as the calls for reform were heard in the hallways of every school. Standards alone changed how schools now viewed teaching, learning, curriculum and students' progress through each grade. Current systems were thought to be inadequate and as schools became more accountable, it became harder and harder to determine what schools needed to do to improve student

achievement. We had a tendency to change everything and therefore found it difficult to determine which changes worked (Marks & Printy, 2003). In addition, principals became responsible for the changes needed to address standards and the newly transparent classroom walls. In the past, teachers had been able to close their doors and teach what they believed needed to be taught. With new standards for accountability, work in schools became open to questions from the community. Teachers became accountable for helping students meet standards and thus the work became open to outside critique.

The relationship between administrators and teachers also had to adjust to different expectations of accountability and new roles within schools. Principals were used as gatekeepers (Public Schools, 2009). They became responsible for student learning, fidelity to curriculum, and explanations about teaching and learning. They knew that the outcome they sought for students was dependent on how and when teachers became involved in efforts of initiating and sustaining change (Sarason, 1996, p. 5). They were responsible for what came in and out of schools.

In the 2011-2012 school year, parents of this middle school's students appear to be more knowledgeable about students meeting standards. They have been asking questions about how our school will help their students become proficient at meeting those standards. School practices need to become more transparent so that teachers are able to grade students in a similar fashion across grade levels and within departments on those standards. We have been meeting by grade levels to look at student data and share that information in department meetings. We have also begun the discussion of how to help students chart their own progress.

Schools such as this one have begun to use professional development opportunities to train staff in the continuous improvement systems suggested by the leading advocates from various research organizations (Marzano, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). However, as we become better at planning and doing, we seem to be missing the critical piece of studying what we are doing and using data to change our practices.

It is apparent that the requirements stated in No Child Left Behind are not going to go away. Even with all the conversation about modifying the requirements (U.S. DOE, 2010), the most casual observers recognize that the school house doors are no longer opaque. In fact, it may seem to some that those doors have been blown off their hinges. School practices and practitioners are discovering that their work is open to scrutiny by all members of their communities. Individuals consider themselves to be experts. After all, every one of them went to school and they know what made their personal educational experience both good and bad. To some, school should remain the way it was. After all, they understand the algorithmic math that used to be taught. Others believe that the system failed them and they want changes. They may not know exactly what those changes should be, but they know that the old way may not be the best way.

Within this century, if schools expect to respond to those who criticize public education, they need to be able to explain not only what they do but who they are. If we believe that we are doing our best for kids, it is no longer enough to <u>say</u> we are doing what is best for kids; we need to be able to <u>show</u> that we are doing our best for all kids and be able to present the data that support our claims. "Middle schools that have undergone organizational transformations have been shown to improve not only the work

life for teachers, but also the organizational climate and support for students. These intermediate results have also been shown to lead to improved academic performances for students—of all types of backgrounds. With transformed organizations, middle schools raise the tide that lifts all ships" (Strahan & Hedt, 2009, p. 2).

Most schools are beginning to discover that what they <u>say</u> they are doing does not necessarily match what they <u>are</u> doing. At our school, we tend to say a lot about what we are doing. However, when questioned, teachers become flustered and are unable to show concrete evidence of the progress students have made. In addition, they seem unable to speak to their beliefs about students, teaching and goals. Data is still a foreign word. They "do not use it" and have been heard to state that they "don't need it." They state that they have a gut instinct for teaching and learning. Yet test scores continue to drop, the amount of expected information to be taught continues to rise, and our school does not seem to know exactly how to talk about the student learning process, and the data that will illustrate our focus and help us plan ways to continuously look at and improve classroom instruction and documented student progress.

Our school needs to develop the necessary expertise to help our staff learn about the interactive practice of becoming skilled reflective practitioners. We must learn to develop a common vocabulary about students and learning. As a staff, we must develop an ability to expand on what we need to do to be accountable to students.

What kind of leadership could be exercised at our school? The opportunities and ideas may only be limited by our current inability to even know what kind of questions to ask. Leadership in schools may be informal, distributive, top to bottom, or shared and there may be several kinds of leadership in evidence in the same school from the

administrative offices to the classroom environment (Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Marks & Printz, 2003; Randolph, 2006; Sommers, 2009). However, it is readily apparent to me that among our first tasks is the development of a way to build opportunities to cultivate leaders with common goals, vocabulary, and data collection methods and then empower those leaders in failing schools to act.

Helping schools to build the capacity to change is the challenge faced by current school leadership. It involves changing the professional culture within the schoolhouse walls (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1999; Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Leithwood, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004). Young, Petersen, and Short (2002) took the stance that without a commitment from all the stakeholders to find common ground and common goals, positive and sustainable change in schools may not be possible. No one person or one group of individuals could possibly create that kind of change and continuously improve on their work, especially not the principal attempting to act alone. "In an era of accountability, policy makers have imposed new requirements, and the principal is responsible for enhancing progress on multiple (and often conflicting) measures of educational achievement. The frustrations with the lack of time, the lack of resources, and the pressures of external requirements have grown substantially" (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 519).

The purpose of this study was first to illustrate how change at the school was viewed by teachers, both as part of a historical process and the current change process. The second purpose of this study was to understand staff beliefs about change in a middle school setting. The final purpose of this study was to observe teachers' connections to mandates, policies, organizational culture or other values.

The work will need to begin by identifying how the adults at our school see our school. What are the positive and negative factors? What drives our teaching and learning and what inhibits it? How does each person see her role in the school? What do the adults see as the primary tasks to begin the shaping of school values and organizational culture into a positive, creative learning environment with goals that are driven and supported by appropriate data collection? A case study is the best approach to investigate these questions because questions are being asked about the current phenomenon of educational change at one school and what we can learn and understand from that change. A case study approach is also appropriate for this study because the events in this study could not be manipulated and events could be observed (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Schram, 2006; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Our challenge at middle school can be illustrated by a quote from John Maynard Keynes: "The real difficulty in changing the course of any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas but in escaping from old ones" (Lounsbury, 2009, p.3).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This Literature Review addresses research that corresponds to three research questions: How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring? What are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies? What are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment?

In this chapter, I present a review of the literature that describes federal, state, and district contexts for educational reform. It lays out the backdrop against which I examined the change processes that have already occurred and that continue to occur at our middle school. I also review the literature and discuss theories about school change and the leadership necessary to make those changes. Additional sections include a discussion of middle schools and their unique challenges, what it means to build capacity in schools to make positive changes, and a description of the communication, collaboration, and trust issues necessary to sustain positive educational changes.

The Federal Context for Educational Reform

This section was tied to my research questions because federal guidelines have determined significant changes at the federal level that middle school teachers may not be aware of, that they may see have having a positive or negative impact on their practice, or that they may be ignoring.

Education reform has taken on many guises. In the late 1950s, for example, reform efforts focused on the building and redesign of the mathematics and science

teacher workforce (The Business-Higher Education Forum, 2005). In the 1960s, national attention shifted to the design and introduction of new curricula in mathematics and science (The Business-Higher Education Forum, 2005).

However, the seminal event of the 1960s was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. This bill provided additional funding to schools that were designated Title I schools. President Johnson agreed to sign the bill when the National Assessment of Education Progress demonstrated that White students had significantly higher test scores than Black students. Title I funding supplemented funds given to schools by states. In most cases, it appeared that schools used the funding to pull students from regular classroom instruction and put them in different groups for instructional purposes. The federal government was on a course to mandate educational goals in ways that had never been imagined previously. The ESEA was later re-authorized by President George Bush in 2002 and became known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (Graham, 2005).

By the 1970s, the focus had moved to national testing (The Business-Higher Education Forum, 2005). Current activity was directed at improving school, district, and state accountability. These interventions include new curricula, testing, a focus on math and science initiatives, and teachers that had not had much connection with other educational initiatives such as state and district testing requirements, English language learners or inclusion for students with special education needs. As a result, there have been some changes, but the system of education in the United States, at least as rated by test scores, does not seemed to be much improved.

In 2007, the United States Government Accounting Office (GAO) reported, "over the past 40 years, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) has authorized billions of dollars in federal grants to states and school districts to improve educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged students" (p. 1). Even with this heavy investment and based on scores on state and federal tests, economically disadvantaged students have continued to perform lower on standardized tests than their peers who are not economically disadvantaged.

The federal government reacted in part to these test results by reauthorizing ESEA, commonly known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB and President George W. Bush signed it into law in 2002. This act made every public school accountable for the proficient academic performance of all of the school's students. Proficiency was defined by each state and 100% proficiency was required in reading, math, and science by 2014. If districts and schools receive any funding under Title I of NCLBA, those schools and districts are required to write an Alternative Governance Plan when students do not make adequate academic gains. Schools can restructure academically and/or with new staffing under these plans (GAO, 2007, p.1).

This national attention on accountability and improvement of opportunity for all students forced all public schools into the spotlight and opened schools to seemingly unprecedented public scrutiny. By 2007, almost 35% of schools receiving federal funding did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP). Schools that did not make AYP found themselves labeled as schools in need of corrective action. If this pattern continued for more than five years, these schools must restructure (GAO, 2007).

In addition, the Government Accountability Office recommended at that time (2007) that each state's Secretary of Education give direction to individual schools as to which actions to take. Schools could continue with corrective actions that had been in place in previous years or decide to completely replace the administration and teaching staff. Regardless of the choice that was made, schools had to put new corrective actions in place. Each state was also required to collect data on schools' corrective actions and to document the assistance each state was giving to schools.

Approximately half of the schools in corrective action or in restructuring in the United States received Title I funding (GAO, 2007). These schools tended to be in urban areas with significantly higher numbers of minority, poor, and middle school students than other Title I schools. The GAO's report included mobility and violence as factors that also affected academic student success.

The 2007 GAO report predicted that as states increase academic proficiency targets to 100 percent in 2014, a significant number of schools would enter corrective action and restructuring status. The Center on Education Policy posted a report that stated that one third of public schools in the United States did not make adequate yearly progress in 2008-2009 (Dietz, 2010). There are 94,170 public schools and that means, according to Dietz (2010), that 31,758 of those schools did not make their state's cut off scores for adequate yearly progress.

The Influence of States and Standards

This section was tied to my research questions because the states have determined school goals that determine a school's progress. Schools that are determined to need restructuring are required to meet state guidelines, which may change classroom teaching. States influence a school's need to adapt current school values to meet state requirements.

The Government Accounting Office (2007) report also expressed concerns that the Department of Education, as required by NCLB, had not followed through on dealing with school districts that had not reported annually on the measures taken by each school to academically improve. When schools did not improve after five years, they were required to take one of the five restructuring options defined under NCLB.

The GAO was also concerned that not all states were providing the required assistance to those schools. The assistance was intended to help with the analysis of individual student assessment data and aid districts in modifying budgets to direct monies toward school improvement. According to NCLB, states were supposed to create support teams for schools to offer technical assistance to target school improvement needs.

A timeline was set by each state to meet NCLB requirements for school improvement. This timeline was developed to help schools implement targeted interventions based on the number of years the school missed AYP. When schools do not make AYP for two consecutive years, school districts are mandated by their state education departments to offer students in restructuring schools an opportunity to transfer to other public schools in the district that have better performance records. After the third year, schools that are still not making progress are mandated to provide supplemental

educational services (SES), such as tutoring. These schools must design plans to improve. They must involve the school district, staff members, and parents in an open process. In some districts, outside experts are available for schools. District approval was necessary prior to implementation of the improvement plans. These plans were expected to include strategies to address the academic concerns in the areas where the school did not make the expected progress. After the fourth year, schools that were not making AYP must implement one of the corrective actions listed in the NCLB legislation. An additional intervention available in the fifth year was an opportunity to change the governance of the school as part of school restructuring (GAO, 2007).

Primary responsibility for making sure that these improvement steps were followed rests with the school district, with the state acting as a support system. Researchers such as Fullan (2001) believed that reform of this magnitude requires the school, the district and the state to create and coordinate accountability and capacity building at their level. Schools had little recourse about what was mandated. Most changes came from outside school systems and individual schools needed to work to make those changes (Sarason, 1996).

Schools in districts that provided active assistance believed they were being more successful (GAO, 2007). This assistance included training administrators and other staff to analyze and use test data for targeting instruction and tutoring. In some districts, this led to professional development in best practices. Districts may have invested in literacy or math coaches for classroom professional development. Some school districts worked to get increased parent involvement or stronger curriculum.

In 2006, the U.S. Department of Education stated that Federal guidance emphasized the need for schools to make dramatic changes in response to restructuring, but left it to states, districts, and schools to flesh out most of the details (CEP, 2009). In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) agreed to allow some states to use growth models for NCLB accountability and determination of whether or not a school has met AYP target goals.

As NCLB opened the school house doors and obliged schools to begin to follow and try to meet state curriculum grade level standards, it also moved the curriculum from meeting teachers' needs to the expectation that that teachers would teach what students were expected to learn and know how to do (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). This was not significantly different from the findings from earlier research that stated that teachers could no longer say that something had been taught, but that for students to be successful, the emphasis had to be on what the students had learned (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

It was clear that when districts or states mandated what schools do, those mandates were models from external organizations and as such may not effectively change the learning environment of a school more than superficially (Fullan, 2001). Schools may have implemented the model, but a cycle of continuous improvement did not automatically become part of the practice. Yet if change developed internally, it had a better chance of being sustained and assessments would show more positive trends (Brown & Spangler, 2006).

The state policy context was an essential element of reform because "Just as schools will not develop capacity if districts are not helping (or if a few schools do, it

won't be sustained), districts will not progress if the state policy context is not working to foster district and school development. This means that the state must work to establish a sophisticated blend of pressure and support (or accountability and capacity-building)" (Fullan, 2001, p.17).

A myriad of changes happened at the state level, changes influenced by federal money and unfunded mandates. States were asked to use federal monies to reward teachers earning National Board teaching certification. Districts were required to disclose to parents who asked information about specific teacher's qualifications. States were asked to ensure that students with limited English proficiency reach proficiency within three years. Federal funding was to be used to defray start up costs for charter schools. School choice and "open enrollment" were required in states and districts that received federal funding (ECS, 2001). Education researchers, such as Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning (2001, p. 3), described what they call a "karaoke curriculum." In Japanese, karaoke means an empty box. Although schools were inundated with standards, more frequent and lengthier assessments, and penalties for not showing continuous improvement; in reality these curriculum demands were open to a myriad of interpretations (Hargreaves et al., 2001).

Schools in all states were faced with having to change their internal organization as they moved from displaying minimal concern with assessment and its relationship to testing to an environment in which teachers, administrators, and parents focused on that relationship. This also required ongoing professional development (Fullan, 1993; Morrissey, 2000; Sarason, 1996; Williams, Brine, Sprague, & Sullivan, 2008).

The Education Commission of the States developed a comprehensive status report in 2000 to describe what states were doing to implement reforms to improve education and testing data. States were expected to develop stringent academic standards in safety and academic subject areas, as well as testing policies and rewards and sanctions. All states were now required by the federal government to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for 4th and 8th graders each year. Requirements included disaggregating data by ethnicity, socio-economic factors, gender and other factors (ECS, 2001).

Data were collected from all states because all were mandated to test students annually in reading and math in 3rd through 8th grades. This was not a problem for our state because it was one of fifteen states already testing in those grades and in high school. Our state also was already disaggregating the data from those tests (ECS, 2001). The new twist in this legislation was the inclusion of Special Education students in the testing, as well as making it the state's responsibility to report testing data to the public. The goal was to hold schools and school districts accountable for closing the gap in achievement between various subgroups and in particular for the Special Education subgroup.

Schools were responsible for demonstrating set levels of student achievement on mandated state selected achievement tests (Brighton & Hertberg, 2004). Specifically, as a direct result of the 2001 *No Child Left Behind* legislation, public schools were mandated and required to increase student achievement for all students to a level described as "proficient," with the proficiency level interpreted differently in each state. This reform was accompanied by increased assessment and accountability standards (PL 107-110).

Every state has had a different testing or licensure procedure in place for teachers. These tests/licenses were not always accepted from one state to another and the standards for licensure were different depending on the state. As part of our nation's attempt to raise standards for educating students, our government believed that standards should be raised for those who teach our students. State education departments required districts to hire only highly qualified teachers (HQT) as defined by that state.

Since the beginning of this decade, policies at federal, state, and district levels, have mandated state reporting of teacher candidates' test scores, and in addition, have required states to develop alternate career paths into teaching (Gittomer, 2007). Most teacher applicants have continued to be White, female, and English as a first language speakers. However, they have had higher GPAs than in past years. Teachers with secondary licensure have stronger educational backgrounds and the demanding nature of the test for certification allowed fewer teacher candidates to pass than the numbers that passed prior to 2000 (Gittomer, 2007).

A major change in state licensure during the past decade has been the requirement for middle school content tests to satisfy HQT requirements that dictate that middle school teachers be qualified in the content area in which they teach. Until the mid 1990s, middle school teachers had academic histories that more closely resembled elementary teachers. Additionally, alternate routes to certification were also encouraged in an effort to encourage more academically qualified individuals into the profession.

Gittomer (2007) described concerns in our country that went back almost a century. He referred to a large body of research that established a connection between teachers' verbal ability (as measured on a standardized test) and student achievement in

their classrooms. There are five specific policies that have had a positive effect on teacher

quality (Gittomer, 2007, p. 8):

1. In 1998, the reauthorized federal Higher Education Act 9 required all states and
   institutions that prepared teachers to report the licensure test passing rates for
   those who had completed programs of training. This information was reported
   publicly and was also used to identify low-performing teacher preparation
   programs. Teacher education programs made licensing tests a prerequisite for
   program completion.

2. In 2001, the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education
   Act, known as No Child Left behind (NCLB), included the Highly Qualified
   Teacher (HQT) Provision mandating that all students were to be taught by
   licensed teachers who were able to test well within a subject area. NCLB also
   prohibited the widespread practice of allowing unlicensed teachers to practice
   with emergency credentials. In most states, subject matter competence was to be
   demonstrated through a college major in a subject or by passing a state licensure
   test in the subject area.

3. During the last decade, some states have set performance standards for those
   entering teacher education programs.

4. Accreditation placed a much greater emphasis on outcome measures for students
   in teacher education programs. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher
   Education (NCATE) currently reviews and accredits more than 600 colleges and
   universities that prepare teachers. In 2000, NCATE introduced a new set of
   standards that moved from a primary focus on the teacher education curriculum to

one that also emphasized demonstration of knowledge and skills by teacher
candidates.

5. There has been a tenfold increase in the number of individuals certified through
   alternative route programs during the last decade. These alternative programs
   provide access to the profession for nontraditional candidates, including those
   pursuing teaching as a second career.

As states began to establish content standards, they developed a range of
strategies to gather input from teachers, curriculum experts, and the public (Dutro &
Valencia, 2004). States wanted the standards to identify what students should know and
be able to do based on that input and to get people to understand, value, and support
reform efforts at the state level. Changes in state leadership, variations in state board
approval, and debates over content within curriculum led states to revise standards
multiple times and in some cases actually dictated the content that was used or ignored
(Cusick & Borman, 2002; Dutro & Valencia, 2004). State legislators continued to try to
influence the content found in those state standards, causing standards to differ between
states (Cusick & Borman, 2002; Dutro & Valencia, 2004).

According to Dutro and Valencia (2004, p.3), "reformers argue that if there are
challenging standards, aligned assessments, flexibility for schools to help students meet
the standards, an accountability system, and professional development, then everything in
the education system can be directed toward the standards, and both teaching and student
learning will improve." Similar findings have been reported by O'Day and Smith (1993),
and Augustine, Gonzalez, Ikemoto, Russell, Zellman, Constant, Armstrong, and

Dembosky (2009). In addition, Brown and Spangler (2006) identified change principles

for schools as more rigorous state standards were adopted:

     1. Implementation of a comprehensive, district wide school-change model

     2. Standards based criteria in reading and math

     3. Principals lead instruction and practices shared

     4. Professional development planned from school and district data

     5. Professional development is continuous.

     Descriptions of what students should know and be able to do were at the heart of

content standards. These standards were "intended to define what educators and the

public value, and to provide a transparent way of communicating those expectations to

everyone. In general, it has been *state* standards that have been the focus of much public

attention. States typically set content standards, select the assessments, and issue

sanctions or awards.

     Aligning state and district content standards may not have been the best indicator

for school instruction improvement. School districts wanted to have a voice in content

standards but at the same time needed to adhere to the state's direction (Augustine et al.,

2009). This led to the development of tension between a district's desire to set its own

curriculum and the state's mandate.

     "The work to translate very broad state level standards into grade-bands or

     individual grade-level benchmarks requires time, money and expertise. Therefore,

     it can be an onerous process for districts, particularly smaller districts that have

     limited financial and personnel resources. Even among the large districts in this

     study, informants in all four states told us that there was a need for standards

across grade levels (in bands or individual grade levels) to help create a more

coherent approach to standards-based reform. But the specificity created by some

states far exceeded what appeared to be useful to districts" (Dutro & Valencia,

2004, p. 36).

For states and districts to have successful communication, they need to find ways

to listen to one another. States can mandate and regulate state testing and content

standards. However, mandating and regulating leave out the local district's desire to be

involved in the process that leads to the evaluation of their schools and students.

It was also critical to determine if states and districts were only relying on state

mandated tests to show evidence that schools were following state standards in classroom

instruction. Tests were expensive and to cut costs tests may have been too generic to test

a state's standards. States may align standards with tests. Classroom teachers may not

have taught standards that they did not see tested on standardized tests. A largely

unanswered question was how states and districts would assess accountability for

teaching standards beyond the use of test scores in the future (Dutro & Valencia, 2004;

Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). Content standards were not enough to support and

create change.

It appeared that the federal government believed that change in schools could take

place quickly. Yet, the legislation did not take individual school organization and

environments into consideration when designing the mandate. School improvement

efforts often took more than a year to affect student achievement. For schools that made

AYP, 76% of principals believed that teacher quality helped, as well as the addition of

paraprofessional help and computers. The principals also believed that other factors may

have affected the students' ability to score at the proficient level and as a result the schools' ability to make AYP was affected (GAO, 2007).

Researchers from The Center on Educational Policy (2009) found during an analysis on Michigan schools and their efforts at restructuring that growth models were useful in helping elementary and middle schools make AYP. Our state is one of the states that used a growth model based on the federally designated "safe harbor" model (Public Schools, 2007).

Most states began to use a formula for each test, which indicated how much student growth was needed in order for the growth to be declared significant. If a school did not make AYP in each subgroup area after two years, the school must have a technical state audit, which was based on each state's determination of characteristics of successful schools. The audit took place at the school site and included observations and interviews with staff members. State Department of Education members as well as districts and schools received the results (CEP, 2009). If a school did not make expected progress under NCLB requirements, schools could have replaced staff and/or restructured with building-level leadership teams and grade-level teacher teams, providing them with common planning time built into the school day.

In 1994, Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which did not emphasize standards but instead emphasized that all students can learn and that schools should insist that students are able to demonstrate this learning (Wheelock, 1995). This act authorized states to develop standards and also provided some funding toward the development of those standards as well as the obligation to develop assessments based on those standards. Students were now not only expected to know information, but were also

expected to know what to do with that information and knowledge. Curriculum now needed to be accessible and understandable to communities and that curriculum should not be static, but able to change based on new knowledge and information.

My State and Education Reform

This section is tied to my study since the school in my case study must act on our state's educational mandates, designations of academic progress, and is affected by teachers' understanding of the changes needed to build a positive, creative learning environment under the state guidelines.

The passage in 2003 of a bill in the State House of Representatives signaled the beginning of the state's reform efforts. Five years later, the State Office of Educational Accountability (OEA, 2008, 2009) reported that the state showed improvement in reading and math, but gaps still existed for poor and minority students.

The OEA (2008, 2009) also reported that the state had instituted several changes to meet NCLB requirements, which included PreK programs, an extended school year for kindergarten through third grade in some schools, enhanced teacher and principal salaries, the implementation of a three-tiered teacher licensure system, and amendment of the Public School Code to require a school year consisting of 180 full instructional days for a regular school year and a mandate to make up lost days. In the same report, the OEA (2009) stated that NM was 16th in the nation for standards, assessment, and accountability, 17th in the nation for the teaching profession, and 1st in the nation for school breakfast program.

Our state's standards-based assessment test (SBA) determines which schools are making the adequate yearly progress (AYP) required to comply with the federal

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law. Each year, the state raises the percentage of students who must be proficient in math and reading to achieve AYP. Districts that fail to make AYP are designated in need of improvement. If they fail to measure up for several years in a row, schools come under more scrutiny and, eventually, under direct control of the state. The state measures percentage improvement in each subject area separately for eight groups of students: Hispanic, Native American, white, African-American, Asian, English language learners, students with disabilities (including special education students), and low-income students. Elementary schools also can fall short in attendance, and high schools may fail based on graduation rates. The AYP target percentages increase each year until 2013–14, when every student must be proficient (Feemster, 2007, p.1).

School leadership was second only to teaching among school related factors that affected student learning and the impact of school leadership mattered more in high-need schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). With the national struggle to improve high-need schools, attention around the country had been focused on attracting and retaining effective leaders. There was a need for school administrators to create an environment that allowed for anticipation of the need for change and the ability to sustain change (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001). To do this, schools needed consistent leadership, teachers who stayed at one school for a longer period of time, and policies and procedures outside of the school that did not negate the changes. Leaders were expected to be able to understand the sub-texts, meta-messages, the politics between

their constituents, as well as the politics at the district and state levels (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

Successful leaders were active, not passive. Changing organizations, organizational cultures, and school environment demanded that leaders be pro-active (National Council for School Leadership, 2007). These were core skills for leaders that live in the world of educational change since they must "be able to analyze and understand their settings, determine priorities and enact their own and others' leadership in ways that are needs based" (p. 5). In 2007, the state's Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), and the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) conducted a joint study of the status of school leadership in our state. That study highlighted concerns about preparation and professional development (OEA, 2008).

As part of the reaction to that study, the OEA and the Coalition of School Administrators used surveys and focus groups with principals, superintendents, university faculty, and school board members to learn more about how we supported and retained school leaders (OEA, 2008). Our state also started to recognize that the changes necessary to challenge the status quo in its public schools would require some systemic change. State colleges reported that remedial college courses had to be developed to educate almost 85% of incoming freshman from some high schools (OEA, 2008). In 2007 and 2008, 442 of our state's almost 800 public schools failed to meet AYP. Based on that number, it was estimated 644 schools would fail to meet AYP in the 2013-2014 school year. In our state, schools failing to meet AYP for two years were designated as Schools in Need of Improvement (SINOI).

When we discovered that more than half of its schools were failing, work began on new initiatives to try to stem the downward trend in school success and to rebuild a system that the state government believed was failing its students.

While it was true that our state had made progress and "gained national attention for many of its systemic education reform efforts," too many schools continued to fail to make AYP and "the state has yet to find an effective way to intervene in many schools designated as low-performing schools" (OEA, 2008, p. 10). On the NAEP, the gold standard of national assessment, we were "usually ranked at the bottom of comparative lists of state performance on these assessments" (OEA, 2009, p. 3).

Our state made changes to class size, teacher to-child ratios and began to develop state standards that required teachers to hold a bachelor's degree in a content area. The State Senate (2009) recommended that the Public Education Department, the Higher Education Department, and Institutions of Higher Education: (a) revisit and possibly revise school principal standards; (b) look into recruitment, incentives and retention of principals; (c) develop and implement, the Leadership Institute; (d) help establish data and accountability systems for schools and administrators; (e) improve current certification requirements for school leaders; and, (f) refine and revitalize university principal preparation programs.

The state worked to develop data systems to allow school leaders to isolate areas of need and reallocate resources (The Wallace Foundation, 2006). However, this district was going back to a centralized budget system that would not allow site administrators to make these decisions, a troubling trend as "even the best-trained principals will not succeed for long if they must contend with entrenched state and district policies and

practices that impede their ability to succeed. To be successful, school leaders need to have, and be able to use, appropriate data to enable them to diagnose problems, arrive at solutions, and make the case to overcome resistance" (The Wallace Foundation, 2006, p. 5).

Our state used a unique funding formula, which was reviewed by the 2011 legislature. The proposed formula includes three criteria of student need: English language learners, special education, and poverty. It also recognized costs associated with district and school size and was based on the idea that each school needed a certain level of support if they were to develop a "comprehensive instructional program designed to meet the needs of all public school students" (OEA, 2009, p. 12). This formula tied funding to the school's Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). Schools were also mandated to evaluate teachers according to the three-tiered licensure system developed by the Public Education Department.

The following information from *Quality Counts 2012* (NMPED, 2011) compares our state to the rest of the country:

- was ranked 6th nationally, earning an B+ for transitions and alignment (National Average = C+)

- was ranked 15th nationally, earning an A- for standards, assessments and accountability (National Average = B)

- was ranked 23rd nationally, earning a C for initiatives in the teaching profession (National Average = C)

- was ranked 25th nationally, earning a C for school finance (National Average = C)

• was ranked 47th nationally, earning a D- for K-12 achievement levels (National

Average = C-)

• was ranked 50th nationally, earning a D+ for chances for success for students

(National Average = C+)

In the areas of academic rigor and accountability the Department of Public

Education highlighted the following (PED, 2009):

- Was recognized for mathematics standards highly aligned with the 2009

  National Assessment for Educational Progress.

- Student achievement shows steady improvement.

- In reading, the percentage of students scoring proficient and above on

  standardized tests had increased from 50 percent in 2005 to 53 percent in

  2008.

- In math, the percentage of students scoring proficient or above had improved

  from 30 to 36 percent from 2005 to 2008.

- Replaced criteria-based test with standards-based test in 2005.

- Was the first state in the country to formally adopt a textbook for teaching the

  Navajo Language (2008).

- In 2008, eight native languages were being taught in schools.

- Native American students were showing progress in closing the achievement

  gap.

- From 2005 to 2008, American Indian students in all grades tested had

  improved from 33 percent scoring proficient or above in reading to 39

  percent, more than any other group.

- In 2008, Dual Language programs were offered in 115 schools and 15 school districts.

In 2008, Highly Qualified Teachers (HQT) taught 94 percent of core courses, an increase from 67 percent in 2003-04. Other Public Education Department sources disagree with the picture painted by OEA.

On the state standards based assessment, student performance declined from grades 4 to 8. Additional causes for concern include (PED, 2007):

- On the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) grade 8 tests in 2005, we ranked 49th in the nation in math and 47th in science.

- About half as many students were proficient on NAEP math and science tests as in the nation.

- About 49% of high school graduates who attended state colleges had to take remedial math courses (elementary Algebra or lower).

- Graduating numbers of secondary math and science teachers in our state was inadequate to meet the need for replacements due to attrition at a time when the numbers of math and science courses needed for graduation was being increased.

- Less than 60% of students graduated from high school in 4 years.

Additional Public Education Department (PED) Information

The aforementioned site does not currently appear on the PED website. The site now hosts a document titled Quarterly Report Key Performance Measures-Fiscal Year 2011. This document gives a broad overview of the state education budget followed by broad categories that are not instructional in nature. The third and final section of the

document reports math and reading test scores for 4th and 8th graders. Scores are reported from either 2008 or 2009 up to 2011.

- 78% of teachers pass the test to become Highly Qualified on their first try.

- However, the number of Highly Qualified Teachers has dropped during the last three years.

- The number of schools making AYP in our state is reported as 300 but the number of all the schools is not reported.

- Each performance measure is tied to an action plan.

- Table 1 presents the mandated yearly test scores as reported by PED.

Table 1.
Reading and Math Test Scores 2008-2011 for 4th and 8th Grade Reading and Math

Grade and Test	Target Score	2008	2009	2010	2011
4th Grade Reading	78	50.8	52	51.4	46.5
4th Grade Math	77	39	42	45.4	44.4
8th Grade Reading	76	63.5	62	60.5	53.3
8th Grade Math	74	36.6	42	39.2	40.8

Source: PED Quarterly Report, October 30, 2011.

It is interesting to note that this document does not reference any national comparisons. In addition, in 2011, the state recalibrated test scores since the test had changed. As our state moves toward Common Core Standards, it will be interesting to watch how they compare test scores from the previous tests to the new tests.

The Public Schools Reform Act of 2003 had a provision that called for creation of a framework for professional development. An undated document, Framework for Professional Development, was found on the PED website (PED, 2009). The stated goal of the Framework was to support teaching and learning and it purports to be useful for educational leaders, teachers and parents. The 2003 guide contained requirements for professional development and claimed it could be used to design and evaluate professional development. It also listed resources (not all are currently available) and a calendar of professional development events statewide that has not had items posted since the site was created. The guide itself has not been updated in six years. This was important for state educators who have not had continuous or similar professional

development and guidance. The 2011 state legislature was creating a new evaluation process for educators that did not use this Framework and did not offer professional development guidelines. It is interesting to note that the 2003 guide has been removed from this website. The new document is titled PED 2011 Strategic Plan. It is written in a format that is similar to the format currently being used by public schools when writing state mandated goals for student success (PED, 2011). The new document does not include professional development requirements or resources. There is not a calendar per se. Instead the plan is written for one calendar year.

In 2005, public school students in grades 3 through 9 and 11 began to participate in the Standards Based Assessment. The SBA was first administered in 2005 and was designed specifically for State Standards and Benchmarks. The state and districts used this assessment specifically to look at the internal structure of teaching and learning within public schools.

School and School District Reform in Other States

School districts across the country began to look at their work and at the relationships they had with the schools in their districts. While states had the job of answering to the federal government about school reform, they soon realized that educators and policy makers did not always speak the same language and that they did not even consider the cost of reconstructing schools and curriculum.

School districts have decided on a number of reforms in the past twenty years, a significant number of them in response to demographic and social changes in their student populations (Brown & Spangler, 2006; Fisher, 2000; Marzano, 2003; Sarason, 2006; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Districts have tried busing, magnet and specialty

schools, choice through charter schools and vouchers, and a push to attend neighborhood schools. Districts have also reverted to site-based management and decision making due to the standards movement and increased state and federal influence over schools, in particular the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, which added pressure from the federal government for districts to lead instructional reform. School leaders had to stay autonomous, realign resources, and test students more often with higher stakes on standardized state tests (Allen et al., 2005). School district reform initiatives for schools became increasingly frequent, yet initiatives from previous years were not rescinded.

Middle Schools in the United States

This section was tied to my research because research for this case study will be done at a middle school with a middle school faculty.

Prior to 1960, most public school districts had junior high schools for students in grades seven and eight, and in some places ninth grade was also assigned to junior high schools. As schools were expected to make education more rigorous and as information grew exponentially, instruction changed. As industry changed, more people moved to the suburbs and schools in the inner cities had to cater to a more diverse population, while suburban schools taught more homogeneous groups of students (George, 2009).

In the 1960s and 1970s, middle schools came into being in part as a result of the push to desegregate public schools in the United States (George, 2009, p. 5).

Historically, middle schools passed through four stages of development:

1. One hundred years have passed since the Indianola Junior High School, generally acknowledged as the first junior high school, was established in Columbus, Ohio in 1909.

2. In 1946, 37 years after the junior high school was introduced, the 6-3-3 pattern of school organization became the predominant pattern in the United States, replacing the 8–4 plan.

3. In 1963, William Alexander, speaking at Cornell University, first advanced the term "middle school." This event, 49 years ago and just 17 years after the junior high school had become majority practice, is commonly used to mark the beginning of the middle school movement.

4. By 1983, the new "5-3-4 plan of organization, featuring a grades six through eight middle school, had become the predominant pattern" (Lounsbury, 2009, p. 31).

Under a 1991 grant from the Carnegie Corporation in New York, our state formally began the process of restructuring its middle schools (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). This grant was used to provide leadership and educational opportunities around a shared vision, explore new working relationships, thus creating more collaborative structures in an effort to change schools for middle level students (Middle Level Education Advisory Committee, 1991). The work revolved around investigating the Department of Education, university programs that prepared teachers, school districts, and the schools themselves. This committee recognized the importance of understanding adolescence behavior and of having teachers who were certified to teacher multiple subjects. Teachers who were already employed by the state's school districts would require additional professional development in understanding adolescence behavior and gaining expertise in managing it, as well as becoming proficient in middle school best practices.

The Middle Level Education Advisory Committee (1991) determined three areas of focus in order to change middle school instruction in the state: (a) Establishment of a common knowledge base, (b) plans for changes to improve middle school education implemented within a five year period, and (c) criteria for assessing the changes that were made. Their stated outcome was to be able to gather data that would lead to improved instruction and curriculum.

Schools were expected to write statements about their school philosophy and to describe the characteristics of middle school students. Middle school students were seen as being at risk. Characteristics included extreme emotional swings and uncertainty and schools needed to change the curriculum in order to give middle school students opportunities to express themselves as well as understand their emotional growth. Learning opportunities needed to be expanded to include multiple hands-on experiences and social experiences. Teachers working in teams were seen as a critical component. Discussion and analysis of subject matter were mentioned as being essential to constructing strong middle school learning environments (Moving into Action, 1991).

Early efforts to change middle schools were distinguished by middle schools adopting any program that was touted by the "latest" national group recommendation (Sarason, 1996). These changes were frequently adopted without consultation with or input from teachers. This led to misunderstanding and a lack of trust between teachers, administrators and districts.

Prior to 1969, middle schools were highly touted as being developmentally responsive institutions (Lounsbury, 2009). Soon after, they were said to be failing due to the fact that many middle school students were not reaching targeted academic goals,

resulting in middle schools being labeled as the weak years in the K-12 continuum. This label comes from those both inside and outside the educational system who believe that the primary responsibility of middle school is to prepare high school students for an advanced curriculum. These critics also believe that the middle school's job is primarily academic in nature, while ignoring the social and behavior issues that abound in most middle schools and middle school students.

It is of particular relevance to this study that, when compared with other schools, the GAO determined that middle schools were significantly overrepresented among schools in corrective action and restructuring. The GAO's findings in this area were similar to those found in other reports. See, for example, the National Assessment of Title I Interim Report, Vol. 1: Implementation (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) and NCLB: Middle Schools are Increasingly Targeted for Improvement (GAO, 2007).

Several factors may contribute to the disproportionate number of middle schools that do not make AYP. Middle school students score lower in math than elementary school students and they also are faced with social and emotional challenges during these school years (NCES, 2005, 2006). NCLB also designates that larger numbers of students in a subgroup have to make AYP in middle school than in elementary school (GAO, 2007).

During the past two decades, schools have been held increasingly accountable for student learning success, with a particular emphasis on improving standardized test scores (NCLB, 2001). Principals and teachers expressed a sense of unfairness when discussing accountability that focused on state test results rather than on student growth (Allen et al., 2005). This has resulted in a culture of skepticism and mistrust at many

schools, especially among teachers. Teachers interviewed for our study typically felt disconnected from the decision making that was bringing change to their classrooms. The predominance of one-way communication from the district to schools limited opportunities for teachers and principals to have a voice in shaping district policies. As a result, school level perspectives differed significantly from those at the central office (Allen et al., 2005, p. 8).

Middle school teachers in Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, and Manning's (2001) study were asked about how they invested in change and if that change created difficulties. Teachers were also asked if the difficulties were greater for teachers that did not see the need for change. Researchers (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001) found that the changes that teachers needed to make in their work could not be isolated from all their work with students. Some changes required that teachers become more technologically savvy. Teachers were also expected to build new relationships with students' families. Principals were also expected to assume new leadership roles in schools. All this was occurring while opportunities for professional development and professional collaboration times were being reduced or eliminated.

After several years, George (2009) discovered that middle schools were more successful if teams of teachers shared behavior management plans, shared parent conferences and planning time. It was the integrated planning time that led to team-developed cross-curricular lesson plans. It was imperative that teachers share the same group of students. Teachers also found that changing to flexible block schedules allowed students to be more academically successful. In addition, middle school leaders became instructional leaders (as opposed to managers), introduced a standards based curriculum,

and opened school doors to the community. Middle school educators also had a hand in developing the current trend to work with parents in shared decision making (Hickman, Moore, & Torek, 2008; Kelehear, 2003; Marks & Louis, 1999; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000; Youngs & King, 2002).

There was scant information on evaluating the changes in schools undertaking reform (Felner & Jackson, 1997). Schools have had a tendency to build a checklist of changes and mark them off rather than record discussions about what changes should be made and why.

Jackson (2009) summarized the conditions of middle grades education, finding there was strong, progress in middle school development in terms of structuring how students and teachers are organized for learning. Middle schools still showed achievement gaps between racial and cultural groups. This gap also appeared in all levels of American public schools (Brighton & Hertberg, 2004). Although they (Brighton & Hertberg, 2004) believed that federal mandates under No Child Left Behind were not the best legislation, NCLB did help schools move toward improving instruction and looking at outcomes for traditionally ignored students, those who were not White, those who had special learning, physical or mental needs, and those who were poor.

Middle school advocates wanted schools that helped foster a sense of belonging, confidence and self-esteem (Wheelock, 1995), as well as positive social interaction with peers and adults and meaningful participation in their education. Most schools seemed to still struggle with the view that middle school adolescents are less able to do well academically as they deal with puberty. Middle schools investigated providing

opportunities for sharing multiple opportunities to discuss student learning with parents, teachers and communities (Augustine et al., 2009; Wheelock, 1995).

Leaders at the school level were also critical human components that facilitated the changes without directing change from the top down. More sustainable changes occur in middle schools where there is collaboration between staff and community, and in addition, within these schools members knew that there were opportunities for their suggestions to lead to change (Williamson & McElrath, (2003).

While recent data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2007) indicated that almost all groups showed some improvement in eighth grade, noteworthy problems still existed. For example, approximately 30% of those same eighth graders were below the basic level in both math and reading achievement. Gaps have not closed in achievement between racial and ethnic groups in reading and math. This indicated that what students know and are able to do did not change significantly between 2001 and 2008 (Andrews, 2008; Jackson, 2009). In the meantime, the world continued to change, in both challenges and opportunities. It is critical that middle schools change and educators must recognize that middle school curriculum and philosophy must be structured so that students will be able to work with different people in a constantly changing globalized reality.

There was a fairly recent body of research (Andrews, 2008; Jackson, 2009; Miller, 2002; Sommers, 2009) that suggested that middle schools needed to develop a clear vision, mission, and culture to convey to the entire community that the school recognized the need to create learning opportunities for students that encompass: world issues; different perspectives; opportunities for scientific inquiry; analysis of causes and

consequences, the use of literature to understand how adolescents in other countries come of age and find their identities; and the use of literature to write and communicate with a world audience in mind. Middle school social studies courses can help students connect with current and past world events, perspective and themes.

Middle school reform included the development of authentic assessment. Schools should develop new ways for students to demonstrate their ability using rubrics to determine competence.

By 8th grade, student achievement gains from elementary school may be lost (Zinth, 2009). Consider these indicators:

- *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*: While fourth grade math scores jumped twenty-four points from 1973 to 2008, 8th-grade scores saw just a fifteen point improvement during the same period. Likewise, 8th-grade reading scores rose only four points 1971-2008, while 4th-grade scores increased twelve points. Although 4th-grade science scores saw a modest increase between 2000 and 2005, 8th-grade science scores were stagnant in 1996, 2000 and 2005 (Zinth, 2009).

- *State Assessments*: In 2006-07, 8th graders in thirty-two states were less likely than their 4th-grade counterparts to demonstrate proficiency in reading; in math, Forty-eight states and the District of Columbia saw a lower proportion of 8th graders scoring at the proficient level in 2006-07, in comparison to 4th graders (Zinth, 2009).

- *Lack of Adequate Yearly Progress*: Four out of ten (41%) of middle schools did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in 2005-06, compared to 19% of

elementary schools and 34% of high schools. More than one out of five (22%)

middle schools in 2006-07 was identified for improvement — in contrast to 13%

of elementary schools and 14% of high schools whose performance triggered this

designation. (Zinth, 2009, p. 1)

School personnel should pay attention to attendance, grades, and behavior in the

middle grades. Johns Hopkins University researchers (Zinth, 2009) determined that sixth

graders who failed English or math, attended school less than 80% of the time, lived in

poverty, and were assigned out of school suspension had a less than 20% chance of

graduating from high school on time. In addition, only one of these indicators combined

with behavior issues signaled a student who was potentially at risk for failure in our

educational system. Some students showed indicators beginning in seventh grade.

Indicators were considered significant for students in this population with fewer than one

out of four graduating from high school in five years. States needed to use these

indicators to collect middle school data. These data should be clear, easily understood

and accessible by school personnel who should be allocated time to go over data.

Attendance rates of less than 90% should be considered. Students identified as being at

risk should receive intense, focused support immediately. Absences were critical.

Students who were not in school may not be learning (Zinth, 2009).

It would have been appropriate at the middle school level to target the essential

skills and knowledge that students need for high school and the future. This would

include prioritizing and lowering the number of content standards teachers are expected

to teach. Specific tests should be developed for middle school use to assess individual

student learning and diagnose issues with learning or teaching not only at the end of the

course but during the school year (Andrews, 2008; Allen et al., 2005; Caskey, 2009; George, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Lounsbury, 2009; Zinth, 2009)

Several researchers have proposed a series of steps to address the quality of middle school teachers (Allen et al., 2005; Caskey, 2009; George, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Zinth, 2009): States should have considered mandating that teachers take subject area courses in the university departments that specialize in those subjects, rather than taking them in colleges and schools of education. All teachers should have taken addition coursework in adolescent literacy instruction. Middle school teachers should have been expected to demonstrate deeper content knowledge on the Praxis II examinations. Any gaps that teachers have in their content area should be identified and a plan should be developed to improve those missing skills.

Brown and Anfara (2003) and Lounsbury (2009) found that middle school leaders were passionate about continuous improvement and growth and worked diligently to set the stage for internal change, while helping stakeholders develop enough knowledge and understanding about not only a school wide improvement process but about the rationale for those changes. These school leaders (Brown & Anfara, 2003; Lounsbury, 2009) wanted stakeholders to be able to make informed decisions. NCLB, with its emphasis on testing, had educated the public to believe that the only teaching that should be taking place was the teaching that directly impacts students' ability to achieve proficient test scores.

In addition to grade level teams, some middle schools were looking at grade level teams and smaller learning communities. They also investigated using block scheduling to reduce the amount of time middle schoolers spend changing classes, and ways to give

every middle schooler a daily "double dose" of math and science by eliminating electives (CEP, 2009). Middle level district administrators had had a significant impact on instructional initiatives at the district level in the past. Policies and procedures that were defined by superintendents and school board members translated those ideas into strategies, guidelines and procedures. These ideas included catch phrases, such as "closing the achievement gap" and "improving literacy" (Allen et al., 2005).

The Role of the School District in Education Reform

This section was tied to my research questions because the district interprets state and federal regulations that change school processes and policies.

Although the federal government passes educational reform policies and passes them on to state legislators, the most linear directives come to schools via their districts in the form of superintendent mandates or school board requirements or initiatives to change current practices.

Less than 30% of change efforts may be successful because major change was typically a response to low performance (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009). This change may have been instituted in haste and without an understanding of what kind of change would result in the required changes. With every change, there were unintended consequences. Therefore, district leaders and the community should have been prepared to continue with the educational plan even when some schools do not successfully turn around on the first try.

Districts and teachers interpreted the political and confusing language in state documents in an unintended way. The public has not been able to separate content

standards from state performance standards and may see performance standards as test scores, which determine how well schools are performing (Dutro & Valencia, 2004).

> The emergence of standards-based reforms and accountability systems at the state and district levels led to renewed interest in and inquiry into the district role in educational change. . . It was only after the district began to reassert its role in providing capacity building, accountability and innovation support to schools that improvements in learning began to emerge on a large scale (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 39).

It was likely impossible to develop school capacity in most schools without a district improving its own capacity for reform efforts (Fullan, 2002). In fact, without the district having had the internal structure to support individual school change it would actually undermine a school's efforts or ignore a school in need. School districts found value in communicating with teachers and developing the specifics of the state's broader standards together (Augustine et al., 2009; Dutro & Valencia, 2004).

The introduction of restructuring in district schools required a paradigm shift from an organization that dealt with changes one at a time, to an organization that dealt with change as a constant. In order for schools to implement new ways of teaching and learning, change had to be seen as an important step in creating a new school culture (Brown & Spangler, 2006; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fisher, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Sarason, 1996; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth & Smith, 1999; Zmuda, Kuklis & Kline, 2004).

In this way, the work of the school was not stagnant, but continued to evolve in a way that enhanced the environment and the way staff worked together for the benefit of students (Burke, 2003; Sarason, 1996).

School districts were able to take different steps to improved student achievement. Some used direct support from the state and some did it without any state support. The most productive way to build capacity for reform seemed to be in those districts that tailored support to local strengths and needs (Augustine et al., 2009). In addition, Dutro and Valencia (2004) found that teachers have more contact with and understanding of district standards than of state standards.

There are seven concerns that stood in the way of strong support for schools from central district offices (Allen et al, 2005, pp. 9-10):

1. District-wide instructional policies and mandates had little impact on improving classroom instruction. Conversation was rare from district administrators about teaching and learning. School level staff interpreted many district policies as shallow and uninformed because the central office staff did not really know the culture of their schools.

2. The districts' rhetoric about improving instruction did not match the reality of their relentless focus on increasing standardized test scores. Standardized test scores played an increasingly important role in the competition for recruiting public school students and in meeting *No Child Left Behind* requirements.

3. Teacher voice and expertise were excluded from policy development and implementation discussions.

4. The districts failed to provide the kind of support and capacity building that school staff needed to achieve the districts' ambitious goals. School leaders faced the daunting challenge of implementing large scale reforms without having the comprehensive infrastructure needed to support new skills and knowledge development.

5. Principals had multiple responsibilities that often worked at cross purposes with their role leader. The principal's job grew increasingly complex due to external pressures and demands of accountability and internal needs to increase the capacity of school staff. (Principals were expected) to be budget professionals, to budget for hiring, for instructional leadership. Principals frequently commented that it was difficult to perform multiple functions that included instructional leadership, student discipline, professional development, budget oversight, marketing, personnel decisions, fundraising, and community relations. Principals had to comply not only with external policy messages to improve teaching practice and to raise test scores, but they also had to address the unique learning needs of their students.

6. Professional development was fragmented and not directly tied to district initiatives. School leaders had little patience for district provided, top-down staff development that did not relate to work going on in the schools and in the classrooms.

7. Principal leadership was an important determinant in how districtwide policies were implemented. Astute principals helped teachers make sense of district initiatives through existing communities of practice and through mediating and

buffering district policies to fit into their schools' ideas about teaching and learning. Principals mediated relations between district policies and classroom practice.

Principals defined effective training for change as getting technical assistance for budgeting and compliance issues, training on how to handle conflict and other challenges, and principals and superintendents being given the opportunity to network and learn from each other (Johnson, 2007; Petzko, Clark, Valentine, Hackmann, Nori, & Lucas, 2002).

The Public Schools Context for Education Reform

This section is tied to my research question because the school in this case study is part of this district. This district is a large urban school district in the Southwest. For purposes of confidentiality, the district is referred to as Public Schools District in this research.

The Public Schools District did not update its goals or mission statements from 2005 to 2007. Rather, the district used the state's educational plan for student Success (EPSS) as the predominant way to change schools. The apparent district mandate was for principals to provide clear direction for their schools around student achievement and standards-based education. In addition, principals were advised to apply the "instructional focus" to everyone in the organization, to both practice and performance, and to a limited number of key instructional areas and practices. "Instructional focus" was not defined during professional development nor could it be found on district websites or in district material (Public Schools, 2007).

Principals were also expected to "create a strong culture of commitment to high-performance; implement effective communication systems; and rely more heavily on face

to face relationships and to communicate with all stakeholders" (Public Schools, 2007). There was no schedule of implementation, training or evaluation process in place or described for these areas. The only professional development offered in relation to these expectations was through the presentation of PowerPoint slides during a district administrators' meeting (Public Schools, 2007).

District level administrators informed principals about expected changes via a set of PowerPoint slides that were presented in July 2009. All schools were to have school-based collaborative work teams. Schools were required to participate in District Standards Report Review, a process that involved a team of district administrators and teachers from other schools visiting a school other than their own for one day, and responding to a checklist. Feedback from the team was then shared with the principal of that school. The cluster leaders facilitated the discussions. At that time, cluster leaders were school principals who worked with small groups of principals from other schools. Cluster principals were also responsible for continued leadership at their own schools. Each principal was expected to share the data with school staff and use those data to make changes at the school.

A key component of school improvement was for a school to create a learning environment that used school data to plan improvements and changes (Cicchinelli, Dean, Calvin, Goodwin, & Parsley, 2006). This allowed schools, prior to making changes, to think about what data they were collecting and subsequently using to determine whether or not their plan has succeeded and what further actions needed to be taken. In addition to comparing itself to other districts in the state and in the country, our district collected data from individual schools. The district looked at three-year trends and looked at cohorts of

schools. These cohorts were built using yearly standards-based assessment data. School administrators met in 2007, 2008, and 2009 as test data cohorts at least once each year during an administrator level (elementary, middle or high school) meeting. Although individual schools used this information as part of their restructuring process, schools did not necessarily meet together to share information other than at these meetings. Data was also not shared in writing or in meetings with high schools or elementary feeder schools.

Although the districts gave lists of the support that they had provided for schools in their district, it was frequently apparent that the support was given to all schools without acknowledgment of individual school needs. In other cases, support was given only to those schools that qualified for additional federal funding and the support was not offered to schools that were unfunded (Public Schools Budget Meetings, 2000-2011).

Associate superintendents at each level implemented a task force to look at interventions that should be made at the school level to help students become proficient (RTI Taskforce, 2008; Woodard, 2008). The members of the task force invited schools that had received Title I funding to the meeting. Schools that did not make AYP and that did not receive funding were not given the same instructions or materials. Title I schools were also given the support of a "turn around principal support person" (Woodard, 2008). Non-Title I schools were not given a support person, even if they had not met AYP. The support personnel were paid for with Title I monies and therefore were instructed to work only with schools that received Title I funding.

In August of 2008, the Public Schools superintendent unveiled his eight goals for change for the next three years (Public Schools, 2008):

- Develop and implement a 3-year academic plan (2008/2009 – 2010/2011).

- Develop and implement a plan to change the perception and build confidence of Public Schools.

- Develop and implement a comprehensive internal and external communication plan with an evaluation component that involves the community.

- Provide facilitated training by nationally known experts for the Board of Education to focus on the role and responsibilities of effective school boards and superintendents. The training will assist and focus the Board of Education and district staff on raising student achievement and creating a more "student focused" organization.

- Review, evaluate, enhance and publicize plans to upgrade and maintain facilities to support and enhance student achievement.

- Review, modify and maintain a transparent, sound and effective financial stewardship with clearly defined, consistent and well documented processes throughout the district.

- Study, modify and recommend a plan to transition our district from a site-based management to district-based management for equitable distribution of resources.

- Review, evaluate, modify and enhance the school and district crisis plans, to include safety and prevention plans.

A district project manager used electronic mail to inform district administrators about websites that offered research on meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically different students, which met the goals stated in the district Response to Intervention (RTI) requirements. Other email messages gave an overview of the District Standards Support Review (DSSR) process, which was used to meet state requirements for NCLB.

The overviews gave a schedule, but lacked information on expectations, training, or support (Public Schools, 2008).

District emails for middle school administrators began to include two district goals in the Monday Memos. For example:

Goal: There will be an overall 3% increase in academic achievement.

Goal: There will be an overall decrease in the dropout rate of 3% (Public Schools, 2009).

The school district also offered occasional professional development opportunities. However, these opportunities were restricted to those principals with three or more years of professional experience, limited to one day, and concentrated only on ways of invigorating school communities.

The district's professional development unit also met NCLB criteria by expanding instructional coaching services to every elementary and middle school. In August of 2007, each middle school received a 1.0 FTE instructional coach, but important details about the coach's role were not fully developed. As time went on, the roles were expanded, and as decreases in funding became an issue, roles were expanded outside of the school to include district responsibilities and less time in assigned schools. Each year at budget time, principals were unsure as to whether the coaching jobs faced elimination, thus hampering each school's ability to plan for the following year.

<div align="center">**Leadership and Change**</div>

This section was tied to my research questions because school leaders are involved in helping schools reshape their values and cultures (Barth, 2002) to create a positive learning environment. Schools depend on leaders to define restructuring and to

<div align="center">53</div>

help teachers understand necessary changes, mandates and policies that affect their teaching.

Research from the Wallace Foundation (2006) made it clear that there is a large body of evidence that in order to have excellent teaching and excellent schools, it was necessary to ensure that schools have excellent leadership. This type of leadership did not isolate effective teaching practices and insisted that best practices are shared. At the same time, ineffective practices were not allowed to continue and with support from the administration, ineffective teachers were encouraged to get help and change the educational environment. High quality leaders also insisted that every single student is given the opportunity for success in school.

As demands on school leaders grew in the areas of improving teaching and learning at their schools, the Wallace Foundation (2006) wrote that:

Federal *No Child Left Behind* law and state-level accountability rules have placed principals squarely on the front lines in the struggle to ensure that every child suc-ceeded as a learner. The result, in more and more districts, is that if principals merely performed as competent managers, but not as engaged instructional leaders who developed effective teams in their schools to drive sustained improvements in teaching and learning in every classroom, they were at risk of losing their jobs. Providing a range of support to teachers, creating a supportive team culture in schools in which all adults share successes and challenges in a sympathetic but rigorous way, being vigilant in recognition of both good classroom practices and bad ones, and having the courage to challenge long-

cherished practices when the facts show they were ineffective, was at the heart of

what it means to be an 'instructional leader,' not just a building manager. (p.1)

Principals found it difficult to balance the demands from students and staff as well

as all the district, state, and federal requirements. Overwhelming requests from Central

office interfered with principal focus on school instruction. Principals had to work with

external policy, improve teaching in classrooms, increase student learning, raise test

scores, design instructional programs based on individual student learning needs, interests

and skill levels, build capacity and informal teacher leadership inside individual schools,

even as they offered a supportive climate for staff, students and parents (Mezzacappa,

Holland, Willen, Colvin, & Feemster, 2008). At the same time, they received little to no

support and/or resources from district central offices (Allen et al., 2005, p. 8).

Leaders in the organizations were obligated to recognize how members of the

school community fit together and depend on one another within organizations

(Wheatley, 1994), particularly as those organizations began to change in response to

NCLB and recognized that accountability for educational work is a national expectation,

and not just a local idea (Zimmerman, 2004). These problems "were not just peculiar to

schools, the problem of change is the problem of every major institution in our society

and that fact alone suggests that our conceptions of institutional change have deep roots

in the nature of our society" (Sarason, 1996, p. 44).

The "basic core" of successful leadership includes setting directions that can be

understood and supported by the community, as well as creating professional

development opportunities (The Wallace Foundation, 2006). These opportunities allowed

educators to improve upon and learn best practices, increase school leadership capacity

and involved all stakeholders in supporting the direction being taken to improve schools for students.

Change dictated a necessity for a school to continuously improve. Continuous improvement required a community to purposefully work toward shared goals and mutual understanding of how they worked toward those goals (Cicchinelli et al., 2006). This effort involved developing a shared vision of where schools want to be as opposed to where they currently were (Brown & Anfara, 2003; Hickman, Moore, & Torek, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Vision was the single most important element of change (Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Senge, 1998; Zimbalist, 2001). It was needed for the growth of the organization; how the vision was created and selected may determine whether or not that change was successful. The vision was shared, understood, and developed by the organization at large. Change leaders who had a strong vision for their schools knew how to implement new ideas, carefully collected data on the effects of that change, and continually engaged in reflection about their leadership practice (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

Most of the school leaders interviewed by Portin (2003) were familiar with the terms vision and mission. They believed it was their job to keep the vision and mission at the center of the focus on school reform, made this part of their school organization, and included mission and vision in discussions with community members. Visionary leaders had the role of keeping the vision alive and staff members enthused about getting "there." They knew how to foster an atmosphere of collaboration as staff members begin to explore ways to reach their goals together. Staff members were empowered by planning

and setting outcomes that were measurable and had a timeline. School leaders set the tone of the school and were open to suggestions and appreciative of staff work (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Hickman et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004).

It was clear that a

growing body of evidence has highlighted this basic fact: behind excellent

teaching and excellent schools is excellent leadership – the kind that ensures that

effective teaching practices don't remain isolated and unshared in single

classrooms, and ineffective ones don't go unnoticed and unremedied. Indeed, with

our national commitment to make every single child a successful learner, the

importance of having such a high-quality leader in every school is greater than

ever (The Wallace Foundation, 2006, p. 1). Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth,

and Smith, (1999) had similar research findings.

Effective leaders within strong, successful organizations were able to share a vision that persuaded others to work toward necessary organizational change (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Senge's 1990 work was based on the theory that educators are learners and many who share that belief are now in leadership positions. Senge (1990) presented the concept of working in an organization that can learn and through that learning, can change. This led to the concept of developing a way of communicating shared visions that could be used as a set of tools that guided practices within an organization.

Visionary leadership required a shared vision with staff and that vision became "actions" that led to change (Brown & Anfara, 2003). Leaders understood the strengths and needs of their staff and what it would take to implement the desired changes (Brown & Anfara, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000).

Brown and Anfara (2003), as well as Leithwood et al. (2004), acknowledged that visionary leadership became popular to describe what successful school principals had achieved in the 1980s. Principals were expected to share their vision with teachers, students and parents. In addition, they had the roles of instructional leader, budget analyst, problem solver and community builder. These leaders were able to see what is possible within their schools and were able to set goals based on the shared vision and possibilities.

Schools found that change was part of everyday expectation. Through the last decade, school administrators were no longer expected to individually make decisions for their schools, nor were they expected to hold all the power (Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Timperley, 2005; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000). Leaders were expected to develop capacity within their schools for shared leadership opportunities and to collaborate within that structure to build a system that gave each student an opportunity for educational success, no matter how diverse the needs were (Beachum & Dentith, 2004). Strong teacher leadership significantly contributed to the success of restructuring within schools (Beachum & Dentith, 2004).

Principals were unable to direct staff members to generate a shared vision for their school, if all stakeholders did not identify a shared focus for improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Morrissey, 2000; Sarason, 1996; Sommers, 2009; Wyatt-Smith, Bridges, Hedemann, & Neville, 2008). Principals communicated their belief in creating school-based professional learning communities and created collaborative structures that ensured the sharing of leadership and decision-making. Principals needed to practice distributed leadership by developing opportunities for staff members to take

on leadership roles related to teaching and learning (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Williams, & Thomas, 2006).

Restructuring schools often looked for a leader that could work with and initiate the change process.

Evidence suggests that individual leaders actually behave quite differently (and productively) depending on the circumstances they are facing and the people with whom they are working…We need to be developing leaders with large repertoires of practices and the capacity to chose from that repertoire as needed, not leaders trained in the delivery of one 'ideal' set of practices (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 10).

To be effective, change within the organization required shared leadership and good communication between members. Both children and adults should practice that good communication. All members needed to be empowered and encouraged to participate. Relationships in these kinds of organization were more reciprocal and less linear, which led to all members working toward similar goals (Amey, 2005).

Shared decision making, a process of making educational decisions in a collaborative manner at the school level, emphasized the fact that those closest to the students would make the best decisions about their education changes and how to implement those changes (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Dufour, 2007; Hickman, Moore & Torek, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000).

School leaders, faced with mounting and diverse challenges, found that it was imperative to find ways to share leadership tasks (Portin, 2003). As principals took on

new roles in the area of human resources, they incorporated new opportunities for differentiated leadership in the school. Group members also took on more responsibility and were accountable to one another for completion of tasks and development of new ideas. It was difficult for a principal to know all ways in which their staff members were unwilling or unable to learn new information and to change. Instead, they developed and practiced a tradition of shared leadership and responsibility (Kelehear, 2003). "At its root, the concept of distributed leadership was quite simple: initiatives or practices used to influence members of the organization are exercised by more than a single person. In this way, the work was divided and schools benefit from a deeper capacity of abilities" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 28). This leadership valued shared, collaborative, democratic, invitational, transformational and participative leadership (Leithwood et al., 2004). This leadership had members sharing best practices, rather than searching for those characteristics in one leader. For the purposes of this paper, distributive leadership will be defined as leadership that "holds that leadership cognition and activity are situated within an interactive web of actors (leaders and followers), artifacts, and situations. The situation, or context, is not an external force but an integral part of the leadership dynamic. Leadership is 'stretched over' leaders, followers, and activities within a reciprocal interdependency" (Lambert, 2003, p. 424).

Sharing authority and leadership kept change sustainable (Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). Nevertheless, school improvement was partly explained by the extent to which leadership practice was found distributed within the school organization (Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004). This distribution was defined by several persons with several job descriptions that practice leadership at the same time and

in a similar way. This shared, or distributed leadership, worked with creating

opportunities for change, setting direction and redesigning the organization. Setting

directions involved creating a vision and developing shared understandings that support

the organization's vision. Redesigning the organization suggested that building an

effective organization that took into consideration steps that supported the school

traditions, collaboration and the goals of the school (Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker,

2007). Distributed leadership endowed teachers with the authority and support they

needed to take risks and investigate innovative strategies for making positive changes in

the school. In this way, administrators and staff were able to share decision making that

was essential for creative, sustainable change (Hickman et al., 2008; Sarason, 1996).

Leadership affected the process of shared decision making. Change occurred

when principals collaborated and supported risk taking by school staff and students.

Principals created an organizational culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1999;

Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Leithwood, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004;

Owens, 2004) of learning by encouraging the school members to learn to change what

they do. Distributed leadership helped members learn from one another, allowed more

participation in decision making and developing organizational goals and strategies.

Leaders were able to learn while doing and responded faster and more appropriately to

school issues (Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Youngs & King, 2002;

Zimmerman, 2003).

Principals had the responsibility to become the leader of all the leaders within the

school (Marks & Printy, 2003). Shared instructional leadership required school personnel

to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The principal had the

responsibility to encourage teachers to share school improvement ideas based on their expertise and close work with students.

Marks and Printy (2003) demonstrated the effectiveness of integrated leadership—both transformational and instructional—in eliciting the instructional leadership of teachers for improving school performance. Arguably, principals who shared leadership responsibilities with others would be less subject to burnout than principal "heroes" (p. 393) who attempted to solve the challenges and complexities of leadership by working alone. Principals who required strong commitment and complete professionalism from teachers, and worked interactively with teachers in a shared instructional leadership capacity, created schools that had the benefit of integrated leadership; they were organizations that learned together (Senge, 1990).

Transformational approaches to leadership have long been seen as the logical and successful way to lead schools invested in reform (Leithwood, 1994). Yet, later research appeared to contradict this when looking at the long-term effects and whether or not the changes made were sustainable. Motivation and transformational leaders led to school members being more committed to the reform process (Yammarino, Dubinsky & Spangler, 1998). "Much less evidence was available about whether these socio-psychological effects actually resulted in organizational change" (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 452), particularly within school contexts (Leithwood, Tomlinson, & Genge, 1996). In fact, Sarason (1996) suggested that when educators talk about change, they were ignorant about how that change occurs in relation to the organization in which they worked.

Within their leadership roles, principals were able to work to transform school traditions or to maintain them (Firestone & Louis, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003; Zimmerman, 2003). According to Conley and Goldman, (as cited in Marks & Printy, 2003) transformational leadership empowered and supported teachers when they shared in decisions and goal setting (Leithwood, 1994). Instructional leadership then became described as shared instructional leadership, with innovation and opportunities to shape school culture at the forefront.

Transformational leadership has frequently been cited as one of the methods used to change a school's organization in ways that improve the school's performance. This method concentrates on the combined methods of collaboration with stakeholders, problem identification and collaborative solutions to those problems (Amey, 2005; Marks & Printy, 2003). Even Burns (1978) saw transformational leadership as a way to build capacity in an organization.

Change does not always just occur within the organization. "Change-oriented leadership" or "transformational leadership" (Murphy, Elliott, Goldring, & Porter 2006; Yukl, 2002) extended beyond the school staff when it reached out to families in the communities. By involving those community members in decision making and goal setting, school leaders empowered others to support and sustain the changes needed to make a difference for student success (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Murphy et al., 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003).

As schools continued to improve and change, the people who worked in them learned to collect and use data. These data were then used to make decisions about the direction of the change needed at the specific school. Schools were most successful when

stakeholders could identify the goals and data collection methods and then have a conversation about both areas (Sommers, 2009; Strahan, Cooper, & Ward, 2001). In this way, individuals at all levels were able to buy in to the changes they believed were necessary to improve schools. The collected data, essential for school change, were descriptive of current teaching and learning practices and became part of a plan to reform the school (Williams, Brine, Sprague, & Sullivan, 2008).

School site administrators used data to monitor what happened in classrooms and within the entire school "by using data, observing, teaching and learning, identifying strengths and the development needs of teachers and determine priorities for groups of students" (National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 2007, p. 7). Collected data had to be current and must only be based on the organization in question (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009; Zimbalist, 2001). Mandates for the quantity of data within educational organizations that must be kept and that could be found became overwhelming.

For change to be effective, it had to exist in every corner of an entire organization (Hill, Pierce, & Guthrie, 1997). Realistically speaking, if only the administration of the school changed, it did not follow that significant or meaningful classroom change would occur. Perhaps this explained why administrators sometimes saw positive school change at a particular point in time, yet the change did not appear to be sustained or sustainable over time.

Schools determined that important changes would not be made if rules and governance had not changed (Brown & Spangler, 2006; Zimbalist, 2001). In other words, it was imperative that school boards, superintendents and state agencies remained open to

new ideas and school generated data. School improvement models and plans should have

been built with input from all stakeholders and should have been looked at as change that

could be sustained within the system. Schools were comprised of multiple embedded

systems and therefore, multiple systems would have to have modified for change to be

introduced and sustained (Sarason, 1996), but "the power to legislate change is no

guarantee that the change will occur" (p. 149).

Regardless of the reasons for engaging in change processes:

All successful schools experience 'implementation dips' as they move forward.

The implementation dip was in reality a dip that was seen in the collection of

performance and confidence data. This was consistent in schools as teachers were

required to learn new skills and understand new concepts as new innovations were

introduced. Understanding leaders saw the dip as having two parts. School staff

members were afraid of change, both socially and psychologically. In addition,

some of them were learning new skills for the first time since college and for

some that was years ago. Therefore, those leaders had to strategize all aspects of

the changes that must be implemented. They had to constantly survey the work

ahead and adapt to meet each new challenge as they began to craft solutions with

their community. (NCSL, 2007)

It was increasingly apparent that with the advent of NCLB and state and district

accountability rules that principals were not only on the front line, but they were on the

firing line. Principals no longer simply managed their buildings, but as instructional

leaders they were expected to build teams of educators and community members who

continuously worked to improve practice in each classroom. In that way, they were able

to initiate opportunities to change the school culture and work toward sustained changes in teaching and learning in each classroom by supporting teaching and students. In this manner, all members within the school organization helped build a school environment that was strong and supportive and directed the school's work toward effective change (The Wallace Foundation, 2006).

In order to have successful school leaders, leadership standards should be aligned with and based on an agreed upon definition of what successful leadership is and how leaders should act (Lambert, 2003; Murphy et al., 2006; O'Neill, 1981; Portin, 2003; Slatter, 1984; Timperley, 2005; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985; The Wallace Foundation, 2006; Zimbalist, 2001. Successful reform is supported by (The Wallace Foundation, 2006):

- Leadership training tied to standards and responsive to the job conditions, needs and learning goals of districts;
- Continuing professional development opportunities for leaders linked to learning goals and multiple opportunities for principals to share challenges, successes and effective practices;
- Shared and distributive leadership;
- Decision-making based on fact, data appropriately collected and related to learning goals and leaders trained in collecting and using data; and,
- Leaders with the authority to allocate staff, time and money needed to make changes meet student learning goals. (p.8)

Historically, demands on school leaders continued to increase exponentially (Beachum & Dentith, 2004). School leaders were held accountable for increasing student

achievement scores and their jobs are held hostage if increases did not occur on the state or federal government's schedules. Public opinion about education was at an all time low and yet expectations continued to rise. Change in schools was not seen as successful change and part of the issue was that the public has not yet learned to look further into the complex arena of learning, building knowledge, educational organizations, and adult and student behavior (Fullan, 2002).

As schools looked for opportunities to change, sometimes they were presented with a mandate to change leadership. Five important leadership characteristics led to positive results for school change (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009; Public Impact, 2008) and these were related to the term "turnaround leadership" where leaders: (a) would be results driven and task oriented; (b) influenced others by motivation and influenced their thinking and behavior; (c) had the ability to solve problems, analyzed data prior to making decisions; (d) presented plans to stakeholders and made the connection to student learning and classroom instruction; (e) were focused, committed, confident even with negative feedback (both personal and professional) from community members unable to see the need to change (Kowal, Hasssel, & Hasssel, 2009, p. 3).

Turnaround principals changed the way things were done in the past at schools, which in a large number of cases conflicted with standard school practices. School leaders needed to provide staff members with a low risk environment so they were free to share ideas, concerns and questions about new policies and procedures that may or may not improve classroom practice and learning (Kowal, Hasssel, & Hasssel, 2009). Nearly half of the nation's school superintendents said that they had moved a successful principal into a low-performing school in an effort to turn the school around (Johnson,

2007). The vast majority of those who have done this said the principal was able to make genuine progress. However, forced change may not always be sustainable (Conley, 2001; Fisher, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Normore, 2004; Scherz, 2004) and there did not appear to be literature on forced change that was sustainable and successful.

Significant change required time and opportunity for reflection, questions, and the processing of new information. Members of the organization needed time to interact with one another through verbal sharing, decision making on common goals, and opportunities for developing new skills. Changes were usually incremental and required leaders to work patiently with faculty members, students and community.

True reform was neither created nor mandated (Brown & Anfara, 2003). Reform was described as developmental in nature. Leaders developed opportunities for staff members to change in a supportive environment. Change frequently occurred in small steps and leaders had to be patient with the time it took to transform schools. Everyone needed to believe that they were making a contribution (Brown & Anfara, 2003; Normore, 2004; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

Multiple researchers have determined elements of leadership required for effective reform efforts (Arlestig, 2007; Miller, 2002; Shapiro & Wade, 1994; Sommers, 2009; Wheatley, 1994; Yates & Holt, 2009; Youngs & King, 2002; Zimmerman, 2004). Brown and Anfara (2003, p. 30) and found that leaders who led change successfully:

    1. Understand the nature, needs, strengths, and limitations of staff members.

    2. Understand the relevance of the reform in terms of need, practicality, and
    complexity.

    3. Assess the readiness of staff to become involved.

4. Ensure that the necessary resources and support are available, including the time to accomplish the task.

5. Work collaboratively with a critical mass of diverse constituents (teachers, community members, parents, etc.).

6. Understand that change is difficult and will be met with resistance.

7. Acknowledge that teachers must "own" the intended reform.

8. Ensure that excessive authority is not imposed from above.

9. Provide the professional development and education necessary to properly implement the intended reform.

10. Remember that structural changes will not ensure fundamental changes in the purposes, priorities, and functioning of a school by themselves.

11. Acknowledge that reform is a developmental process.

Successful school leaders learned to guide and facilitate change rather than directing change. A school's vision should have been developed collaboratively with the school's members. In that way, a meaningful school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1999; Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Leithwood, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004) emerged through cooperation, meaningful work and conversations and continuous classroom improvement. *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989) called for empowering teachers to make such decisions and share the responsibility for school leadership. Visionary leaders at the middle school level understood that teachers who knew and worked with students in the 6th through 8th grades should be part of the change process, rather than recipients of the change process (Brown & Anfara, 2003; National Middle School Association, 2003).

If change was to be sustainable, funding, time to talk, experimentation and feedback, and the knowledge that change takes place over time are needed (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Timelines needed to be developed and indicators selected so that results would later be measured and gauged for effectiveness. In that way, a repeatable link was developed between what the school believed and what actually occurred, as well as discerning what factors caused the changes that should be implemented as part of that competent school system (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

There were several incongruous ideas in schools that may have impeded the school's ability to change (Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). For example, students learned material but did not see its relationship to the world, teachers worked hard, but used professional development time as prep time for their instruction, teachers who saw their teaching as synonymous with student learning, principals who wrote shared vision statements without staff input, and staff who went to trainings but did not share knowledge and information with peers. Leading in a culture of change did not mean placing changed individuals into unchanged environments. Rather, change leaders worked on changing the context, helping create new settings conducive to learning and sharing that learning (Fullan, 2002, p. 411).

Fullan (1993) highlighted physical and human factors that were keys to the process of change. The physical factors included the school size and room arrangement, student and class schedules, and policies that influenced what happened at the school. Human factors included attitudes, beliefs, relationships that influenced behavior, actions and conversations. Of particular interest for this study was that the potential for success of a change idea may be based on the gap between the data as to how the school was

performing and what the school staff believed about the school's performance (Zmuda,

Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Others (Fisher, 2000; Scherz, 2004) have discussed the ability of

schools to group several initiatives so that the enormity of the changes were not so

startling or incapacitating to the staff members at large.

It was important to look closely at how leaders treated others within the

organization (Fullan, 2002). If the organization wanted change that was sustainable, then

business and education leaders shared some common factors as they led their

organizations through an increasingly complex environment. Fullan (2002) and others

(Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Murphy et al.,

2006; Portin, 2003; Scherz, 2004; Young, Peterson, & Short, 2002; Zimbalist, 2001)

determined that successful leaders shared the personal characteristics of

energy/enthusiasm and hope, as well what was believed to be the core components of

leadership: moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge

creation and sharing, and coherence making.

Brighton and Hertberg (2004) described several kinds of educators in terms of

how they faced and interacted with change: resisters, overt resisters, and accessorizers.

Resisters showed a limited willingness to cooperate with change while overt resisters

were vocal and displayed limited willingness to cooperate, mainly when pressured to do

so. Some educators were accessorizers. The changes they made were applied in a

superficial manner. Change was neither deep nor lasting. Other educators looked like

accessorizers in the changes they made but their classroom practices demonstrated that

they had not altered their beliefs about teaching and learning. Researchers studied the

struggle in schools as teachers and others tried to preserve their existing way of doing

things while make making school wide changes that effectively restructured how staff

members connected with the direction the school was going as the organization changed

(Yates & Holt, 2009).

Organizational Culture and Change

This section was tied to my research questions because without understanding the

organizational culture, it would be difficult to describe the changes and the effect of those

changes within the school environment. It also helps to address the processes that may

have been used to reshape the school culture to build a more positive, creative learning

environment.

I understand organizational culture as a variable that focuses on the importance of

developing shared meanings and values. Culture is defined in this research dissertation as

organizational culture. Culture develops over time. It is an organization's shared

philosophy and actions and new members to the organization are trained to respond to

issues and solve problems in the same way (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lunenburg &

Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004). It is related to "the norms, values, beliefs, and

assumptions that shape members' decisions and practices" (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p.

456). The contribution of culture to school effectiveness depended on the content of these

norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions. It also depended on the extent to which they are

shared, and whether or not they foster collaborative work (p. 456).

School leaders engaged in complex work that led to the development of better

skills and deeper knowledge for organizational members. In doing this work, they created

school cultures that expected those with skills and knowledge to be accountable and to

contribute to building that new organizational culture (Elmore & Fuhrman, 2001). Yet in

some schools, the staff frequently worked in a traditional, competitive academic setting and they did not want any change that they believed would weaken the overall school successes that they continue to value (Miller, 2002; Yates & Holt, 2009).

Zimbalist (2001), referring to Kotter's 1996 work, described the changes necessary to help change a school's culture (p. 47):

- Establish a sense of urgency

- Develop a vision and strategy

- Communicate the vision

- Empower others

- Link new approaches to the culture.

Zimbalist (2001) reported that our individual school's organizational culture mandated how organizational change was received, supported, and understood within and outside of a school. The best middle schools were those that connected the community in meaningful ways to each stated change and helped develop those connections as part of school climate and culture (Virtue, 2009). Those schools had foundations that encouraged and supported student learning and growth, first by establishing high expectations and then by maintaining those expectations (Anfara & Schmid, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Strahan, Cooper & Ward, 2001; Yates & Holt, 2009).

There are four factors that are imperative to understand when planning for change (Zimbalist, 2001, p. 23): (a) Leaders are responsible for developing and creating quality cultures; (b) Existing cultures may block change implementation; (c) A new culture was developed as a product of continuous improvement; and, (d) Changing the culture is required for long-term change.

Senge (1990) suggested that principals who were engaged in the change process may actually be building new learning organizations. Their task was to design a process so that teachers learned to clarify what they were thinking, think deeper and in a more complex fashion about new ideas, and how to share those ideas. Ideas needed to be publicly shared, open to scrutiny, and constantly improved for the benefit of all learners in the school. Teachers and principals had to learn to share those ideas so that they built the kind of professional learning community that they wanted to work in and one that would benefit students.

Teachers had become critically important as instructional leaders due to their intimate knowledge of students and curriculum. Allowing teachers to make decisions, particularly during a time of school change, gave that change a better chance of success. In their capacity as change leaders, school goal and culture also had a better chance of changing when formal and informal leaders worked together (Marks & Printy, 2003).

No matter how individuals felt about the change, external events kept occurring that impacted the changes (Fullan, 1993). Therefore, as educators, we must all learn how to control how to personally deal with change. This continues to be a critical skill in today's world. While change continued to push against the schoolhouse doors, staff and administrators had to decide how to respond to each change. Those changes could not be controlled, but staff learned to make controlled responses. As organizations faced changes, the focus was not on the individual but rather on the system that was changing (Fullan, 1993).

The very nature of change seemed to carry an urgent message that a goal must be reached and reached quickly. Many schools and school staffs reached for the simple

answer. But the simple answer was not acceptable because people cannot simply expect

schools and school communities to change because someone in a district or government

office stated that change is necessary. Educators' knowledge and expertise should have

been respected and valued by finding out what schools believed about their current

situation, what the goal for change was, and allowing for some input as to the process and

timeline. To ignore those who must invariably become the agents for change created an

adversarial situation that may not allow a goal to be reached, quickly or otherwise

(Scherz, 2004).

It was clear from the literature on strong leadership (Amey, 2005; Belenky,

Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Scherz, 2004; Young, Petersen, & Short, 2002)

that leaders needed to investigate relationships and culture while looking through the lens

of multiple forms of intelligence and ways of knowing as fundamental to the leader-

follower relationship. It forced administrators to use skilled facilitators who navigated

through the diverse thinking of organizational members and who helped create

institutional goals and cultures with the multicultural beliefs and values of others. Those

facilitators worked with what was seen and said, as well as "the elephants in the room"

(Amey, 2005; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Scherz, 2004; Young,

Petersen & Short, 2002).

Successful school leaders understood the magnitude of change. Magnitude was

not intended as a reference to the amount or size of change, but rather to the effect the

change had on those who implemented the change and those who benefited or lost as a

result of change (Cicchinelli et al, 2006). Unless the characteristics that defined the

system itself were changed, then school leaders had not reached the roots of the problems

they were trying to solve (Sarason, 1996). The task seemed clear. Schools had to discover

what they valued and discover what was holding them back from being more successful.

The organization needed to set the guidelines for the work so that what the

organization valued was woven into the change process (Wheatley, 1994). Values of the

organization must be transparent to those outside and inside the school if those values

were to be part of the school's culture. By the definition previously stated in this

document, culture was a school's way of thinking and responding to situations. It was

taught to those new to the community by those who already shared a common

philosophy, common language, and shared norms and rules for succeeding within the

organization (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004).

Organizational research showed educators that within the process of changing an

environment, how we interpreted and acted on that change determined whether or not the

change was successful (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Zimmerman, 2004).

School organizational culture and change has also been studied through the lens

of the concept of professional community. By using the phrase, "professional learning

community", administrators showed that they were interested in developing and

participating in an organization that expected collaboration and inclusion as part of

school practice (Burke, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004). An organization's success

included its ability to see things in new ways, understand how things relate in a different

way, and change behavior patterns that led to a changing school culture (Angelle, 2008;

Fisher, 2000; Fullan, 1991; Rhodes, 1990; Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009).

Schools have used collaboration to close information gaps as well as develop

connections between administrators and those who were expected to implement new

ideas while continuously improve their work (Angelle, 2008; Fisher, 2000; Fullan, 1991;

Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001; Rhodes, 1990; Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg,

2009). In order to create sustainable, positive change, collaboration between all groups

was not only necessary, but imperative (Fullan, 2001; Gruenert, 2008; Strahan & Hedt,

2009; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000).

Yost, Vogel and Rosenberg (2009) examined the importance of the development

of informal teacher leaders in an effort to change the instructional traditions of a school.

These teacher leaders worked on ways to collaborate with peers, based on research by the

National Middle School Research Committee's 2003 findings that strong leadership used

data as a decision making tool. These leaders worked hard to find opportunities to engage

teachers, students, and parents in meaningful discussions about student learning and

positive, effective changes in schools (Angelle, 2008; George, 2009; Hickman et al.,

2008).

As teachers became more collaborative, they did better with change, and in fact,

initiated change within that kind of culture (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

In addition, a collaborative environment also provided opportunities for meaningful

feedback for school staff. Teachers were willing to take risks within a more supportive,

collaborative school structure.

The best setting for learning for both students and teachers was in schools where

everyone was able to share similar values and work and where that the sharing became

part of the culture (Gruert, 2005). In my study, culture encompassed the beliefs,

assumptions and expectations that defined the school (Gruenert, 2005; Fullan &

Hargreaves, 1996). As the culture of the school changed, communication and collaboration also changed.

For over two decades now, school organization as a learning environment in relation to educational change processes has been a research topic with leading researchers looking at how school leaders managed change (Fisher, 2000; Fullan, 1991; Rhodes, 1990; Senge, 1994; Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009). Schools are now seen as professional learning communities, which are more successful in a collaborative culture that embraces participatory decision making and may include transformational leadership (Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). In addition, the concept of professional learning communities, by definition, allowed schools to take what they knew how to do and use that information to determine what steps were needed to reach their goals. Teamwork and collaboration were emphasized in learning communities (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker & Many, 2006; Dufour, 2007).

The outcome of organizational change efforts could not always be predicted. Leaders had to remember that change resistors, like thunder clouds, may make us uncomfortable, but they were not always bad. While empathizing with all organizational members, leaders had to work with those who generated either positive or negative emotion and had to use both to build the energy required for sustainable change (Fullan, 1997; Zimmerman, 2004).

Schools were more successful when the school leadership worked to develop a philosophy that led to a process by which teachers collaborated with other teachers and worked as a leadership team who made changes that improved student learning (Timperley, 2005; Wiggins & Tighe, 2005). The National Middle School Association

(Angelle, 2008; Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009) maintained that professional development should be a balance of formal classes, workshops, conferences, and informal collaboration, planning or other group work. In addition, the collaboration and professional development that was necessary to improve schools involved trust and collaboration in schools where teachers believed it was safe to learn together (Beachum & Dentith, 2004; Hickman, Moore & Torek, 2008; Lambert, 2003; Virtue, 2009). Change leaders built bridges between where schools were and where schools wanted to be (Zimmerman, 2004).

Teachers participated in shared leadership opportunities, both formally and informally. They did this when working with peers, students and parents and during collaboration about teaching and learning (Marks & Printy, 2003).

School administrators fostered collegial, trusting relationships among faculty and staff without increasing their budgets by a single cent (Virtue, 2009). A collaborative relationship increased opportunities to build trust. Teachers committed to treating each of their students and colleagues with care and respect. All of these changes involved cultural shifts within schools.

As schools began to change, it was imperative that members trusted one another (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). That trust between principals and teachers did not occur in a vacuum, but rather was a continuous process of building a relationship through negotiation and conversation. This trust was built with the collaborative efforts of school staffs as they worked their way towards becoming part of a successful school (Morrissey, 2000; Randolph, 2006; Williams et al., 2008). School leaders needed to seek out

opportunities to build organizational trust, since mistrust impeded opportunities for improvement (Zimmerman, 2004).

Trust was central to a staff's ability to work together for lasting changes that improved school culture and student work when the values and purposeful work of the school functioned in tandem with a continuous improvement process (Angelle, 2008). Change was more sustainable when trust emphatically put ideas with student success at the forefront and community members worked toward this vision together (Sergiovanni, 2004).

As organizations developed trust and mutual respect, the professional culture that was built also allowed for shared decision making, where all viewpoints were heard and respected. Stakeholders realized that they were empowered to shape the school's direction, goals and vision (Brown & Anfara, 2003).

A clear tenet of successful leadership was one that was collaborative and willing to take risks where leaders have high standards for teachers, students and themselves (Angelle, 2008; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001; Hickman et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Petzko, Clark, Valentine, Hackmann, Nori & Lucas, 2003; Wyatt-Smith, Bridges, Hedemann & Neville, 2008; Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009). Schools with highly collaborative stakeholders recognized that not only was principal leadership important, but that other formal and informal leaders shared in that responsibility (Fullan, 2001), including principals, assistant principals, department chairs, and informal teacher leaders. Virtue's (2009) research and that of others (Amey, 2005; Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Strahan & Hedt, 2009) found that

effective middle schools shared the traits of trust and respect, characterizing not only the way teachers work together, but also serving to attract teachers to the school.

Good communication helped establish leadership. Leadership roles required communication to establish shared meanings and vision, shared information, shared visions and shared paths toward positive change. Communication connected leaders and the organization to the same culture, restructuring ideas, and common decisions (Arlestig, 2007; Fullan, 2001; Hickman et al., 2008; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2008; Zimmerman, 2004).

When schools sought opportunities to build capacity, the focus was often on the knowledge and skills of individual members (Fullan, 2001). However, this did not connect individual classroom instruction to other classrooms. Isolated change was not enough to make a difference. Individuals and philosophical beliefs needed to change simultaneously. The importance of redefining professional development includes capacity building to sustain the habit of individuals working together toward a common goal (Fullan, 2005). By improving the capacity of members of the school, and then of the whole organization, school improvement followed (Timperly, 2005).

Leadership capacity had several components that must stand together to improve not only practice but also student performance. Ability to participate with diverse group members, a shared vision that brings clarity to the organization, informed decision making, collaboration, and reflective practice were all necessary for sustainable change (Lambert 2003).

Most school reform initiatives assumed significant capacity development on the part of individuals, as well as whole organizations. Those who developed the initiatives believed that there also existed a high level of motivation and commitment within the

organization to solve both complex and simple problems that existed when schools were in the process of changes that affected school culture (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004)

Capacity building was "reculturing" an organization (Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Hickman et al., 2008; Strahan, Cooper, & Ward, 2001). This process involved schools focusing on goals, current processes, collaboration, and improved teacher capacity. Reculturing has been seen as part of organizational change. This led to a view of reculturing as the actual process of both the individual and the group making sense of the changes within the organization. This process sometimes began with individual experiences as group members realized the vagueness of the existing situation and how it related to the outside world. From there, members built a vision as to how things could change. A collaborative staff with a shared vision, working on collaboratively, pre-determined sets of skills and processes was able to develop capabilities beyond those that existed individually (Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Hickman et al., 2008; Strahan, Cooper, & Ward, 2001).

There was a correlation between strong, positive principal leadership and the principal's ability to build capacity at the school when the principal focused on change that was sustainable and school wide (Young & King, 2002). It was also important to note that when building capacity in a school level collaboration, professional development, and trust are important components. School staffs needed to understand the rationale for the changes they were being asked to make and they needed to understand how the changes benefited their students (Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001).

Those changes could have included, but were not limited to, longer curriculum periods, blocked core classes, looping, and more generalized teacher roles.

Schools needed to have the capacity to look for and adjust to any change as it occurs (Fullan, 1993). While educational institutions were unable to predict when change would happen and how it might happen, it was important for those institutions to build the capacity within schools anticipation that they would continuously face changes. Change was inherent within the educational system. Change necessitated the ability to continue to grow and improve while dealing with changes that were planned for and changes that surprised school staff and leaders alike (Fullan, 1993).

Research questions

Three questions guided this study: How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring? What are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies?   What are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment?

A case study enabled me to uniquely address these research questions because this was a contemporary phenomenon as defined by Yin (2009). As an investigator, I did not have control of the events, but examined them in-depth and they were restricted by a time and a place. A case study was appropriate because relationships, expected and unexpected, would be illuminated by this research (Creswell, 1988; Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998, Yin, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

Research Methods

This section describes research methods that I utilized to answer the research questions, a description of the context for the study, and the participants. In addition, this section includes definitions and the rationale for using qualitative methods, in particular, a single case study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was first to illustrate how change at the school was viewed by teachers, both as part of a historical process and the current change process. The second purpose of this study was to understand staff beliefs about change in a middle school setting. The last purpose of this study was to observe teachers' connections to mandates, policies, organizational culture or other values.

As the principal of the school, I was interested in how change at the school is viewed by teachers, both as part of a historical process and the current change process. I hoped that their perspectives would provide insight as to how educators in a changing middle school viewed the change process and their own capacity to build a community that can change.

This study was designed to also give the teachers themselves a way to look at how they processed their own learning and change as they reacted to and negotiated their way through changing educational directives and balanced those changes with classroom instructional goals.

Context of the study

This study took place in a medium sized suburban middle school. The school was built more than forty years ago and is not aging gracefully. In fact, it was originally an elementary school on one side and a junior high school several hundred yards away. The district connected the two schools by building a central hallway with lockers, three additional classrooms, and a gym. This created an environment of different sized classrooms, different windows, light fixtures, heating and cooling systems and until a few months ago, multiple roof structures. In addition, the school has ten portable buildings that house an additional thirteen classrooms and one office.

The 689 students at the school were in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Students were predominantly Caucasian (58.4%) and Hispanic (29.8%); smaller percentages were African American (5.8%), Hispanic, and Native American (3.6%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (2.3%).

The student population was not equally divided between male (52.5%) and female (47.5%) students. Nearly one in every six students received some sort of specialized support to access the instructional curriculum. Approximately one third of the students qualified for reduced rates on cafeteria food or food at no charge. While there had been an additional push by the school to have parents who qualify financially for free or reduced school breakfasts and lunches complete the application process, many families have been reluctant to share qualifying financial information.

There were twenty-eight regular education teachers and fifteen special education teachers. The special education teachers included four teachers of the gifted, a teacher for a classroom of emotionally disturbed students, two classrooms of students with autism

spectrum disorders, two classrooms for students with severe and profound disabilities, a classroom for students identified as gifted and autistic; and six special education core curriculum teachers.

Study Participants

All teachers who were at the school at the time I sent out the invitations to participate in this research were invited to participate in the survey process, which involved responding in writing to an electronic questionnaire. Teachers were asked to provide information that included the number of years of teaching experience, gender, age group, and education level attained. Teachers were not asked to indicate their ethnicity since the teaching staff was predominantly Caucasian and I did not believe that the teachers' ethnicity would be a critical variable for this study.

In the summer of 2011, I sent an email message to the entire staff to invite them to complete an electronic questionnaire. Originally, I had hoped to place a hard copy of the invitation in staff boxes in May. However, permission for this research was not granted through the IRB process until summer. Therefore, the invitation to participate in the study by completing the electronic questionnaire was not sent out to the staff until the first week in August.

I emailed the invitation letters to all staff members who worked with students on August 5, 2011. The same electronic invitation was emailed again on August 25, 2001 and a third time on September 6 and 7, 2011. The third time the email invitation was only sent to staff members who stated that they had not received the invitation, or who asked to have it sent to a different email address. The invitation contained a link to the

electronic questionnaire. Volunteers could not access the questionnaire without agreeing to take part in the study.

I had originally planned to leave the electronic questionnaire open for a minimum of three weeks. At the end of that time, I had not reached the minimum goal of having approximately 50% of the teaching staff respond to the electronic questionnaire. Therefore, the questionnaire was left open for an additional month, for a total of fifty-one days. The survey was opened one week before teachers were expected to return to school for the new school year. It is possible that not all teachers were looking at their email at that time. I used the emails assigned by the school district for the first email invitation. As the staff learned that I had sent out the invitation to complete an electronic questionnaire, fourteen staff members during the next few weeks requested that I resend the questionnaire to a personal email account or to the district assigned account. Several staff members stated that they "must have missed the first email."

It was hoped that half (25) of the staff members would complete the electronic questionnaire and twenty-seven staff members accessed the electronic survey exceeding my expectation.

Electronic questionnaire responses were color coded for themes. I used "handy categories" (Tesch, 1990, p. 142) as a way to organize the information generated by the questionnaires. The themes were staff talking about students or teaching students, Instructional Council, talking about how they (staff members) contribute to the creation of the learning environment, speaking with peers about changing instruction, restructuring changing teaching, understanding change and restructuring, accountability,

building a positive, creative learning environment, being part of the process of building

that environment and the process to reshape school values and culture.

The questions used the terms "restructuring", "creating" and "accountability".

The themes were selected when more than one person responded to a question in a

similar way. They were used when more than three responses were in a category.

Categories with less than three responses were not used for the purposes of this

dissertation.

All staff members at the school were invited to participate in an interview. This

study took longer than expected, but more subjects volunteered to participate in the oral

interviews than were originally anticipated, which added to the richness of the findings.

A minimum of six interviewees was expected, and eleven interviews took place and were

used in this study.

Interviewees were both male and female. Nine females were interviewed and two

males. Their experience ranged from teachers with two years of experience to teachers

with more than twenty-five years experience. Their education included Bachelor's

degrees, Master's degrees, and they were all highly qualified in their subject areas. Four

had come to teaching after working in other fields and seven had only taught. They

ranged in age from mid-twenties to sixty-four years of age.

Interviews were scheduled to be less than two hours in length and if needed could

have been completed in two sittings. Interviewees were allowed to add to their interviews

if they wished by writing out additional thoughts or comments. This writing was accepted

up to thirty days after the interview. Interviewees were also given an opportunity to

review their responses, thus adding to the reliability of the data. These interviewees were

invited through several processes. Teachers who formed the school's Instructional

Council were invited to participate. Teachers who filled other leadership school roles

were invited to participate. These roles included: Assistant Principal, Instructional

Coach, Counselor, Department Chairs, and teachers who facilitated professional learning

community groups who looked at school and student data to drive instruction. If these

role groups did not give me an opportunity to interview at least eight staff members, the

invitation would be extended to other staff members. However, it was difficult to get a

response during the time the staff was not on contract, so the opportunity to interview

was sent to all staff members who worked in an educational position with students.

Oral interview responses were also color coded for themes using "handy

categories" (Tesch, 1990, p. 142) as a way to organize the information generated by the

interviews. The themes were developed based on the interviews, answers that did not

directly correspond to questions, answers that referred to communicating or talking with

others, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), data collection and use, change, being

part of a school culture, and additional comments were considered in a separate category

of their own.

The questions used the terms "policies/mandates", "creative" and "change". The

themes were selected when more than one person responded to a question in a similar

way. They were used when more than three responses were in a category. Categories with

less than three responses were not used for the purposes of this dissertation. However,

individual comments that did not fit a category were used as individual comments.

Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research "is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). This type of research often deals with one case and multiple variables.

In qualitative research, theories about why something is happening need to be explored or developed to explain participant behavior. The researcher pulls apart and puts together pieces of a story in an effort to interpret what is happening and to make meaning of an event or an issue (Stake, 1995). Qualitative studies paint a broad picture of the topic and the researcher must study participants in their natural setting. The researcher may use the word "I" in his/her narration and is an active participant in the research (Creswell, 1998).

Qualitative research questions frequently start with *what or how* questions and describe what is going on. Words and participant viewpoints are analyzed. The researcher works to make sense of events and to tell a story using observations, interviews, and surveys, describing in detail the processes used.

Quantitative research was not be appropriate for this study because that research often deals with a minimum number of variables and numerous of cases. Quantitative research may ask *why* and often seeks to compares groups or look for cause and effect. A quantitative researcher does not change the questions being asked as the researcher proceeds but a qualitative researcher may refine the research questions (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Researchers tend to select a research methodology that best matches how they make sense of the world (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Stake, 1995). Qualitative research methods did allow me to listen to multiples stories of how people viewed the world and allowed me to participate in finding out how those participants created meaning within that world. I was also able to use the data I collected to build my theory about what is happening (Creswell, 1998).

Qualitative researchers do not have any pre-determined ideas. The researcher spends substantial time in personal contact with participants and in reflection about what is said or written or observed. A narrative process is used to organize thoughts and make meaning in order to develop a theory about what is occurring.

Case Study

The purpose of this study was first to illustrate how change at the school was viewed by teachers, both as part of a historical process and the current change process. The second part of the purpose of this study was to understand staff beliefs about change in a middle school setting. The last part of this study was to observe teachers' connections to mandates, policies, organizational culture or other values.

I wanted to understand staff beliefs about change in a middle school setting. I explored how middle school teachers see and value school change and my investigation looked to see if there were connections to mandates, policies, organizational culture or other values.

To best examine and make meaning of the phenomenon of change in this setting, I selected a case study method of investigation. Yin (2009) wrote, "the case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational,

social, political and related phenomena" (p. 4). Stake (1995) described the case study

method as having "Two principal uses…to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of

others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone. Qualitative researchers take pride

in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case" (p. 65).

A two-part definition of a case study separates case study research from other

study definitions (Yin, 2009). Researchers utilizing case study research methods must

follow systematic procedures where (Yin, 2009):

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that

   - Investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life

     context, especially when

   - The boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

2. The case study inquiry

   - Copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be

     many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result,

   - Relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a

     triangulating fashion, and as another result,

   - Benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide

     the data collection and analysis. (p. 18)

A single case study is a "bounded system" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). In this study,

the research was bounded by time, defined as two months of data collection, and by

place, bounded by using a single middle school campus. This study met the single case

criteria defined by Yin (2009) as a representative or typical case. The "objective is to

capture the circumstances and conditions of any everyday or commonplace situation"

where "the lessons learned from these cases are assumed to be informative about the experiences of the average person or institution" (Yin, 2009, p. 48). The single case is expected to be unique and the researcher is interested in exactly what the case is (Stake, 1995).

The case study is also used when a researcher has little control over events. A case study also uses multiple sources of information for data collection (Yin, 2009). Case studies provide thick description of a specific phenomenon from the viewpoint of a participant. Case studies allow researchers to analyze how the study participants interpret a specific phenomenon (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). A thick description is a description in which the viewpoints of the subjects involved in a study are meticulously brought to light and used to explain what the researcher is investigating (Stake, 1995). Creswell (1998) has defined "thick" as writing that is filled with the voices, feelings, actions and beliefs of individuals (p. 184). Case study research was appropriate for this study since it was used to trace patterns in participant beliefs (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009).

Case studies are sometimes seen as not being rigorous because it is not possible to generalize from them (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). However, I did not expect to generalize from this study. I expected to be able to provide a description of how one middle school faced and dealt with change during a specific period of time, thus making the case study method an appropriate choice for this research.

A case study method was appropriate for this research because I worked with a small group of eleven individuals for the oral interviews, twenty-seven individual completed the electronic survey and I explored a few topics, including cultural behavior.

If my intent was to examine only one topic, an ethnographic approach may have been better suited to the study.

I expected to provide descriptive details, which included the bounded details, including setting, context, and multiple themes. After I completed the data collection process, I grouped these themes into smaller categories.

Creswell (1998) defined a set of beliefs used by qualitative researchers. The first belief is ontology or the nature of the reality of the situation as defined by the study participants. I used direct quotes and show several perspectives from the participant group. The second belief is the epistemological assumption, which describes the relationship between the researcher and participants. The participants and I had a relationship that was collaborative in nature and I was seen as an "insider." The third assumption is axiological and refers to the acknowledgement by the researcher that the research could be biased and value laden, which will shape the narrative and the interpretation by both researcher and participant.

Triangulation

Several sources of data were used for triangulation. This study included interviews, observations, document analysis, and a paper and pencil questionnaire.

Triangulation is the process used by researchers to "corroborate evidence from different sources" that will be used to illuminate the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). Researchers may use many different methods, investigators or even different theories within one study. Yin (2009) defined triangulation more specifically and emphatically wrote, "a strength of the case study method of research lies in the ability of the researcher to use multiple sources of evidence" (p. 114). In this way, the researcher

can investigate and point out a wider range of topics and conclusions. Thus, via triangulation, the "converging lines of inquiry" allow for a stronger case study because it is based on multiple information sources. Using more than one approach in a single case study helps researchers to confirm descriptions and interpretations and allow increased confidence in both (Stake, 1995).

Triangulation also provided me with multiple opportunities for thick, rich description of what teachers believe is happening within the middle school. The narration, filled with the voices, feelings, actions, and beliefs of individuals, should paint a clear and definite picture for the reader (Creswell, 1998). For Stake (1995), methodological triangulation usually involves observation, interview, and document review, which creates a procedure with a high validity in the interpretation of the collected data.

Positionality

Not only was I the researcher for this case study, but I am also the principal at the middle school where this study took place. I have been a school administrator for fifteen years and for the past three I have been at this middle school. I have shared my dissertation process with my staff, explained the kinds of questions I would be asking and offered to share my writing with them. They also explained the kinds of questions that they found to be uncomfortable. I reviewed the questions and found that they were professional in nature. I found the staff to be honest in their opinions and as we have worked together, we have co-created an atmosphere where it is important to state what you believe to be true about any situation. I also told them that I was open to whatever

patterns and ideas emerged from this research (Yin, 2009, p. 72). None of the questions were evaluative in nature.

Responses to questions were taken at face value. If an answer was unclear, I returned to the interviewee for clarification. Any opinion that was personal was labeled as such, as was any paraphrasing.

Document Analysis and Review

Document analysis in case study research is used to verify details and to help the researcher make inferences about a topic. Yin (2009) has suggested that it is important that researchers understand that a document may have been written with a specific bias toward the audience for whom it was written and should not be seen as the unmitigated truth. Researchers can go back to documents at any point. They are specific and can cover a range of settings, events, and time. They can be difficult to find or may be biased. Documents may include, but are not limited to, journals, personal letters, public documents, autobiographies, biographies, photographs, and videotapes (Creswell, 1998).

A document review is one of the three suggested ways for researchers to triangulate their data because, "Quite often, documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly" (Stake, 1995, p. 69).

I have been principal at this school since August of 2008. I only used documents from the beginning of my tenure at this school. I did not include documents from my previous schools.

I reviewed and studied district and school agendas, and minutes from those meetings, for the years 2008 to 2011, examining them for information that would link them to the research questions. I viewed the documents chronologically and separated

them by source. This document analysis included looking at documents from the school's

Instructional Council meeting minutes, meeting agendas, and professional development

agendas and feedback forms (all of which are public information). In keeping with case

study methods, document analyses were guided by the works of Stake (1995) and Yin

(2009). I followed Stake's (1995) description of looking for patterns in the documents

that either modeled what schools were being asked to do or specifically did not give the

information that a school might need to create change and a new learning environment.

In addition, I analyzed the documents using chronological analysis (Yin, 2009, p.

148). I expected to find that over time, the documentation would become more focused

on change, linking past events with future plans. I also expected to see a direct link

between meetings and the work being done at the school.

I reviewed and analyzed notes from administrative meetings and Instructional

Council meetings that specifically dealt with school change and changing mandates. In

addition, I reviewed district email and notes and PowerPoint slides from principal

meetings and professional development. These documents were useful for the study both

because of the timelines they illustrated, as well as the many changes proposed that did

not align with additional materials giving guidance to the schools. These documents were

available online, in folders from middle school principal meetings, and in personal notes.

Instructional Council meeting agenda and minutes were emailed to staff and were

available in that format.

Interviews

Interviews in a qualitative study are used "to understand themes of the lived daily

world from the subjects' own perspectives" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 24). Stake

(1995) determined that interviews were a way of getting information from others that they have observed and that we perhaps might not have seen. "Two principle uses of case study are to obtain the descriptions and interpretations of others. The case will not be seen the same by everyone. The interview is the main road to multiple realities" (p. 65). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) have added to this definition, writing that interviewing "is an active process where interviewer and interviewee through their relationship produce knowledge" (p. 17).

Interviews in case study research are guided conversations. "An interview is a conversation with structure and purpose" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 3). Researchers have "two jobs: (a) to follow your own line of inquiry, as reflected by your case study protocol, and (b) to ask your actual (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of your line of inquiry" (Yin, 2009, p. 106). In other words, the questions must meet the criteria set forth by the study while maintaining a friendly, open atmosphere that puts the interviewee at ease. Interviews require a process that includes a consent form, questions to be asked, and an amount of time set aside to go over the purpose of the study and whether the interviewee will be able to review the responses for accuracy and where they can see the study results (Creswell, 1998; Yin, 2009).

Each interviewee may have a unique description of the case and it is the researcher's task to develop questions that are probing and helpful in getting a good accounting of what the interviewee believes. It is critical to get what an interviewee means and for the researcher to interpret what they have heard and add their own commentary as soon after the interview as possible (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) used the metaphorical terms of a miner and a traveler to describe interviewing. As a miner, an interviewer goes over transcripts and notes looking for deep meaning. The data are left as they are transcribed and questions do not generally change or are added during the interview. As a traveler, the interviewer goes on a journey with the interviewee, seeing the world through the oral and written descriptions that the interviewee provides. The interviewer may ask probing questions and spend time encouraging the interviewee to relay more. I believe that my interviews constituted a reflection of my desire to walk with my interviewees on their journey.

I planned the interviews using Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) seven stages of interviewing: "(1) thematizing an interview project, (2) designing, 3) (interviewing, (4) transcribing, (5) analyzing, (6) verifying, and (7) reporting" (p. 19). For this case study, I had planned to conduct interviews until saturation was reached or until I reached six interviews. I reasonably expected to conduct six to eight interviews and to complete them within a two-month period. Indeed, the interviews were completed within the two-month period. I was surprised and pleased to have eleven volunteers for the face-to-face interviews. Using a digital voice recorder, I audio-recorded the eleven interviews and had the interviews transcribed professionally.

Interviewees were given two sets of consent forms prior to the interviews. Both the interviewee and I signed both forms. They were given a set of signed forms and I kept the second set. I also had the questions I was asking printed out. I put them inside a plastic sleeve and they were available in front of the interviewees as I asked the question. Every person that I interviewed looked at the sheet as I asked the questions. They each referred back to the sheet to be sure that they had answered the questions.

At the beginning of each interview, volunteers were told about the steps that I would be taking to keep their identity confidential. Without exception, all eleven staff members told me that confidentiality was not important and that I could use their names. However, I will be referring to each interviewee with a pseudonym.

Staff members appeared relaxed during the interviews. They were able to take as much time as they needed to respond to questions. Occasionally, the interviewees asked some clarifying questions, but I told them that they could interpret the question that was being asked.

Several interviewees asked me if they had answered the questions correctly. I assured them that there were no preconceived answers to the questions. In many instances, they waited until I had thanked them and turned the recorder off. At that time, they wanted to know how I would have answered some of the questions. I responded that I would be glad to have a discussion with them on any of the questions, but that I would like to wait until they had had a chance to review and possibly amend the transcript of their interview. That seemed to be a satisfactory response in all cases.

The oral interviews were coded using the same criteria as that used for the electronic questionnaires (Tesch, 1990, p. 12). Responses were lengthier than in the electronic questionnaires. Several times the interviewees gave responses that did not seem to correspond to the question. When that happened, I asked the question a second time in the hope of getting a response that correlated with the question that had been asked.

All of the interviewees said "no" to an opportunity for a second oral interview. They also responded negatively to an opportunity to extend the interview past the originally scheduled block of time.

Oral interview responses were also color coded for themes using "handy categories" (Tesch, 1990, p. 142) as a way to organize the information generated by the interviews. A sample of this document can be found in Appendix D.

As I worked my way through the transcripts, the process was not as clear cut as I had imagined. Several responses overlapped. Participants occasionally referred to other questions. At times I believed that my questions were not as clear to the participants as I would have liked.

Electronic Questionnaire

I used an electronic questionnaire hosted by Survey Monkey composed of open-ended items to survey participants. This allowed participants an opportunity to expand their ideas and reflect on their answers without the pressure of the interview setting. The electronic questionnaire items can be found in Appendix A and the interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

The responses to the electronic questionnaires were downloaded into a MS Word document. The format consisted of two columns: the left hand column contained the items from the questionnaire and the right hand column included the response to each item. Respondents were labeled as person 1, person 2, and so on. A sample of this document can be found in Appendix C. The sample is also color-coded.

Responses were color coded for themes. I used "handy categories" (Tesch, 1990, p 142) as a way to organize the information generated by the questionnaires. Themes

were created when more than one response made a category. Themes with fewer than three responses were not used.

Observations

Observations involve a process of recording information and then building a descriptive summary of what the observer has seen or heard (Creswell, 1998). The researcher may be an inside or outside observer and the observation will be used to paint a picture of the case. In addition, the observation may include both descriptive and reflective notes. These notes will be used for future analysis and to tell the story, increase understanding and reveal the hidden complexities of the case (Stake, 1995).

Data Analysis

Creswell (1998) described case study analysis as writing a comprehensive description of the case and the setting. Stake (1995) divided the analysis into four forms and Creswell (1998) suggested the fifth: (a) Categorical aggregation looks for meanings to emerge from multiple sources that are relevant to the research; (b) Direct interpretation pulls data apart; (c) The researcher puts it together as he/she identifies patterns in the data; (d) Naturalistic generalizations that develop through data analysis as people apply the generalization to other cases or learn from the case itself; (e) Descriptions of the case which connect the patterns and how those patterns compare and contrast with other cases. I used these five forms to guide the work of analyzing the data I collected through interviews, questionnaires, and document review.

Limitations

This study was not intended to take the collected data and findings and generalize them to similar investigations or situations. This study could be defined in multiple ways

and my intent was to provide an in-depth description of events and ideas about middle school change within one middle school (Merriam, 1988).

Validity and Reliability

I addressed internal validity by allowing interviewees to check interview transcripts and by affording them the opportunity to make amendments to what was said (Creswell, 1998). I also addressed validation by using three data sources: interviews, documents, and an electronic questionnaire. These triangulated data allowed for a more thorough and deep understanding about how one middle school worked with change during a specific time period.

Rich descriptions found in this study may allow future readers to see similarities between the subjects in this study and their own context or setting, but that was not the intent of this study.

Human Subjects Protection

Following the defense of the proposal for this research, I sought permission from the University Human Research Protections Office Internal Review Board to conduct my research. The approved electronic questionnaire and interview protocol can be found in Appendices A and B, respectively.

The consent forms, explanation of the study, and the recruitment letter can be located in Appendix E, F, and G, respectively.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was first to illustrate how change at the school was viewed by teachers, both as part of a historical process and the current change process. The second part of this study was to understand staff beliefs about change in a middle school setting. The last part of this study was to observe teachers' connections to mandates, policies, organizational culture or other values.

This study explored the ways federal and state mandates have affected one middle school. This middle school had been designated as a school in restructuring. As a researcher, I was interested in how those mandates and policy changes affected teachers' perceptions of teaching in the classroom setting. In addition, this case study has given examples of how school culture has changed during restructuring and how it led to a learning environment that is positive for all stakeholders. This study was designed to help one middle school understand how educators view the change process in schools and how to build capacity within a school to change school culture. This study also explored the ways instructors balance curriculum and the mandates for change with instructional goals.

The three research questions that were addressed in this study were: How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring? What are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies? What are the processes that will reshape this school's values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment?

The first section in this chapter presents the district-level context for this case study and was based on document review of district and school meeting agendas. Following that section, I organized my findings from the electronic questionnaires and interviews using the themes from Chapter 2. From the literature review, themes included the influence of standards particularly in relation to AYP and NCLB, the use of data collection, organizational change that results in building a positive culture, and organizational leadership and change. Unanticipated themes from this analysis included change as viewed from outside the school, accountability, communication, the community belief about change from the staff's point of view, understanding change in a restructuring school and my staff's understanding of how students are also involved in school change and the creation of a positive, creative learning environment.

In this chapter, based on the data analyses I conducted, I have offered substantiating evidence that teachers see change as a mandate, frequently without allowing for individual school input. Teachers describe change as punitive. However, when staff members were presented with opportunities to make decisions at the school level, they believed that they could better meet the needs of their students (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Burke, 2003; Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Dufour, 2007; Hickman, Moore & Torek, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Sarason, 1996; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000).

In addition, my research showed a lack of evidence for my school to show it was successful without using test scores. Although teachers followed district, state and federal mandates, they were not always supportive of those mandates. When afforded the opportunity and the time during the duty day for discussion and questions about mandates

and policies, they were able to make the connections between what they were being required to do and the classroom.

In further analyzing the data, I have substantiating evidence that teachers value communication and the time to communicate. They found the collaborative learning communities to be positive in nature and were vocal in their positive reaction to being provided the time to work with peers. They used this time to talk about student learning and their own learning. They believed that their ideas were valued and listened to by the administration and their peers (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Hickman et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Portin, 2003).

They also believed that they were able to be part of the school governing body, the IC (Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). By being heard and contributing to the school's direction they believed that they were becoming a more cohesive group that worked well together (Brown & Anfara, 2003). These factors led to the creation of what they believed to be a more positive, creative learning environment.

A Brief Review of the District-Level Context for School Change

Individual public schools do not operate in isolation. They are organized into districts that require administrators to participate in a variety of meetings, including professional development sessions. It is not unreasonable to expect that district-level activities in which principals take part will have an influence (or not) on their work to improve their schools.

Following Stake's (1995) description of the search for patterns in documents, I conducted a document analysis to determine what schools were being asked to do. I also

looked for evidence that principals received specific information that a school might need to create change and a new learning environment.

I analyzed the documents using chronological analysis (Yin, 2009, p. 148) for the period of 2008-2011 because 2008 was the year in which I assumed the principalship of this middle school. I expected to find that over time, the documentation would become more focused on change, linking past events with future plans. I also expected to see a direct link between meetings and the work being done at the school.

Evidence from Document Analysis of District Meeting Agendas

District meetings were scheduled for four times per year. Meetings were for all principals and department directors. Assistant principals were not invited to the meetings and were discouraged from attending. Meetings generally consisted of reports from departments, budget issues, and district concerns. There were occasional scheduled break-out meetings by level, to discuss mandated state testing results and school achievement gaps.

Principals did not have input into the agenda items. Information on expected school changes were talked about. There was infrequent opportunity for discussion. School administrators were encouraged to change the school culture but the meetings did not allow for time for more than review of various policies. New ideas for programs or materials were occasionally presented but not all schools had the funding available to purchase the suggested materials.

From 2008-2011, agendas were ready for principals at the beginning of the monthly meetings; agendas were not provided prior to that time. On at least two occasions during that time frame, notes were emailed to middle principals from those two

meetings. However, there were no monthly minutes taken on a regular basis that allowed principals to know what had occurred at the meetings. New principals also were unable to review the minutes from earlier meetings to gain an understanding of previous work or concerns. Although comprehensive discussions on restructuring and change may have been held, if principals were not in attendance, the information did not filter down to schools and teachers. George (2009) stated that schools realize greater success when information is shared widely.

At that time, the documentation was not focused on change. The link between meetings and the work being done at schools was not easily observed.

Meetings were originally held for two hours and eventually moved to four-hour meetings. Meetings began on time and ended on time. Agendas did not allow for open discussion. District officials were scheduled to talk during these meetings. On several occasions, speakers did not appear, sent representatives, or did not come during their scheduled time. On other occasions, members of the Superintendent's team would appear and the agenda item would be held to accommodate their schedules.

During this three-year period, the Associate Superintendent for Middle Schools attended the majority of the meetings. During the 2010-11 school years, there was a change in Associate Superintendent, but the meeting format did not change (Miller, 2002; Yates & Holt, 2009).

Mandates and policy changes were handed down at these meetings (Sarason, 1996). District administrators did not speak directly to teachers. Site administrators were generally the conduits for information.

Middle School assistant principals were not included in these meetings; they had separate, bi-monthly meetings. Occasionally, they would attend the meeting if the school principal was unable to attend. District information sometimes changed between meetings and it was occasionally unclear which information was correct.

Early agendas had a start and stop time but did not have times assigned for each line item. There were breakout sessions one out of every two meetings. Individual schools were invited to present at least four times a year but the entire administrative group was not privy to the process used to determine which schools would present. There was a planning team for professional development and those principals were frequently the only presenters. When a panel group was used, the principals from the planning group were the panel. Professional development did not always pertain to every school. Although requests for differentiated professional development sessions were brought up early in 2009, professional development continued to be whole-group in nature.

In March, April, and May of 2009, the meetings consisted of receiving information on budget, schedules, and district updates.

Handouts were part of each meeting but not all handouts were used. A welcome addition was the handouts that included the slides from the PowerPoint presentations. Homework was given to principals at each meeting. This usually consisted of a staff survey or student work being collected and brought to the next meeting. Teachers at my school were interested in participating in the surveys and in getting feedback, but the surveys were either not used at the next administrative meeting or data were not collated and shared. There seemed to be a disconnect between the changes the district wanted to see and the gathering of individual school information about changes that teachers were

making (Johnson, 2007; Petzko, Clark, Valentine, Hackmann, Nori, & Lucas, 2002). There still was not a direct link between the meetings and much of the work being done at schools even though the district was attempting to build a more direct link.

In August 2009, the meeting agendas were formatted differently and meetings were scheduled for four hours. Times were assigned to agenda line items. At the top of each agenda, information could be found on middle school redesign outcomes, the vision and mission for middle schools and meeting norms. This information was not reviewed again at later meetings until the mission and vision were reviewed in October of 2010.

In October and November of 2009, the conversation became centered on building professional learning communities in each school (Fullan, 2002; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Murphy et al., 2006; Portin, 2003; Scherz, 2004; Young, Peterson, & Short, 2002; Zimbalist, 2001). Although the principals were broken into smaller "table groups", learning was still designed for the entire group. The professional development time was organized, clear instructions and learning goals were shared with the principals. Documentation was becoming more focused on change and principals were able to link some of the meeting work with the work being done in schools.

However, the professional development continued to be sporadic. Principals may not have been as invested in professional development that was either not meaningful or that frequently was not of use the following school year. The next two months reverted to previous meeting formats and principals were again being given information on district issues and scheduling dates by district personnel. District presenters usually included the Director of Human Resources, the Director of Research, Development and

Accountability, the Associate Superintendent for Curriculum, and sometimes the Superintendent. Scheduling information was usually shared by the Middle School Superintendent or the Superintendent's two administrative assistants. In February 2010, professional development continued to focus on building PLCs.

Beginning in September 2010, an additional two-hour meeting was scheduled each month for principal PLC meetings. Principals were placed in groups according to how well their schools tested on state-mandated testing. At that time, professional development moved to those meetings. Monthly meetings remained at four hours with an additional two hours per month for PLCs.

Principals were beginning to feel more connected to the district conversations. Our work as principals was reflected in the work we did with teachers at our schools. When we spoke to staff members about the PLC work in schools, we were able to reference the work principals were doing at the district level. There was more district support for the conversations in which each group became engaged. In addition, we were experiencing learning how to be members of a group that we may not have originally selected for ourselves. We were learning to work together on shared problems. This allowed principals to model the collaborative practice for our staffs as they were beginning to engage in a similar PLC process.

MS Instructional Council (IC) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

One of the strongest examples of school leadership can be found in how educators in one middle school viewed the Instructional Council (IC) and Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Both of these groups are mandated in my school district by union negotiated contract.

Moving Away from Traditional Administrative Meetings

Administration meetings were scheduled for every Monday at 9:30 a.m. The participants included the principal, assistant principal, counselors, instructional coach and the head special education teacher. The assistant principal developed the agendas. At that time (in 2008), I had agreed that she should write the agendas. However, the agendas were not always developed with participant feedback from previous meetings or with participant input. I did not have many opportunities to review the agendas. The agendas were not available prior to the meetings, and at times meetings were delayed in order to create an agenda.

Prior to my arrival at this school, there did not seem to be regularly scheduled meetings for an administrative team. I asked the Assistant Principal, Instructional Coach, Head Special Education Teacher and Counselor to join me at this meeting. The Assistant Principal suggested that she be in charge of the agendas for the meetings. In her previous job, she had been responsible for the agendas and this was a comfort area for her. All members took their own notes and no arrangements were made to have more formal meeting minutes. At the time, I was envisioning an environment that was open to discussion and new topics. The agenda did not allow for that kind of format.

By the end of the 2008-9 school year, the agendas had evolved into more formal documents, which included a purpose, a weekly calendar, new items and next steps. Previous items were not reviewed.

The group did not write up the stated purpose of the meeting; the assistant principal took care of that task prior to my tenure as principal at this school. The group's

purpose, according to the agendas, was to articulate student work and to create a process for teachers to communicate (Burke, 2003; Sarason, 1996).

Agenda items included housekeeping items, discipline, counselor reports, and upcoming events. My review of the agenda items from August 2008 to August 2010 did not uncover items that corresponded to the purpose statement.

As the principal of the school, I wanted to help teachers connect with the district. However, with the federal, state, and district mandates all focusing on test scores (Sarason, 1996), it was hard for my staff to talk about change in the classroom. They seemed to believe that change was not needed. They did not believe they were heard. They were frustrated. They shared their feelings openly at staff meetings.

Shifting Our Focus

In January 2011, our school administrative meetings began to be focused on staff needs. I asked staff members about the kind of professional development they wanted to make their instruction more accessible to students (Marzano, 2003; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). In addition, I also asked our Instructional Coach to ask staff members about the kind of professional development that they would find meaningful. Then the Instructional Coach and I would meet to share what we had learned. I believed that teachers might have viewed our roles in the school differently and that we might have had differing responses from the same staff members. This was not the case, but we did continue this process of getting feedback. This information was used to design staff meetings and all-day professional development. All staff members had opportunities for presentation and discussion. This interactive planning has continued.

The Instructional Council had been a "rubber stamp" group, relying on the principal to make decisions and to lead the group. In August of 2008, I was assigned to be the new principal at this school and expectations changed. The group was now expected to represent their constituents in both departments and grade levels (Fullan, 1993; Morrissey, 2000; Sarason, 1996; Williams, Brine, Sprague, & Sullivan, 2008). Lively conversation was encouraged and the group was asked to make decisions that affected teaching and classroom learning.

In 2008, the teacher that chaired the group prepared the agendas, but she did not send them out to the staff or committee members prior to the meeting. Minutes were taken by a volunteer committee member and were emailed to me. I then forwarded the notes by email to the school staff. These notes consisted of a list of discussion items.

I gave the committee information and then the committee would request an opportunity to present it to their constituents. They were reluctant to vote without that opportunity. Agendas were a laundry list of dates, trainings, and information. The group was not able to make decisions in a timely manner. The committee would put items on the agenda for the next meeting but those items did not appear on the next agenda. There was no expectation by staff members that they should be having discussions with their role groups outside of the monthly meetings. The assistant principal generally did not attend council meetings.

By January of 2009, the Instructional Council (IC) was able to help the instructional coach and me plan a professional development afternoon for the staff (Brown & Spangler, 2006). They included scheduled time for grade levels to meet (topics were not set for this time) and there was time for grade levels to meet with the principal

114

and assistant principal. Once again, there was no set agenda for these meetings. The IC did not ask for feedback from the staff about the afternoon.

By April of 2009, the IC was able to plan another professional development afternoon. By this time, both the Instructional Coach and I had been asking the staff for input for more than eighteen months. They had had the opportunity to see their suggestions used and their feedback used to plan future professional development. At that time, I also asked our assistant principal to facilitate the meetings. She was a good facilitator and kept us on track, in regard to both time and topic. The Instructional Coach took detailed notes that would be shared with the staff both orally and in writing. This structure gave me an opportunity to participate in discussions, share my opinions, and allow for group decisions. I had made it clear that I would not vote. The Instructional Council made decisions. I would only intervene if a decision was under consideration that would not be supported by the district, state or federal government. By operating in this manner for eighteen months, there was a confidence that this committee had become the school's decision-making body.

At this staff development meeting, I asked three teachers to present how they used continuous improvement in their classrooms. There was time for discussion and then the staff was divided into four groups. Each group was given a different topic to discuss. Each group then presented its ideas to the whole group.

Once again, there was no tool for formal feedback. We were relying on the discussion at the end of the meeting. The Instructional Coach and I would meet with individuals and get their feedback. Also, department chairs would meet with their constituents and give us written feedback. The Instructional Council was getting feedback

in this manner so they did not seem to miss having a more formal method of collecting data. Feedback was not an expected part of the process prior to August 2008. In addition, it was more feedback than they were used to receiving. The Assistant Principal requested a more formal process. She made feedback posters, laminated them and brought them to meetings. We then used a plus/delta system of commenting on meetings and professional development by writing on sticky notes and adhering them to the posters.

In September of 2009, the IC set meeting dates for the year and decided to begin and end meetings on time. An October retreat was planned and a district resource person was brought in for the retreat to train the group on data analysis in conjunction with state-mandated testing scores.

By November of 2009, the Instructional Council was leading discussions with the three grade levels to determine which students should be targeted for math and reading interventions. Data was openly shared and lengthy discussions ensued. While that discussion flowed easily, the groups were not sure what evidence needed to be collected or how it would be collected so that progress could be determined in the future.

The next few months of Instructional Council meetings and conversations focused on developing a new middle school schedule that met the criteria set by the district and a schedule for state mandated testing. The staff also wanted to be able to give input for what they believed about middle school students and instruction. The teacher who took minutes for the IC volunteered to take minutes for different discussion groups. That information was sent to me and I then emailed it to the staff. It was hoped that this would involve everyone in the discussions.

A retreat for the committee was held in April of 2010. For the first time, long-term goals were proposed and voted on. A plus/delta was done at the end of the retreat to gather feedback from the group. The group defined who they were and what constituent groups they represented. Bylaws were discussed and written. Communication methods to share information were determined. Members stated that they were willing to work for change and to make decisions but they wanted the work to be meaningful and they wanted the work to be focused. They also wanted to have conversations with peers and administrators about expectations, changes and the school climate (culture).

In August of 2010, a new staff member volunteered to chair the Instructional Council. She and I met weekly to exchange ideas and information. She suggested that the IC meet twice monthly and the vote was unanimous to do that. The IC decided to meet as a professional learning community (PLC). Agendas were sent out the week before meetings to the entire staff. Minutes were sent to me immediately after the meeting so they could be sent out to the entire staff in a timely fashion. Bylaws were amended and approved and shared with the staff.

A determined effort was made to find parents who would join staff members at Instructional Council meetings. Two parents agreed to share the meetings and they began attending meetings in September 2010. These parents reported meeting content and decisions to their parent constituents. This same month, the committee requested training in collaborative decision making.

In October of 2010, the IC decided to meet as a professional learning community (PLC). The questions for the staff were based on the questions teachers used to discuss teaching and learning. What is it we expect them to learn? How do we know that they

have learned it? How do we respond to those who do not learn? How do we respond

when they already know it? The questions that we wanted to answer throughout the year

were ones that we believed would influence the culture and our instruction. As a PLC of

instructional leaders, what do we need to know about our students and ourselves in order

to support instruction? How do we shift from reacting to planning and doing? How do

we ensure that everyone is accountable and included?

In December of 2010, the IC met to plan two days of staff professional

development in early January. Members enthusiastically offered ideas and discussed the

pros and cons of each. Members looked at district expectations/mandates and determined

what our school staff needed to support instruction, conversation and a collegial dialogue.

As principal, I agreed to lead the professional development days.

In January 2011, I led the staff through two successful professional development

days, using the agenda created by the IC and input from the entire staff. I began with a

PowerPoint presentation, which clearly explained district and state mandates. The

presentation also included recent student test results. Four teachers presented test data

based on content areas and then data on students who needed help. The staff broke into

smaller groups for discussion. Discussion was task oriented and group members were

engaged. Teachers shared best practices. The second day, teachers met in small groups

and planned a lesson based on one best practice. The group came together and each small

group taught a lesson to the entire staff. The plus/delta was positive with regards to the

format and content of the days, the positive feelings generated by the sharing, and the

opportunities for discussion. The delta was a concern about how the positive steps could

be continued.

By April of 2011, the staff looked forward to giving input and having discussions. Plus/deltas were moved into the staff lounge for comments. It was no longer necessary to have staff members give feedback as exit slips from meetings. Their feedback was being used to plan for the school year and they were willing to participate.

Where the Instructional Council is Today

The IC is a teacher-led group that is tasked with making decisions that affect teaching and learning. While the meetings are open to anyone, only elected members are able to vote. Four years ago, this group did not make independent decisions, did not make decisions for their peers, and they tried to maintain the status quo, rather than initiate change. At this time, they make decisions for the entire staff and openly discuss new ways of instruction that can be shared with the entire staff. Members of the IC are viewed as school leaders and each member represents a specific school group.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

PLCs were mandated one year ago in our district. All teachers are expected to belong to a PLC that meets weekly to discuss how students are learning, what students are learning, and how to improve this learning. Our school uses data from both formal, mandated testing and from informal classroom tests and observations to describe student learning and teacher instruction. Each group has a facilitator and one member of each group is part of our school's IC. This allows for a constant flow of information between groups. It also allows us to make decisions based on what is happening in our classrooms.

The Participants

The electronic questionnaire collected minimal demographic information. The participants were asked to share their highest earned degree, the number of years that

they had worked in education, and how many years they had worked at the school (see

Table 2). While this gave some information about the respondents, it was not possible to

determine who responded to the questionnaire based on this set of data.

Table 2

Distribution of years in education and years at this middle school (n =19)

Question	0-5 years	6-12 years	12-20 years	20+ years
How many years have you worked in education at any level, in any position, or at any school?	3	6	4	6
How many years have you worked at this middle school?	13	5	1	0

It is important to note that while twenty-seven staff members opened and began

the questionnaire, only twenty respondents completed the questionnaire. Of those,

nineteen responded to the questions seeking demographic data. Fourteen of the nineteen

respondents hold both a bachelor's degree and a master's degree, while five only hold a

bachelor's degree.

There are at least six staff members in each of the categories in Table 1 (0-5

years, 6-12 years, and so forth). It appears that staff members with fewer than six years of

experience at this school may have been more open to responding to the questionnaire. In

Table 1 it is evident that 47% of respondents had twelve years or less experience in

education and 53% of respondents twelve years or more experience in education.

Individual interviews were conducted at the middle school both before and after

school. Interviewees were asked to select a time that was convenient for them. I had

hoped to get six to eight volunteers and was pleased to have eleven staff members

volunteer to be interviewed (see Table 3). An assistant principal who had been assigned

to a different school during the summer volunteered to be interviewed but that interview

was not held. An additional four staff member volunteered to be interviewed after the

oral interviews were completed. They were thanked for volunteering but additional

interviews were not held.

Table 3

Distribution of years in education and years at this middle school for staff that

participated in the oral interview process (n =11)

Question	0-5 years	6-12 years	12-20 years	20+ years
How many years have you worked in education at any level, in any position, or at any school?	2	3	4	2
How many years have you worked at this middle school?	5	4	2	0

Change, Data Collection, and Data Use

Staff members were concerned by the belief that they knew their students best and

yet somehow that knowledge was not used by data-collecting bodies. They believed that

their interactions with their students were an intrinsic part of the learning environment. It

appears that they may have benefited from the collective data that is essential to change

and which we do not have in place (Williams, Brine, Sprague & Sullivan, 2008). The

staff understood that the data they want must be current and school based, but it is not

clear that they use a consistent format to collect or to present data, which will lead to

sustainable changes. Several teachers contributed the following quotations that confirm

findings from the research (Cicchinelli, Dean, Calvin, Goodwin, & Parsley, 2006; Kowal,

Hassel & Hassel, 2009; The Wallace Foundation, 2006).

> "It always helps me to go straight to the source and ask my students directly what
> they find interesting, motivating, and helpful in what I've presented and how I've
> presented it. They are very shrewd and insightful about their own learning
> process."

> "I feel that I actually 'know' my students from a strength, weakness, and
> motivational perspective."

> "Without the foundation of classroom data, testing data is nearly 100% unreliable
> because the classroom teacher is the day-to-day, on-the-ground expert who is
> most likely to know the entire profile of a student: intellectual, emotional. [sic]
> physical, social, economic and familial that determine a child's ability to learn and
> progress."

Looking at data was seen as a change for all those interviewed. Collecting and

using data was seen by many as a way of being accountable to both the curriculum and to

the needs of students (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Casavant & Cherkowski,

2001; Dufour, 2007; Hickman, Moore & Torek, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Wesson &

Kudlacz, 2000). I observed my staff members becoming more emotionally involved with

this question than they had with other questions. I think this may have had to do with

some of their frustrations. Katie illustrated that when she stated, "Being aware of data is a

change." I think this is true for most of my staff. We were not used to looking at data for

any length of time prior to 2008 and we did not take time to discuss it. However, they understood that to change, we needed to collect data and review data and that we needed to look at our own data (Kowal, Hassel & Hassel, 2009; Williams, Brine, Sprague & Sullivan, 2008).

Joan, our newest teacher, said that data is used "to make my teaching more effective." She seemed to appreciate having data help her evaluate what she was doing. Other staff members were not so appreciative. Tom was more concise, but no less emotional when he exclaimed, "So much data!" He went on to state that he believed there was "good information if time was there to evaluate it;" a statement that Jenny echoed (Grubb & Flessa, 2006).

Tammy, who has had almost twenty years of experience in elementary, middle and high schools did not seem to be as fazed by data as her peers. She has probably more experience looking at data at previous schools. She believed that data was useful but "only shows trends" (Cicchinelli, Dean, Calvin, Goodwin, & Parsley, 2006). Directly opposite in opinion was Lisa who has had more than ten years experience in elementary and high school and frequently uses social statistics in her teaching. However, she emphatically declared, "numbers and data scare me." In answering other questions, it became apparent that she did not see social statistics and school data in the same light. The former was seen as a teaching tool and the latter was seen as something that was outside of her teaching responsibilities although she knew that she had use data to gauge her work (Cicchinelli, Dean, Calvin, Goodwin, & Parsley, 2006; The Wallace Foundation, 2006).

Several staff members believed that seeing things in print actually makes them appear more valid than they may be when other factors are taken into consideration. Lisa remarked that collecting data alone is not enough to change the outcome. This is something that was an obstacle in our school three years ago. Teachers collected data and showed it at meetings. They did not consider other factors. They mainly collected test scores and when they saw higher numbers in print, they thought they had disaggregated the information and that was all they needed to do.

It is interesting to note that data was not seen as either positive or negative. Those who used it found it worthwhile. A frequent theme was the amount of data that schools collect and the amount of time it would take to use it all. Mary spoke for many of her peers when she observed that teachers seemed to trust classroom data and find it useful. Data from district testing was used mainly by teachers who taught the tested subjects. Teachers were more frustrated with trying to use state testing data.

Influence of Standards, AYP, and NCLB

Change was frequently interpreted as state mandated or district imposed testing. Pat, who was generally positive and calm in her conversations with me, was quite angry with what she described as an "increased suffocation of federal, state, district testing leading to less creativity" and test score legalities that were "sucking life out of teaching."

Testing at the state level (SBA) was specifically mentioned four times. District testing (DBA) was mentioned five times. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was mentioned five times. Testing in general was described as a change five times.

Pat was also angry at the policies and mandates that had led to more testing than she had seen in her previous twenty years in education: "We have moved away from teaching and more toward preparing for tests."

Tammy also saw the policies and mandates as more punitive than helpful, "NCLB is huge . . . a burden . . .multiple ways to fail." Lisa and Carol echoed those sentiments when they stated they thought that the state and district held test scores "over our heads" and Lisa went on to describe it as a "tremendous cloud hanging over teachers."

AYP and NCLB were also part of the responses when staff members were asked how they understood change in a restructuring school. Five participants referred to No Child Left Behind (NCLB), three participants referred to the state-mandated testing, two participants referred to the district-mandated testing. Five participants referred to the need for schools to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) based on testing results. One teacher noted that it helped that the administration at the school downplayed the continuous testing mandated at schools (Allen et al., 2005; Brighton & Hertberg, 2004; Dutro & Valencia, 2004; Feemster, 2007). It appears that the staff members responding to the electronic survey saw the federal mandates for school improvement as being the same. They identified restructuring with school change. They saw restructuring as placing more pressure on their teaching. They also expressed the belief that the mandates for change kept changing their classroom instruction.

Staff members expressed concerns about the way in which federal and state mandates have changed their classroom instruction.

"It seems that just when teachers and students were beginning to grasp the implications of standards-based education, NCLB mandates for AYP eroded

125

student-centered, project-based learning in favor of intervention/remediation, fidelity to research-based textbook programs, and district-wide instructional strategies (i.e. Marzano, Promethean boards, Cornell Notes, RACED, etc.)."

"In summary, all stakeholders do not view recent changes in education equally, and NCLB interrupted meaningful change in education."

". . . AYP has put more pressure on my teaching, more pressure on students to achieve on discrete measures . . .."

"There have been two really big changes in education over the past ten years. The first is NCLB. This caused a shift to focus on data rather than on the student."

Leadership and Change

As staff members referred to instruction (Augustine et al., 2009; Cicchinelli, Dean, Calvin, Goodwin, & Parsley, 2006; Sommers, 2009; Strahan, Cooper, & Ward, 2001; Wheelock, 1995) and their students (Brown & Spangler, 2006), they also spoke about assuming new leadership roles in the school.

Eight responses about PLC (Professional Learning Community) meetings identified that time as an opportunity to share information about instruction and students (Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009; Public Impact, 2008). Staff made statements such as:

"We get together now and talk about students to see what we can do to help their academic success here."

"I seek out collaboration with peers in order to both strengthen and preserve my understanding" (referring to educational changes).

 "I am more aware of data at school and the discussions here have changed from

complaining to working together with other teachers and discussing kid work and

how we present ideas."

Five responses specifically stated that the school's Instructional Council (IC) was

a positive venue for teachers to have input into school decisions. These statements

supported the research reported by Angelle (2008) and others (Hickman, Moore & Torek,

2008**),** which stated that middle school communities work well together when teachers

believe they are heard and are part of decisions.

"Major decisions are made in IC by a committee, which reflects teacher views."

"IC gives teachers a voice, therefore, teachers are treated as competent in their

profession."

In response to the question about how a staff member contributes to the creation

of the learning environment at our school, a staff member stated that he/she contributed

by volunteering "to be a member of the Instructional Council." This response

corresponded with other answers, which clearly saw the school's Instructional Council as

a decision making body, which acted according to staff recommendations and did not

make decisions isolated from school stakeholders' input.

Professional learning communities (PLC) are planned opportunities for groups of

staff members to meet weekly to discuss the curriculum, learning environment, and

opportunities for school and self-improvement (Dufour et al., 2006; Dufour, 2007;

Timperley, 2005; Wiggins & Tighe, 2005). PLCs were mentioned by name as a positive

school change by six out of eleven interviewees. Every interviewee talked in some way

about collegial conversations. There were approximately thirty-nine different statements

that mentioned communicating with peers as a positive change. Pat stated that the

conversations were generally positive in nature and not seen just as opportunities to vent.

Administrators were included in the conversations and this was seen as positive by the

staff (Angelle, 2008; Fisher, 2000; Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning,

2001; Rhodes, 1990; Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009). Communication was not seen as

negative in any interview although one interviewee described it as taking her outside her

comfort zone. This interviewee was Joan. I believe that she may have been less

comfortable than other staff members because she had fewer years in teaching.

Jenny, who has taught for more than fifteen years, has also left teaching at least

twice due to her dissatisfaction with the previous school's environment. She was pleased

with what she described as teacher "interaction on a professional level" (Deal & Peterson,

1999; Fullan, 1999; Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Leithwood, 2004; Lunenburg

& Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004). Gail, who has taught a similar number of years,

remarked on the time to share and discuss. She had not had that experience at her

previous school and was happy that her peers respected her experiences. Once again, the

professional culture at our school was seen as changing by the staff.

Organizational Change That Results in Building a Positive Culture

Staff members believed that they were part of a process that created a more

positive school environment. It is important to note that the responses to this question

were also found embedded in the answers to other questions. Fifteen responses referred to

the positive aspect of collecting meaningful data that was not necessarily data from state

or district mandated testing. They listed reading logs, efforts to know the "whole"

student, student behaviors, attendance, communication with parents, data on learning

strategies, and the importance of attitude (Cicchinelli, Dean, Calvin, Goodwin, & Parsley, 2006; Sommers, 2009; Strahan, Cooper, & Ward, 2001; Williams, Brine, Sprague & Sullivan, 2008). With the exception of attendance, none of the above data is currently being collected by any of our existing state or district mandated testing.

Building a Positive, Creative Learning Environment

There were many positive responses to the question, "How do you contribute to the learning environment at our school?" While other questions had answers that corresponded to examining how a school works toward changes that build a positive, creative learning environment, this question directly looks for participant's description of their personal involvement in building that environment. It is interesting to note that all participants saw themselves as part of the school culture (Burke, 2003; Sarason, 1996) and no one responded in a way that could be construed as negative to this question.

Seven respondents referred to collaboration with peers, four referenced having a positive attitude, and three mentioned being supportive towards all the stakeholders at the school. In addition, students were described as being important. Having an opportunity to be involved in creating a challenging, engaging environment was stated three times. The following quotes illustrated the different methods teachers used to influence the educational environment in a positive way.

> "By supporting students, staff, and parents in varying capacities, when and where needed."

> "I work very hard to create a safe, challenging and engaging learning enviromnet [sic] for my students."

"I determine to make the most of each day and to adjust and incorporate changes as they occur."

"I contribute by having knowledge, being positive, having good feeling tone in my classroom, and making my students the most important element of my quest as an educator."

"I am part of the positive learning environment. I want to share the love of learning."

"I volunteer on several committees. I meet with colleagues and am proactive in discussing ways we can improve instruction. I am open teo [sic] new ideas. I try to document what I am trying with my students so that others can replicate what I am doing!"

"I contributed by being available to listen and to offer support to others."

"I believe that I maintain high expectations for student learning while planning a wide variety of instructional activities so all students have access to important concepts and skills. I work to impart a sense of professionalism about school. I care about the quality of educational experiences students have, and so we use the library, the computer labs, and even the furniture from the staff lounge. I have posted projects in the hallways and in the windows of the classroom to encourage student talk about the concepts they're learning."

"I am actively involved in my PLC and department. I want to make our school a place where students WANT to go to learn."

"I will be positive and do what I know is the best for students, while encouraging others to do the same."

The comments in the electronic questionnaire were more positive in nature compared to those sections that contained opinions about testing or mandates from outside the school. Collaboration with peers was a positive influence on the school culture. I believe that this is related to the way I am able to share authority and school leadership in a positive way with staff members willing to take on additional roles outside of the classroom (Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001).

Creating a Positive Environment

There were many positive responses to the questions, "What do you see as next steps to create a more positive, creative learning environment? How can you affect those steps?" While other questions had answers that corresponded to examining how a school works toward changes that build a positive, creative learning environment, this question directly asks for participants' descriptions of their personal involvement in building that environment. It is interesting to note that all participants saw themselves as part of the school culture (Burke, 2003; Sarason, 1996) and no one responded to this question in a way that could be construed as negative. As our school changed, it was critical that staff members were involved in decision making and planning professional development because they were so personally involved in building that positive environment.

Four interviewees directly referred to the importance of taking the time to have conversations about teaching as being a critical part of the process needed to create a more positive, creative learning environment. Four others talked about the importance of their ability to "share what works for me." There were six additional comments that stated "by supporting each other" and "respecting each other" we would be working toward creating that environment (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Zimmerman, 2004). The

important part of this was that Katie and Gail, who do not have much in common, both thought it was important to share what works for them. Tammy, Carol, and Jenny talked about support and they were staff members who did not believe that they had as much support prior to the conversations as they do now. Mary, Lisa, and Gail mentioned the way the staff respected one another when they met and had conversations. Gail and Mary thought that that was a change from their previous schools.

Paul, who generally gave a more negative response to the interview questions than the others, found the newer staff members to be dedicated to the school and the students. Tom, who also gave some negative responses (particularly in regard to testing mandates), made a similar statement. I did note that everyone responded in a positive manner to this question.

Twelve participants wrote about how their experiences helped create a more positive environment. This was seen as something that they could contribute that might be different from what others were contributing.

"I have a wide range of experience with students from the ages of 8 to 22, and from IQs ranging between 35 and 156."

"Collaboration with UNM has brought the biggest changes to my practice because it allows me to stay on top of what is current in research and our field."

The responses to this question were treated as a separate theme, which described a personal investment in building a positive and creative learning environment. It was also important for my understanding to uncover, examine, and interpret any similarities that I could find between the electronic surveys and the oral interviews.

In continuing to analyze the data in this chapter, I have substantiating evidence for the unanticipated themes of accountability, communication, the community belief about change from the staff's point of view, understanding change in a restructuring school and my staff's understanding of how students are also involved in school change and the creation of a positive, creative learning environment.

Accountability

The word "accountable" was used twelve times when staff members were asked about the connection between change and understanding policies and mandates. Not all staff members used the word. Being accountable was deemed negative in eight responses that equated accountability with a policy or a mandate. Across all responses, accountability was described as being a change sixteen times. Some participants used "accountable" to describe how they look at data. They stated that they could defend what they believe about instruction with data. One teacher also stated that accountability meant teaching what could be measured.

"Accountability has made me analyze more what and how I teach."

"I worry more about keeping up with documentation and probably do it in a more timely fashion!"

"Accountability has helped me be more organized. I still do the things I used to, but now I can defend those practices with data."

"I have never focused on accountability as the school sees it. I focus on being the best I can be I am accountable to myself. I always want to improve on what I do. In the end I am accountable to my students, and I measure this by how I impact their lives."

It is interesting to note that in the questions about change and accountability, teachers did not differentiate clearly between important school data (data required by the district or state) and data that was important for them to access for use in their classrooms. It is also difficult for teachers to assess accountability and I believe that not clearly understanding how accountability is defined is a result of so many mandates using accountability as an expectation without clear definition (Dutro & Valencia, 2004; Kowal, Hassel & Hassel, 2009). Participants in the oral interviews made similar statements about accountability using data but they also linked it to participation in the school communication process believing they were being accountable by participating.

Communication

There were 34 responses in the electronic survey that referred positively to conversations with their peers about changing instruction. Participants used phrases such as "communicate," "share information," and "work together to make decisions." The following quotes illustrate that schools can build capacity when teachers begin to learn together (Burke, 2003; Lambert, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Senge, 1990):

"Teachers are meeting in peer groups to plan for better educational and behavioral outcome of students."

". . . discussions here have changed from complaining to working together with other teachers and discussing kid work and how we present ideas."

". . .sit down with my content teachers and share best practices, discuss problems/topics and always take in more information to improve my own practice."

"I network with other teachers in sharing instructional ideas and materials."

The word "communication" was used multiple times by each interviewee during the oral interviews. It was seen as a valuable component of positive change. Communication was also viewed as a professional responsibility and a way of building a creative learning environment. Previous research had found this kind of communication and collaboration as imperative for change (Fullan, 2001; Gruenert, 2008; Strahan & Hedt, 2009; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000).

Communication also was seen "as interaction on a professional level." The interviewees frequently used the terms "communication" and "collaboration" interchangeably. Katie stated, "One of the direct results of collaboration is more teacher accountability for good teaching." Katie has been teaching for more than ten years. She is always interested in new ideas but she was hesitant to work with other teachers in her grade level. She was more comfortable with teachers who shared her subject area. She was pleased to find that by collaborating with department teachers she was able to work with her peers and found that they were accountable to one another and not just to me or to their students.

Later on, she added that by communicating more with her peers that her discussions with her students had improved (George, 2009). She liked that she was now able to "share strategies, tools, and anecdotes." She connected the sharing to both peers and students.

Joan said, "I appreciate administration telling us to talk." This led to a discussion about how the conversation helps her understand more about the school and her students. This was significant because Joan has taught for fewer than three years. While she is always willing to volunteer to sit on a committee, she is often quiet. She believes that by

collaborating with her peers she has more confidence in her own beliefs about school matters.

Thirteen staff members directly referenced how the staff is now coming together for discussion about students (Arlestig, 2007; Fullan, 2001; Hickman et al., 2008; Wyatt-Smith et al., 2008; Zimmerman, 2004). Some staff members cited their years of experience as being part of that discussion, while others remarked on their educational experiences that were valuable to the discussion: "I seek out collaboration with peers in order to both strengthen and broaden my understanding." It was very gratifying for me to have teachers comment that they looked to collaborate with peers. Three years ago the status quo was more one of shutting the classroom door and now teachers are open to sharing instructional ideas and materials."

Tom has taught in both elementary and middle school. He had been used to the collaboration he found in elementary school and missed the collegial conversations. He believed that setting aside time for teacher collaboration was a positive step that brought teachers "closer" and allowed teachers to talk more.

Carol has been at the school for more than twenty years. She explained that the biggest difference she sees now, as opposed to prior to 2008, is the way our staff is "constantly talking" with one another. Pat, who has been at the school for an equal amount of time, echoed her sentiments. These two teachers had not previously spent time talking together. They generally did not share students and neither had believed that the staff would want to collaborate. They both stated that they looked forward to the professional conversations with members of the staff with whom they had not previously

connected. Perhaps without realizing it, they are part of the changing school culture (Gruenert, 2005; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2006).

Staff Beliefs about How Change is Viewed by the Community

I asked interviewees directly to tell me how they believed teachers, parents, community members, and the district view change. Ten out of eleven believed that change was not viewed equally by any two groups and multiple responses referred to their belief that people who are not within the school itself do not understand school change (Fullan, 2002; Normore, 2004). The eleventh person did not answer the question.

Change was seen as politically motivated by "people who don't understand education," according to Pat. She had become increasingly disillusioned with the policies and mandates that drove educational reform. She believed that policies and mandates did not have students in mind when they were written. Not long after our interview she accepted another job.

Jenny described change as the process the district uses when they mandate that everyone use the same textbook to "solve the mobility issue instead of looking at why kids are mobile." Jenny is generally thoughtful in nature and usually can provide a concrete picture that helps define what she believes; this quote was no exception.

Several staff members blamed the media for how we (both teachers and the public) understand change (Normore, 2004). The ways in which the media report test scores lead to the school finding itself being judged. Teachers believed that the reported test scores in the media influence how they look at change. They also believed that the community took its cues from the media. Jenny and Tom both described media as being "biased." I found this intriguing. Tom is very practical and worked in the private sector

before entering the educational field. Jenny has almost a decade more experience and is interested in things being research based. Yet they both used the same word to describe the media's educational slant. Eight out of eleven interviewees saw the media as skewing how the public sees change.

Change in a Restructuring School

Although change in a restructuring school was part of the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2, the staff at my school viewed restructuring and change in a way that was not supported by the evidence in Chapter 2.

Respondents believed that restructuring has affected their teaching, and that of their peers. One person stated that restructuring "brought me out of my comfort zone in a good way." Another stated, "I am more aware of data at school and the discussions here have changed from complaining to working together with other teachers and discussing kid work and how we present ideas."

Participants frequently connected understanding change in a restructuring school with an emphasis on testing. Change was defined as testing in fourteen statements. In addition, it is interesting to note that this definition of change was unexpected. I had not seen change defined as testing in the literature, but more importantly, it appeared to be a shared definition at this middle school:

"Of course testing is an "ever-present" issue with teachers, as well as the re-structuring process."

(Restructuring) "has caused me to analyze how I can make each 'objective', test measurable."

"I am more intentional about researching student test data and using that data to have conversations with students that are more specific about their habits as learners."

"I have always thought test performance was important, but now I design my instruction for students to be more successful on standardized tests."

Staff made additional comments such as "change for the sake of change." They also saw change as "punitive," a way to "fix education," and a way to "homogenize" their teaching and their curriculum. It is interesting to note that the teachers who used the word "homogenize" are not necessarily in the same learning communities, departments or grade level. I would not be surprised to learn that this may be a word that has been used during discussions in the staff lounge.

It is interesting to note that although teachers interpreted outside mandates for change as being told that they were doing things wrong, they saw the changes that they had helped create in the school as positive. They did understand that push for change had come from the state designating our school as a school in restructuring. They frequently referred to their own personal changes and the changes they saw in the staff. They also believed that they had had a role in creating changes based on their experience with teaching and with students. They definitely saw this as positive school change (Brown & Spangler, 2006; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fisher, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Sarason, 1996; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, Roth & Smith, 1999; Zmuda, Kuklis & Kline, 2004).

Mary made the comment that teachers view change as "gut instinct" and if that is challenged (perhaps by asking for data), they then "feel criticized" and see that requested change as being "negative." Mary helps her peers by volunteering to work with them to

create new curriculum. She believes that they are not all as willing to look at data as she is and worries that they will look at her negatively if she continues to be so enthusiastic about using data to make changes.

Student Involvement in the Change Process

The middle school participants all saw themselves as positive partners with their students in creating the learning environment. They also identified some of the changes in the school culture as part of their communication process (Gruenert, 2005; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Fourteen staff members described themselves as working hard for students in a positive way, stating, for example:

"I work very hard to create a safe, challenging and engaging learning enviromnet [sic] for my students."

"I interact with all students, regardless of the setting, both positive exchanges and correction."

"I think that I am always critically analyizing [sic], problem solving, trying to reach each student so that they are challenged and love learning."

Five staff members described themselves as advocates for students via statements such as:

"Advocating for students when they have no one else to do so is also critical."

"I have a heart for students and see them as complete human beings aside from their current age and their role at school."

Eight other written entries shared their beliefs that students are involved in the educational process. It was apparent to me, as I read through the electronic survey

responses, that an ongoing concern for my staff was keeping students at the forefront of the change process.

"They are very shrewd and insightful about their own learning process."

"Students are responsible for putting forth the efort [sic] to LEARN."

Teachers viewed change through the eyes of their students and Pat saw part of this change as an opportunity to discover new, "creative ways to engage kids" in the educational process. Pat and Joan also referred to teaching as a "creative profession." It is interesting to note that only one respondent mentioned school discipline during the entire research process.

Additional Comments or Ideas

When asked if there was any additional information, ideas or comments that they would like to add that related to the research questions, the responses were not what I expected. Two interviewees had responses that had nothing to do with the research questions. They did have a copy of the research questions in front of them so that they could refer to them at any time. Three interviewees commented on the positive administrative climate and current administration as being part of the positive change. Six people stated that they did not have anything to add.

Mary, after stating that she had nothing to add or comment on, then decided that she did want to add something. She stated that she would like to see us (educators) use the word 'evolve" rather than the word "change." She saw change as having a negative connotation. She believed that if educators began to use the word "evolve" that would suggest that we could have the power and opportunity "to make it better."

It is worth mentioning that Jenny commented that our "school becomes our norm," which was supported by the research on school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004; Zimmerman, 2004).

Summary

In response to the first research question, *How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring?*, it appears that at this middle school teachers understand change as punitive and that change is mandated based on state and district test scores. The document review revealed that administrative meetings were concerned mainly with test information and school restructuring status. It clearly showed that there was little to no conversation about work at individual schools at the district level. There also did not appear to be opportunities presented for schools to show other ways they were successful without using the venue of test scores.

Both the electronic survey data and the oral interview data reinforced what I saw in the document review. Teachers saw change as a mandate, frequently without allowing for school input. They also described change as punitive and as making them believe that they had done something wrong.

The document review did not connect restructuring with specific school changes. The document review showed that items that would lead to school change were frequently brought up but not discussed or explained. Occasionally items were only mentioned once. I believe that is part of what frustrated my staff. They understood that restructuring meant that out students had not tested well, but they did not connect restructuring to the changes that they believed were being forced on them.

The second research question that guided this study was *what are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies?* I found that by being presented with opportunities to make decisions at the school level, the teachers believed that they could better meet the needs of their students (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Burke, 2003; Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Dufour, 2007; Hickman, Moore & Torek, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Sarason, 1996; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000). They saw school change as the evolving of teaching practices based not only on research, but on experience and collaboration with peers. They followed the mandates they were required to follow, but they were not always supportive of those mandates. When afforded the opportunity and the time during the duty day for discussion and questions about mandates and policies, they were able to make the connections between what they were being required to do and the classroom.

Three out of eleven of the interviewees took off on a tangent immediately upon being asked the first interview question. They were angry about what they saw as political intervention and mandates in education by people who did not work in schools and who had not taught in schools. They were very passionate about their dislike of what they saw as political figures interfering in best practices for students. They also believed that they were not being valued for their ability to teach and for their ability to create and develop a positive school environment.

Finally, I was interested in answering a third question; *what are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment?* It was clear that teachers value communication and the time to communicate. They found the collaborative learning communities to be positive in nature and were vocal in their

143

positive reaction to being provided the time to work with peers. They used this time to talk about student learning and their own learning. They also commented on the value they placed on being able to create a learning environment in their classrooms (Dutro & Valencia, 2004; Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). They believed that their ideas were valued and listened to by the administration and their peers (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Hickman et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Portin, 2003).

They also believed that they were part of the school governing body (Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). By being heard and contributing to the school's direction they believed that they were becoming a more cohesive group that worked well together (Brown & Anfara, 2003). These factors led to the creation of what they believed to be a more positive, creative learning environment.

My research has reaffirmed that findings at my school support the themes that are present in the literature including the influence of standards particularly in relation to AYP and NCLB, the use of data collection, organizational change that results in building a positive culture and organizational leadership and change. On the other hand, additional emerging themes that have come through my research included how a veteran staff views accountability, communication, the community belief about change from the staff's point of view, understanding change in a restructuring school as well my staff's understanding of how students are also involved in school change and the creation of a positive, creative learning environment.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

This study addressed three research questions: How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring? What are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies? What are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment?

I conducted a document review, disseminated an electronic questionnaire, and conducted oral interviews to gain specific knowledge about the school. Participants were volunteers at the school where I am the principal. The data analysis used agendas and notes from school and district meetings that occurred from 2008 to 2011. The electronic questionnaire was available for all staff members for several weeks. The oral interviews took place at school. Although participants were invited back for a second interview, all interviewees declined the opportunity.

In response to the first research question, *How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring?*, it appears that at this middle school teachers understood change as punitive and that change is mandated based on state and district test scores. The document review revealed that administrative meetings were concerned mainly with test information and school restructuring status. It clearly showed that there was little to no conversation about work at individual schools at the district level. There also did not appear to be opportunities presented for schools to show other ways they were successful without using the venue of test scores.

Both the electronic survey data and the oral interview data reinforced what I saw in the document review. Teachers saw change as a mandate, frequently without allowing for school input. They also described change as punitive and as making them believe that they had done something wrong.

Teachers at this middle school understand change as being punitive and that change is mandated based on state and district test scores. They did not see the relationship to change and our school. They were more comfortable with school-based change in which they were involved.

The document review revealed that administrative meetings were concerned mainly with test information and school restructuring status. It clearly showed that there was little to no conversation at the district level about work at individual schools. There also did not appear to be opportunities presented for schools to show their success other than through test scores.

The document review did not connect restructuring with specific school changes. Teachers understood that restructuring meant that our students had not tested well, but they did not connect restructuring to the changes that they believed were being forced on them. They may have benefitted from a process that involved them in creating sustainable educational change.

The second research question that guided this study was *what are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies?* Teachers believed that they could better meet the needs of their students when they were presented with opportunities to make decisions at the school level (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Burke, 2003; Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001;

Dufour, 2007; Hickman, Moore & Torek, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Sarason, 1996; Wesson & Kudlacz, 2000). They saw school change as the evolving of teaching practices based not only on research, but on experience and collaboration with peers. They followed the mandates they were required to follow, but they were not always supportive of those mandates. When afforded the opportunity and the time during the duty day for discussion and questions about mandates and policies, they were able to make the connections between what they were being required to do and the classroom.

What are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment? It was clear that teachers value communication and the time to communicate. Collaborative learning communities at the school were described as positive in nature and teachers were happy that they were provided the time to work with peers. They used this time to talk about student learning and their own learning. They appreciated the opportunity to change and create learning environments (Dutro & Valencia, 2004; Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). They believed that their ideas were valued and listened to by the administration and their peers (Angelle, 2008; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Hickman et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Portin, 2003).

Staff members saw themselves as important members of the school's governing body (Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). By being heard and contributing to the school's direction they believed that they were becoming a more cohesive group that worked well together (Brown & Anfara, 2003). They described the school as becoming a more positive, creative learning environment.

This study proved valuable in understanding what my staff valued and what they believed about the direction our school had taken. It was gratifying to learn that they appreciated the leadership roles and the opportunity to make decisions.

It was also obvious that teachers, although still overwhelmed by the amount of data collected, were learning to use data that was appropriate for the questions we were asking. They were also using data to drive decision-making.

We cannot create positive school cultures, or even change existing ones, without involving the entire community. Until school leaders practice this, change will not be sustainable.

Time for discussion and questions is the one commodity that we can try to build into our schools. Without taking the time to work through policies and mandates, they will always be treated in a superficial manner.

School administrators should be involved in the case study research illustrated in this study on a smaller, less formal level. Only in this way will they understand what the culture at the school values, what is truly understood about mandated education, and the relationship between change and teachers' personal beliefs.

Unanticipated Findings

The existing literature makes the assumption that principals have the luxury to reconstitute their schools. My findings go beyond that literature. In reality, as an administrator, I have few options to actually do that. In fact, my opportunity to create change at school is in working to change the culture of my school. I have a successful older staff and need to find ways to acclimate new staff members, not always into the existing culture (which is clearly illustrated in the literature) but rather figuring out how

to acclimate them into the culture I would like to see established at my school. At the

same time, I recognize the delicate balance between that idea and new staff member's

need to belong to the existing school culture. My personal values helped shape the

direction that I want the school to move toward and my passion for my work helped the

staff move with me (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2004).

At my school, I am fortunate to have a strong existing school culture. The

research in both education and management (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1999) is clear that

over time productivity will plateau and begin to drop off. Without the right leadership,

the drop off will continue as more staff member are content with the status quo, resulting

in the illustration in Figure 1. This is also the downside of a strong culture. School leaders

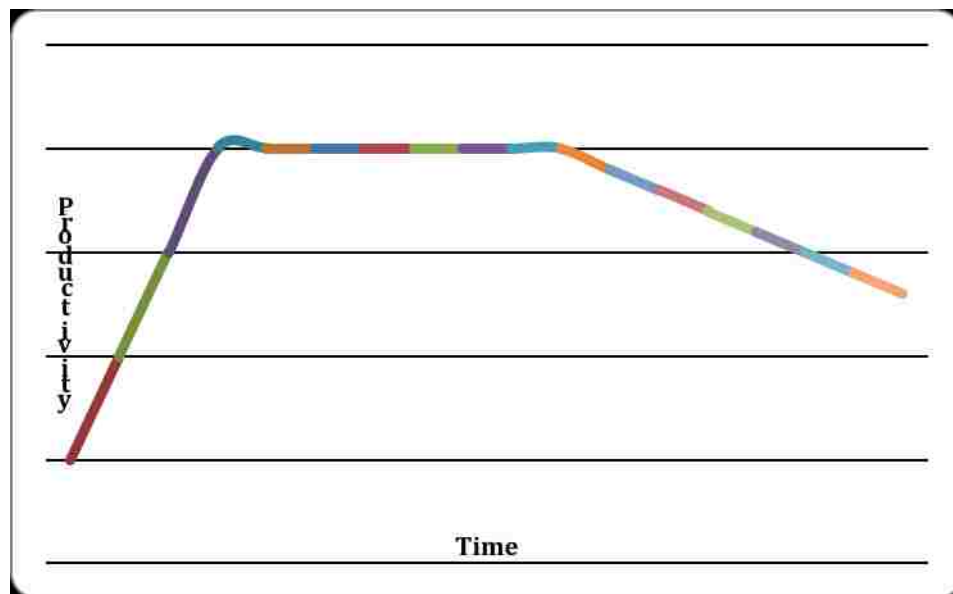need to know how to "kick start" incremental changes that will get a staff moving off the

plateau.

Figure 1. The relationship between time and productivity where productivity eventually
declines.

The upside of a strong school culture is that my staff and I know how to work together. The chaos period (the upward slope) is used to initiate change. We have worked closely together and know how to discuss the hard topics using the language of the mutual culture we have developed together. We do not need to take an approach that uses softer language that may not be heard by everyone.

It is not necessarily bad for the school culture to plateau. It is like the time bread needs to rest after kneading. It leads to a better product. The critical concern is for leaders to be aware of the plateau lasting indefinitely or beginning a downward slide that may be identified within a school culture as poor morale.

Can one person be all the kinds of leaders that those hard discussions require? I do not believe so. Therefore, it has been critical for us to use the addition of informal school leaders to help bridge the gap between where we are and where we would like to be.

Informal school leaders are critical during the chaos phase of building change in a creative, positive manner. We can predict that this will happen. The dynamic we must question is where do we go to change? Who understands how to move each piece of the school culture around to make the inevitable plateau effect of shorter duration? I do it with the help of informal leaders. These leaders are identified by peers by being voted on to represent them on the Instructional Council. As a school leader, I remember that this is a group leadership team and I do not assume control of the meetings. This allows for other leaders to bubble up during discussions. With each succeeding meeting, as they see their ideas becoming part of the school culture, their voices become stronger.

The strength of this model is that we put out all of our ideas for the entire organization to see. It is a transparent process. When, as a group, we understand that we need to make changes, it is easier for us to re-group and not be afraid to initiate chaos to create organizational change.

At the building level, one of the ways we create the momentum to reach the chaos stage that moves us forward is by creating focused professional development opportunities. We know that we have to engage the entire staff in the process. If we do it with just small groups, the same people will create the same relationships with each other and with the process itself, keeping us on that plateau.

As leaders, we are responsible for identifying the dynamic that has us beginning to plateau. I understand that sometimes we plateau because we are paying attention to other issues. It is also the downside of our acceptance of the current culture so that it becomes the status quo we are trying to protect.

As groups work together, it is important at my school to change the group composition from time to time so that more ideas are shared and the discussion changes. We need to tie our achievement goals to new initiatives which when put into place result in "aha!" moments for teachers.

One of the downsides of this school culture is how to know what to change and how often. One of the critical things I need to identify is what does my school culture look like when it is plateauing. I cannot just decide that on the 5th of every month we will change something to keep us in a chaotic frenzy. It is critical that we look at not just the formal testing data, but use observation and school community feedback to constantly check where we are in relation to where we would like to be. I am also conscious of

continuing to personalize my leadership style to match the needs of my school. This is

not always easy but the art of leadership is one of the most rewarding aspects of my

profession (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2004).

The chaos period can lead to unintended outcomes if all members of the

leadership community are not involved in the process. It could result in some members of

the staff not contributing ideas and therefore not buying into the changes in culture. If this

happens and staff members align themselves with colliding cultures at the school, our

journey toward chaos and positive change may result in some school members

undermining the creation of a better school culture.

One of the positive results of this group's efforts is the understanding that even if

I am no longer at the school, we have a strong interactive relationship between the life of

our organization and many leaders. This helps all of us believe that our work will

continue and we can build on what we know instead of worrying about starting over with

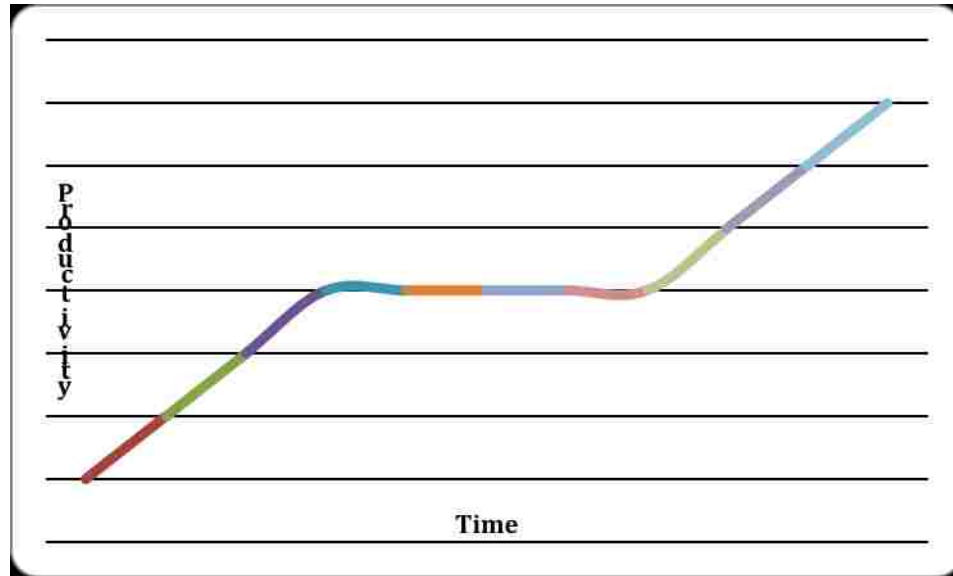different leadership as illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The relationship between time and productivity where an organization continues to improve.

The model used at my school is not used at the district level. There is not a way at this time to develop informal leaders that contribute to the learning organization as a whole; instead there is a hierarchy of leaders that follow a prescribed path in disseminating information. There is not a clear feedback loop and there is definitely not a place where principals sit at a table in equal status for decision-making. At the school level, there is not only a conscientious effort to seek out feedback from all staff members, but at the Instructional Council table all members have equal say in discussions and decision making.

Some district leaders all believe that one way to initiate change is to move principals from a school that they deem to be successful to schools that they believe need to change to become successful. Three years is the time that has been suggested in my district for principals to be at schools. Our current superintendent moved principals in his previous district. He does move principals, but there does not seem to be a three-year pattern in our district at this time. I do not think that we need different formal leaders for

the chaos, the plateau, and the next period of chaos. Instead, I believe that building a culture of informal leaders at the school builds the capacity that schools need to have a variety of leadership skills supporting the school at each organizational stage.

I also believe that at the district level there may be some discomfort with the uncertainty of the chaos period. I daresay that that leadership may be more comfortable with controlled change and controlled timelines and having everyone on the district on the same page.

I accept the fact that the evolution of my school differs from the district evolution. My staff understands that the district's leadership has mandates that it passes on to us. We believe however that it is up to our staff to define how our culture evolves to address those mandates. We know our community and our students and ourselves. We have a responsibility to decide how our school culture should change in order to meet those mandates. It has been my goal at each of the schools where I have been a principal to develop a culture independent of the district that responds not only to district mandates but to school needs. This is one of my strengths that I bring to the school.

It is not important to me that every member of my staff is always on the same page. I understand that we all accept and respond to change differently. That is what makes the movement toward good change uncomfortable and chaotic at times. It is also what makes it exciting.

Staff members rarely mentioned federal mandates. They were in favor of the light that the legislation shined on their craft but did not appear to refer to it in conversation as having changed their work during the years of instructions. Instead, they seemed to concentrate on state mandated testing and district mandated testing.

Interestingly enough, one interviewee stated that students might not recognize changes in our school because they have grown up educationally with yearly testing that did not directly impact them as individuals. I have to think that some of my teachers who have been in education ten years or fewer may be in the same boat with those students. They have worked in a "testing rich environment" for their educational careers and it has had a different impact on their instruction than on teachers who previously worked in an instructional environment that was based on classroom data rather than on district or state data.

Staff members strayed off topic more often than I imagined. An open-ended question on the electronic questionnaire may have allowed for ideas to be expressed that the questions may not have elicited. In addition, by the time participants were asked in the oral interviews if there was anything that they wished to add, the majority of participants just seemed ready to leave the interview.

Educators in this study were very concerned about what they viewed as homogenous teaching. They believed that the continuous influx of new mandates from entities removed from direct classroom instruction undermined their abilities to be creative and to create materials that served students' needs. They were also concerned about the reliance on math and reading programs that took so much time to teach that there was little or no time to supplement instruction based on student need or to re-teach unsuccessful lessons.

With the above in mind, teachers were willing to make mandated changes but were unsure as to how they would be held accountable for those changes (Dutro & Valencia, 2004; Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2009).

In addition to the above, the interviewees mentioned, almost without exception, how grateful they were to work in a school where the principal made student learning the expectation. They believed that other school principals placed an emphasis on testing results as being the outcome of classroom instruction.

Communication was a theme that wove its way through both the oral and the electronic interviews. I believe that this is one of the stronger keys to building a positive environment. It was definitely the way the newer staff members, regardless of age or experience, learned the school norms (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004).

I expected to find that over time the documentation at the district level would become more focused on change; linking past events with future plans. The documentation that I reviewed at the district level continued to reflect district personnel coming to talk at school personnel with little or no expectation that they wanted to hear the school perspective on most subjects.

I also expected to see a direct link between meetings and the work being done at the school. Although there were multiple directions in meetings and in emails inviting principals to try new programs in schools, the feeling was overwhelming, one of frustration. Programs came and went without explanation. There were few opportunities to discuss what was working at multiple schools and no opportunity for schools with limited funding to purchase programs. That district viewpoint put schools like my school in the untenable position of being on the outside looking in at all the potential help we could use to change instruction if we had financial support.

Limitation of the Data

This study included only one middle school in restructuring for the fifth year. Although other schools had as many years in restructuring, they were not part of this study. Not every member of the staff volunteered to participate in the study. However, I believe that since more than twice as many staff members volunteered than expected, I can be confident that my findings represent the understanding of the educational environment at this middle school.

Teachers, other staff, community and students may be so used to the restructuring rhetoric that it may not motivate them to think about it, discuss it, or participate in a study about it.

I had to resend the electronic survey several times since teachers wanted to respond to it at home in some instances. In other instances, teachers told me they started to work on the survey but realized it would take more time than they wanted to spend on an electronic survey.

I used school emails to invite participants to respond to an electronic survey. The survey went out before teachers were back on contract. Since most of my staff did not check their school email accounts in the weeks prior to school, I was forced to extend the time I had originally allowed for collecting data from the electronic survey. Many staff members had me resend the invitations and electronic link to their personal email accounts. Prior to doing research again, I would send out a letter describing my research and requesting individual to send me their best contact information.

Advice to Principals

Teachers take restructuring seriously. While some see it as a process that interferes with their ability to do whatever they want to do within the classroom, others see it as ideas they need to incorporate into their classrooms. Principals must also be able to persuade their staff members to look at new methods of teaching and learning. Principals need to be able describe what the goals are and then be open to teacher feedback. They are the classroom experts and need to be valued as such. It is more likely that a school will be able to change its culture and sustain that change if staff members are involved in learning and decision-making.

Principals must be aware that it will take time to change the culture of a school in a meaningful way. It would be wise to identify school leaders to help in this process (Senge, 1994; Zimbalist, 2001). It is comforting to staff members when leaders share common goals and vocabulary.

One of the most difficult jobs we have as principals is to change the culture of our schools. In fact, Roland Barth (2002) believes that the culture that we develop within our schools may have a more far-reaching effect on our students than almost any other societal influence. The school culture is resistant to change, yet if we want to continue to improve, we will continue to need to change. He believes, as I do, that we must work together with staff and students to forge a successful community.

It is my opinion that schools undergoing restructuring do not need to talk about testing in a punitive way. Educators are well aware of the high stakes involved in testing. They will welcome professional development on test taking skills, test vocabulary and test preparation. They feel threatened when test scores are "held over their heads."

I believe that there is a strong relation between talking about change and teachers feeling that the conversation is occurring because they have failed, a feeling supported through my interviews with these teachers. I was not surprised that it was brought up but I was taken aback by not only the intensity of their feelings but also by the fact that the feeling was there even in my newer teachers. Principals must take the time to have in-depth conversations with staff members about expected changes and why change is expected. When the staff is part of the process, they are less likely to fear it. In addition, they will be able to support changes that they help develop. This makes professional development a critical area for principal participation. This is where I can meet staff needs, get input on what we need to do next, and become a collaborative member of the staff.

Teachers believe that they need to be creative to move a school forward. They are not always sure how to do that with the popular scripted programs now being used in our district and in other districts throughout the country. It is critical for principals to collaborate with teachers in discussions about students and the curriculum that will help them be most successful. I also remember that good teachers bring a passion and a commitment to the classroom that cannot be duplicated by a program. Teachers should be encouraged to find creative ways to teach. That creativity will also be used in making changes that will change the school culture. Those changes will be more likely to be sustained due to the high level of teacher involvement.

It is important to know and respect the teacher's work, not give it lip service, but to really know and acknowledge the work. I am referring to the frequently "canned" evaluation forms that some districts require. While acknowledging and following district

protocols, it is also imperative that as principals we take the time to be in classrooms for other reasons. There are opportunities for varied conversations that are more collegial than evaluative in nature when we remember that there are multiple ways we can observe education and educators.

Principals should always also be prepared to give meaningful suggestions and then follow up on how useful their advice was in the given situation. It is also acceptable to admit you do not know something and then offer to get an answer. Teachers appreciate honesty in their co-workers. I believe that I work for my staff. I believe that is why they trust me to be honest with them and why they are willing to try my suggestions. They are also able to go to some of the school's informal leaders, their peers, and know they will get similar responses (Angelle, 2008; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore, & Manning, 2001; Hickman et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004; Petzko, Clark, Valentine, Hackmann, Nori & Lucas, 2003; Wyatt-Smith, Bridges, Hedemann & Neville, 2008; Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009). Schools with highly collaborative staff members recognized that not only was principal leadership important, but that other formal and informal leaders shared in that responsibility (Fullan, 2001), including principals, assistant principals, department chairs, and informal teacher leaders. Virtue's (2009) research and that of others (Amey, 2005; Casavant & Cherkowski, 2001; Leithwood et al., 2004; Strahan, 2009) was confirmed by my experiences in this research study.

All principals should create venues that allow opportunities for staff to vent in a supportive environment. They want to be heard and have their ideas valued by their peers and by their principals. Since my staff does not go to district meetings and hear those conversations, their opinions are frequently formed by what they read in the newspaper or

hear on a local news channel. The face-to-face interviews made it very clear to me that teachers need an opportunity for meaningful conversations. They should be able to choose the topics. Principals should join the discussion to contribute facts that the faculty may not know, to make sure that everyone is heard, and to learn what the staff views as important (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1999; Geijsel, Meijers, & Wardekker, 2007; Leithwood, 2004; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004; Owens, 2004). These discussions can help create the positive, learning environment where change can be understood as looking at curriculum in a new way. Without the collegial environment, teachers frequently see change as a way of telling them that they are doing something incorrectly.

Even more importantly, these discussions helped all the members of the staff, including me, define who we were as an organization and what we believed about our school. It is critical for principals to be part of that discussion. If we are not, we may find that we are traveling on a path without companions.

Leader as Learner

It was interesting for me to recognize that as my own learning continued during this process, that I was also changing. I changed in the way I approached my staff. It became more important for me, for instance, to be inclusive when planning professional development. I knew that the district had expectations for what schools needed to accomplish. I learned that if I took those expectations to the Instructional Council, and gave opportunities and time to the member to incorporate what they valued into the planning, that we became a community that worked together to address needs both inside and outside of the school (Barth, 2002).

The implications of this change for me were in the ways in which I became a more inclusive school leader. I looked for partnership opportunities with my staff. I believe that my decisions become more transparent and I did a better job of explaining my thought processes. I became more open to suggestions. When initiatives were acted upon, they had a better chance for success because I had learned about them and developed them with a community of educators.

Implications for Professional Development

The teachers at my school also changed as we worked together to create professional development opportunities. They felt valued. Their ideas were worthy of consideration and their input was used for planning all school based professional development. During professional development time, they were the presenters, the facilitators of conversation, and they gathered feedback to help critique the professional development on feedback forms that they had created. When we met again, we disaggregated the information to help us move forward and do a better job. I believe that being part of the creative process that drives our school changed the way these teachers viewed not only professional development, but also the way they viewed their roles within the school. They believed that their input was valued and that their leadership helped us move in a positive, creative way toward the goals we had decided on together.

Insider Conducting Interviews

Although there was some concern about doing this research at my own school, the IRB protocol accepted by the university eliminated or reduced those concerns. The questions asked of my staff did not reflect on their ability as teachers or as school employees. The questions did, however, give them an opportunity to voice their opinions

and concerns about the direction of education. They also used the face-to-face interviews as an opportunity to talk about the positive direction in which they thought our school was moving. They liked the way I had changed the professional development process and how their input was used to determine the school based professional development. I liked hearing this since I clearly remember having to persuade them to look at changes we could sustain as a school and then plan professional development around those needs (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Hargreaves, Earl, Moore & Manning, 2001, The Wallace Foundation, 2006).

They did not have to take time to explain specific situations to me or to defend their ideas. They recognized that I was part of the school culture and so were they. I observed that they were also relaxed during the interviews (Stake, 1996).

Most teachers mentioned their dislike of "district personnel." They seemed to think that people outside of out school did not realize the work they did. They also believed that they were not given the respect they earned.

Teachers were concerned that their comments could get me "in trouble." They made a clear distinction between the district management (which they saw as not being helpful and just piling on more work) and the school administration. They thought we worked well together and that they were listened to and respected.

Some interviewees were worried that their answers might not have been "good enough" for my research. They volunteered to come back if I needed more information. After the recorder was turned off, most of them thought it had been a positive experience and stated that they had more to say than they thought they would. I think that most

teachers have a lot to contribute to the discussion about education but believe that those outside of the school do not seek out their expertise.

I do have a concern that there may have been a better way to ask for additional comments at the end of the oral interviews that may have resulted in some unsolicited ideas. It seemed as though the interview may have led interviewees into believing that I had made all necessary comments or asked all the essential questions. It might have been better to have mentioned during the introduction that additional comments would be welcomed, and perhaps expected, at the end of the interviews.

Suggestions for Future Research

This research could easily be replicated at another school. If the staff trusts a principal, it will be easier to get volunteers to interview (Angelle, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001). A second round of interviews may lead to more in-depth responses where the researcher could refine questions or even ask fewer questions.

It would be interesting to look at the differences in ability to change based on whether a teacher is elementary or secondary certified. It may also be valuable research that could lead to appropriate staffing at middle schools.

Further research could make use of two electronic questionnaires. I believe I would have received more responses if a first survey had made use of a Likert-type scale, allowing staff member to work through questions in a more timely fashion. A second electronic protocol could ask the more complex questions that I used in the electronic questionnaire for this research.

The amount of data that school staff now has to sift through is overwhelming. It would be interesting to look at the data a school collects; in addition to the data they are

given from federal, state and district sources (Kowal, Hassel & Hassel, 2009; Williams, Brine, Sprague & Sullivan, 2008). How much of that data is used by teachers to direct and change and inform instruction? Where do teachers find the time to sift through that data? How is the data shared at the school level? Is there a communication loop for the data between schools, districts and others (Normore, 2004; Marks & Printy, 2003)?

Future researchers should consider providing paper and pencil for interviewees. I believe that would help those who need to organize their thoughts before responding aloud.

Future Policy/Mandate Implications

Politicians who do not understand the environment within schools continue to ask for more positive and rapid changes from educators. These educators are willing to look at new ideas when they are given time to digest information and when they recognize that their feedback is valued by others (Brown & Spangler, 2006; Brown & Anfara, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Sarason, 1996).

Educators are also concerned about the widely held, underlying politically popular belief that changing test scores will solve all issues. Teachers believe the opposite to be true. Test scores are seen as merely one check on student retention of material. They may not be the best gauge of what the student has learned and what the student can do with that knowledge. They understand that they are accountable but are unsure as to how they should expect to be assessed on that accountability (Dutro & Valencia, 2004; Kowal, Hassel & Hassel, 2009).

Interviewees were delighted to be asked for their opinion. An overriding shared feeling from this staff was the positive feeling they had from being asked their opinion

and the understanding that what they were saying was being seen as important and valuable.

Although teachers believed that students are involved in the educational process, I see little evidence of that. In fact, one of the issues we are currently working on at our school is how to get students more involved in the business of their own education.

I would suggest that as those concerned with wanting to continue to make changes in schools and school cultures, it would be helpful to talk about the evolution of education rather than changing education. Teachers in this study believed that those who write the policies and mandates that direct and guide educational reform do not have the experience to know what is happening in the classroom. They want the world outside the classroom door to know about the journey they have taken before changing not only the journey's route, but the entire map. In the meantime, educators will continue the work they do so well.

This research has addressed the questions that I started with, but has left me with more questions to answer. While I concentrated this study on my school, I am hopeful that I will be able to continue to have conversations with peers in an effort to collaborate on the best ideas we can bring back to each school.

REFERENCES

Allen, L., Ostoff, E., Swanson, J., & White, P. (2005). *A delicate balance: District policies and classroom practice.* Chicago: Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform.

Amey, M. (2005). Leadership as learning: conceptualizing the process. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 29(*9-10), 689–704. doi:10.1080/10668920591006539

Andrews, P.G. (2008). Centering on students in the middle grade curriculum. Turning points 2000: Lessons learned. *Middle School Journal*, *40*(2)*,* 44-51.

Anfara, V. & Schmid, J. (2007). School transitions: Jeopardy or wheel of fortune? *Middle School Journal*, *39*(1), 60-67.

Angelle, P. (2008). Communities of practice promote shared learning for organizational success. *Middle School Journal***,** *39*(5), 52-58.

Arlestig, H. (2007). Principals' communication inside schools: A contribution to school improvement? *The Educational Forum, 71*, 262-273.

Augustine, C., Gonzalez, G., Ikemoto, G., Russell, J., Zellman, G., Constant, L., Armstrong, J., & Dembosky, J. (2009). Improving school leadership. The promise of cohesive leadership systems. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/

Barth, R. (May, 2002). The culture builder. *Educational Leadership, (59)8, 6-11.*

Beachum, F., & Dentith, A. (2004). Teacher leaders creating cultures of school renewal and transformation. *Educational Forum, 68*(3), 279-286. doi:10.1080/00131720408984639

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, mind, and voice. New York: Basic Books.

Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge.* New York: Harper & Row.

Brighton, C. M., & Hertberg, H. L. (2004). Reconstructing the vision: Teachers' responses to the invitation to change. *Research in Middle Level Education Online, 27*(2). Retrieved from

http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/RMLEOnline/tabid/101/Default.aspx

Brown, C., & Spangler, D. (2006). Creating sustainable reform: Five urban districts implement models for continuous improvement and lasting change. *The School Administrator, 8*(63), 18-22.

Brown, K., & Anfara, V. (2003) Paving the way for change: Visionary leadership in action at the middle level. *NASSP Bulletin, 87*(635), 16-34. doi:10.1177/019263650308763503

Bryk, A. & Schneider, B. (2002). Trust in schools: a core resource for improvement. Retrieved from http://cgitz.com/Trust%20in%20Schools.pdf

Burke, P. (2003) Organizational learning a necessity for sharing and distributing leadership to bring about real change for teachers and students: one principal's story. Paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of American Educational Research Association in April, 2003. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED481091)

Business-Higher Education Forum (January, 2005) A commitment to America's future: responding to the crisis in mathematics & science education. Retrieved from www.bhef.com/publications/pubs.asp

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989). *Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century.* New York: Carnegie Corporation.

Casavant, M. & Cherkowski, S. (April, 2001) Effective Leadership: Bringing mentoring And creativity to the Principalship. *NASSP Bulletin* 85(624): 71-81. doi:10.1177/019263650108562409

Caskey, M. (2009). Indicators of middle school implementation: how do Kentucky's schools to watch measure up? *(32)*6 Retrieved from *Research in middle level education online*

Center on Educational Policy (April 2009). *Expanding Restructuring and Taking on High Schools: An NCLB Follow-up Report in Michigan.* Washington, D.C.

Cicchinelli, L., Dean, C., Calvin, M., Goodwin, B., & Parsley, D. (2006). Success in Sight: A Comprehensive Approach to School Improvement. Retrieved from www.mcrel.org

Cicchinelli, L., Dean, C., Calvin, M., Goodwin, B., & Parsley, D. (2006). Success in Sight: A Comprehensive Approach to School Improvement. Retrieved from www.mcrel.org

Creswell, J. W. (1990). *Qualitative inquiry and research design.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Cusick, P. & Borman, J. (2002). Reform of and by the system: a case study of a state's effort at curricular and systemic reform. Retrieved from http://www.tcrecord.org doi:10.1111/1467-9620.00178

Deal, T. E., & K. D. Peterson. 1999. *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dietz, S**.** (2010). How Many Schools Have Not Made Adequate Yearly Progress Under

the No Child Left Behind Act? Retrieved from http://www.cep-dc.org/Center on

Educational Policy

Dufour, R. (September, 2007). Professional Learning Communities: A Bandwagon, an

Idea Worth Considering, or Our Best Hope for High Levels of Learning? Middle

School Journal**.** *39*(1), 4-8.

Dufour, R., Dufour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing. A handbook for*

Professional Learning Communities at Work. Bloomington, Indiana: Solution Tree

Press.

Dutro, E. & Valencia, S. (2004) The relationship between state and district content

standards: issues of alignment, influence and utility. *Education Policy Analysis*

Archives (*12*) n45.

Education Commission of the States. (2000). Building on Progress: How ready are states

to implement President Bush's educational plan? A status report by the Education

Commission of the States 2000-01-00. Denver, CO: ECS.

Elmore, R. & Fuhrman, S. (2001). *Holding schools accountable: is it working?* Phi Delta

Kappan *83*(1), 67-72. Retrieved from www.kappanmagazine.org

Feemster, R. Making state accountability count. How New Mexico supports principals

with data tools. University of Washington, commissioned by The Wallace

Foundation, 2007.   Retrieved from www.wallacefoundation.org.

Felner, R., & Jackson, A. (1997).   *The impact of school reform for the middle years:*

Longitudinal study of a network engaged in turning-based on comprehensive

school transformation. Phi Delta Kappan. 78(7). Retrieved from *Education Research Complete*

Firestone, W. A., & Louis, K. S. (1999). Schools as cultures. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. *39*(3), 370-*397.*

Fisher, D. (2000). So many initiatives, so little time: Sustaining change in an urban high school. *NASSP Bulletin 84 (620): 89-93.* doi:10.1177/019263650008462011

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership and sustainability: System thinkers in action*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press

Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. (1996). *What's worth fighting for in your school?* Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces.* London: The Falmer Press.

Fullan, M. (1999) *Change forces: The Sequel*, London: Falmer Press.

Fullan, M. (2001) *Leading in a culture of change* (San Francisco, CA   Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2002), The role of leadership in the promotion of knowledge management in schools. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and practice, 8*(¾), 409-419.

Geijsel, F., Meijers, F. & Wardekker, W. (December, 2007), Leading the process of reculturing: Roles and actions of school leaders. *The Australian Educational Researcher,* 34*(3)*, 135-162. doi:10.1007/BF03216870

George, P. (2009) Special Series: Part 2. Renewing the middle school: The early success

      of middle school education. *Middle School Journal*, 41*(2)*, 51-55.

George, P. (2009) Renewing the middle school: The early success of middle school

      education. *Middle School Journal*, *41(1)*, *4*-9.

Gitomer, D. H. (2007). Teacher quality in a changing policy landscape: improvements in

      the teacher pool. Princeton: N.J. Educational Testing Service.

Glesne, C. & Peshkin, A. (1992), *Becoming qualitative researchers: an introduction.*

      White Plains, NY: Longman.

Graham, P. A. (2005). *Schooling America: How the public schools meet the nation's*

      changing needs. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Grubb, W. N. & Flessa, J. ((October, 2006). "A job too big for one": Multiple principals

      and other nontraditional approaches to school leadership. *Educational*

      Administration Quarterly. 42(4), 518-550.

      doi:10.1177/0013161X06290641

Gruenert, S. (2005). Correlations of collaborative school cultures with student

      achievement. *NAASP Bulletin 89*(645), 43-55.

      doi:10.1177/019263650508964504

Hargreaves, A, Earl, L., Moore, S., & Manning, S. (2001). *Learning to change*. San

      Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

Hickman, W., Moore, L., & Torek, T**.** (2008) Voluntary teacher leadership. Key to

      sustainable improvement. *Principal Leadership.* 30-33. Retrieved from NASSP.org

Hill, P.T., Pierce, L.C., Guthrie, J. W. (1997). Reinventing public education: How

   contracting can transform America's schools. Rand Corporation. Chicago:

   University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from http://books.google.com/books

Jackson, A. (2009). New middle schools for new futures. *Middle School Journal. 40*(5),

   6-10.

Johnson, J. A mission of the heart. What does it take to transform a school? New York,

   October, 2007. Retrieved from http://www.wallacefoundation.org

Kelehear, Z. (2003). Mentoring the organization: Helping principals

   bring schools to higher levels of effectiveness. *NASSP Bulletin. 87*(637), 35-47.

   doi: 10.1177/01963650308763704

Keynes, J. M. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved May 23, 2010, from BrainyQuote.com

   Web site: http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/johnmaynar385471.html

Kowal, J., Hassel, E., & Bryan C. Hassel, B. (2009). Successful school turnarounds. Seven

   steps for district leaders. *The Center for Comprehensive School Reform.*   Retrieved

   from http://www.centerforcsri.org

Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research*

   interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Lambert, L. (2003). Leadership redefined: an evocative context for teacher leadership.

   *School Leadership & Management.   23(*4), 421–430.

   doi:10.1080/1363243032000150953

Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational Administration*

   Quarterly. 30*(4)*, 498.

   doi:10.1177/0013161X94030004006

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999). The relative effects of principal and teacher sources of

    leadership on student engagement with school. *Educational Administration*

    Quarterly. *35*(5), 370-*397.*

    doi:10.1177/0013161X99355002

Leithwood, K. & Jantzi, D. (1999). Transformational school leadership effects: a

    replication. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. 10(4), 451–479.

    doi:10.1076/sesi.10.4.451.3495

Leithwood, K.A, Louis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership*

    influences student learning. New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation.

Leithwood, K., Tomlinson, D., & Genge, M. (1996). Transformational school leadership.

    School Effectiveness and School Improvement. (10)4, 451–479.

    doi:10.1076/sesi.10.4.451.3495

Lounsbury, J. (2009) Deferred but not deterred: A middle school manifesto. *Middle*

    School Journal.   40(5)*,* 31-36.

Lunenburg, F. & Ornstein, A. (2004). *Educational administration concepts and practices.*

    (4th ed.) Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Marks, H. & Printy, S. (2003). Principal leadership and school performance: an

    integration of transformational and instructional leadership. *Educational*

    Administration Quarterly. *39(*3), 370-397.

    doi: 10.1177/0013161X03253412

Marks, H. and Louis, K. (1999). Teacher empowerment and the capacity for organizational

    learning. Educational Administration Quarterly. *35*(5), 707-750.

    doi:10.1177/00131619921968806

Marzano, R.J. (2003) What *works in schools: Translating research into action*.

Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San

Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezzacappa, D.; Holland, H.; Willen, L,; Colvin, R.; Feemster, R. Improving Leadership

for Learning: Stories from the Field. University of Washington, commissioned by

The Wallace Foundation, May, 2008. Retrieved from www.wallacefoundation.org.

Miller, N. (2002). Insider change leadership in schools. *International Journal of*

Leadership in Education, 5(4), 343 -360.

Morrissey, M. S. (2000). *Professional learning communities: An ongoing exploration*.

Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Retrieved from

http://www.sedl.org/pubs/change45/plc-ongoing.pdf

Moving into action: Middle level education in New Mexico. A report for the State Board

of Education and a call for action from the Middle Level Advisory Committee.

(1991).

Murphy, J., Elliott, S., Goldring, E., & Porter, A. learning-centered leadership: A

conceptual foundation. Report prepared for the Wallace Foundation Grant on

Leadership Assessment, August 2006. Retrieved from

http://www.wallacefoundation.org

National Middle School Association. (2003). *This we believe: Successful schools for young*

adolescents. Westerville, OH: Author.

National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. (2007). *What we know about school leadership.* Nottingham, NCSL. Retrieved from www.ncsl.org.uk/publications

New Mexico Framework for Professional Development. (n.d.). Retrieved from PED website www.ped.state.nm.us

New Mexico Public Education Department (April, 2009) Education Initiatives/Making Schools Work: Foundations for Success Retrieved from PED website (www.ped.state.nm.us) December 30, 2009.

New Mexico Public Education Department (July 13, 2007). A Strategic Action Plan for Advancing Math and Science Education in New Mexico 2007-2010. Retrieved from www.ped.state.nm.us

New Mexico Public Education Department. (October 30, 2011). Quarterly report. Key performance measures fiscal year 2012. Retrieved from www.ped.state.nm.us

New Mexico Public Education Department. NMPED Strategic Plan 2011. Retrieved from www.ped.state.nm.us

Normore, A. H. (2004). Lester B. Pearson Elementary School: first year on a journey with the change process. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership* 7(3), 35. doi:10.1177/155545890400700306

O'Neill, H. M. (1981). *Turnaround strategies in the commercial banking industry*. . In Murphy, J., Elliott, S., Goldring, E., & Porter, A. learning-centered leadership: a conceptual foundation. Report prepared for the 2006 Wallace Foundation Grant on Leadership Assessment.

Office of Educational Accountability Reform Update New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, Issue 10 June 2009

Office of Educational Accountability Reform Update New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration, Issue 9 May 2008

Owens, R. (2004). *Organizational behavior in education. (8th ed.).* Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Petzko, V., Clark, D., Valentine, J., Hackmann, D., Nori, J., Lucas, S. (June 2002). Leaders and leadership in middle level schools. *NASSP Bulletin.* 86(631), 3-15. doi: 10.1177/019263650208663204

Portin, B., Schneider, P., DeArmond, M., & Gundlach, L (September, 2003). Making sense of leading schools. A Study of the School Principalship. A Report Prepared under a Grant from The Wallace Foundation to the Center on Reinventing Public Education Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

Public Impact (2008). School turnaround leaders: Competencies for success. Retrieved from http://www.publicimpact.com/turnaroundcompetencies.php

Public law print of PL 107-110, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html

Public Schools. (2009). Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Letter.

Public Schools. (2008). *Celebrate the 8!* (Handout from Administrators' Conference on Education).

Public Schools. (2007, October 26). District Administrator's Meeting Powerpoint

Public Schools. (2009, August 6-7). Administrators' Conference on Education.

Public Schools. (Multiple dates). Friday Email for Administrators.

Public Schools Budget Meetings. (Multiple dates).

Randolph, L. (2006). Leadership through partnership: a collaborative, strengths-based
approach to strategic planning. Online Submission, Paper presented at the
Academy of Human Resource Development International Conference (AHRD)
(Columbus, OH, Feb 22-26, 2006) p1081-1088 (Symp. 51-2). Retrieved on from
ERIC database (ED492801)

Rhodes, L. (1990). Beyond your beliefs: Quantum leaps toward quality schools. *School
Administrator. 47*(11), 23-26. Retrieved from ERIC database (EJ418139)

RTI Taskforce. *Response to Intervention* (February 1, 2008). Powerpoint Notes from
Kathy Alexander

Sarason, S. (1996). *Revisiting "the culture of the school and the problem of change"*. New
York: Teachers College Press.

Scherz, J. (2004). *Harnessing the power of resistance: a guide for educators*. New York:
Eye on Education.

Schram, T. H. (2006). *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research (2nd ed.).* Upper
Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Senge P., A. Kleiner, C. Roberts, R. Ross, G. Roth, and B. Smith. 1999. *The dance of
change: The challenge to sustaining momentum in learning organizations.* New
York: Currency/Doubleday.

Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline.* New York: Doubleday.

Senge, P. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization.*
New York: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2005). The virtues of leadership. *The Educational Forum*.

    69(2), 112-123.

    doi: 10.1080/00131720508984675

Shapiro, A. & Wade, B. Changing the culture of a school: A supervisory strategy,

    restructuring a dysfunctional junior high school into a model middle school. Paper

    presented at the annual meeting of the council of professors of Instructional

    Supervision November 5, 1994. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED383087)

Slatter, S. (1984). *Corporate recovery: A guide to turnaround management*. . In Murphy,

    J., Elliott, S., Goldring, E., & Porter, A. (Eds.) Learning-centered leadership: A

    conceptual foundation. Report prepared for the Wallace Foundation Grant on

    Leadership Assessment, August 2006.

Sommers, D. (April, 2009). Information leadership. . . leading with the end in mind.

    Techniques. Retrieved from http://www.acteonline.org

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications,

    Inc.

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.

    doi: 10.1007/s10833-006-0001-8

Strahan, D. & Hedt, M. (2009)   Teaching and teaming more responsively: Case studies in

    professional growth at the middle level. *Research in Middle Level Education*

    Online, 32(8), 1-14. Retrieved from

    http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/RMLEOnline/tabid/101/Default.aspx

Strahan, D., Cooper, J., & Ward, M. (2001) Middle school reform through data and

    dialogue. *Evaluation Review. 25*(1), 72-99.

    doi:10.1177/0193841X0102500104

Tesch, R. (May 1, 1990) Qualitative *research: Analysis types and software*. Routledge

    Falmer: Abingdon, Oxon.

The nation's report card: Mathematics 2005. NCES 2006-453 (Washington, D.C.:

    October, 2005); *The Nation's Report Card: Trial Urban District Assessment*

    Mathematics, 2005, NCES 2006-457r (Washington, D.C.: February 2006).

The Nation's Report Card: Trial Urban District Assessment Reading, 2005. NCES 2006-

    455r (Washington, D.C.: February 2006).

The Wallace Foundation as part of their Leaders Count initiative (2006). Retrieved from

    www.wallacefoundation.org.

The Wallace Foundation. (2006*). Leadership for learning: Making the connections among*

    state, district and school policies and practices. New York. Retrieved from

    www.wallacefoundation.org

Timperley, H (2005). Instructional leadership challenges: The case of using student

    achievement information for instructional improvement. *Leadership and Policy in*

    Schools. 4(1), 3–22.

    doi:10.1080/15700760590924591

Tushman, M. L., & Romanelli, E. (1985). Organizational evolution: A metamorphosis

    model of convergence and reorientation. In Murphy, J., Elliott, S., Goldring, E., &

    Porter (Eds.). A learning-centered leadership: A conceptual foundation. Report

prepared for the Wallace Foundation Grant on Leadership Assessment, August 2006.

Ubben, G.C., Hughes, L.W., & Norris, C. J. (2004) The *principal: Creative leadership for excellence in schools.* Boston: Pearson

United States Government. (2007). Accountability Office Report to congressional requestors, September 2007 NCLB Education should clarify guidance and address potential compliance issues for schools in corrective action and restructuring status GAO-07-1035 Schools in Corrective Action and Restructuring.

U.S. Department of Education. (2010). Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, *ESEA Blueprint for Reform,* Washington, D.C. Retrieved on May 29, 2010 from http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/.

Virtue, D. (2009). The best things in life-and education-are free. *Middle School Journal***.** *41*(1), 3.

Wesson, l & Kudlacz, J. (2000). Collaboration for change. *Principal Leadership. 11,* 50-53. Retrieved from NAASP.org

Wheatley, M. J. 1994. *Leadership and the new science: Learning about organization from an orderly universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Wheelock, A. (September: 1995). Standards-based reform what does it mean for the middle grades? The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. United States Department of Education Publication.

Williams, R., Brine, K., Sprague, C., Sullivan, G. (2008). Professional learning communities: developing a school-level readiness instrument. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy. 74,* 1-17.

Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. (Expanded 2nd ed.).

    Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Williamson, R. & McElrath, M. (2003). Reshaping the middle school: Engaging parents

    and communities in the work. Paper presented at the National Councils of the

    Professors of Educational Administration Conference Within a Conference of the

    Annual of the American Association of School Administrators on February 21,

    2003. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED477190)

Woodard, P. (2008). *Task Force and AYP training for Principals.*

Wyatt-Smith, C., Bridges, S., Hedemann, M., & Neville, M. (December, 2008). Designing

    professional learning for effecting change: Partnerships for local and system.   *The*

    Australian Educational Researcher. 35 (3), 1-20.

Yammarino, F.J., Dubinsky, A.J., & Spangler, W.D. (1998). Transformational and

    Contingent reward leadership: Individual, dyad, and group level of analysis. *The*

    Leadership Quarterly, 9(1), 27-54.

    doi: 10.1016/S1048-983(98)90008-X

Yates, L. & Holt, B. (April, 2009). "Under pressure I fall back to being a

    teacher…"Confronting contending desires for schooling and teaching in a middle

    school reform project. *The Australian Educational Researcher.* 36(1), 27-42.

    doi:10.1007/BF03216890

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research. Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks,

    CA: Sage.

Yost, D., Vogel, R. & Rosenberg, M. (2009). Transitioning from teacher to instructional

    leader. *Middle School Journal***.** *40*(3), 20-27.

Young, M., Petersen, G., & Short, P. (2002). The complexity of substantive reform: a call
for interdependence among key stakeholders. *Educational Administration
Quarterly, 38*(2), 137-175.
doi:10.1177/0013161X02038002004

Youngs, P. & King, M. (2002). Principal leadership for professional development to build
school capacity. *Educational Administration Quarterly. 38*(5), 643-670.
doi:10.1177/0013161X02239642

Yukl, G. (2002). *Leadership in organizations* (5th ed.) In Murphy, J., Elliott, S., Goldring,
E., & Porter, A. Learning-centered leadership: A conceptual foundation. Report
prepared for the Wallace Foundation Grant on Leadership Assessment, August
2006.

Zmuda, A., Kuklis, R., & Kline, E. (2004). *Transforming schools: Creating a culture of
continuous improvement.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and
Curriculum Development.

Zimbalist, R. (2001). *The dynamics of organizational change: A study of how California's
distinguished schools use change to implement positive new outcomes. (*Doctoral
Dissertation) Retrieved from ERIC database (ED471368)

Zimmerman, J, (9-23-2003). School restructuring: Fitting the pieces together. Retrieved
from ERIC database (ED482351)

Zimmerman, J. (2004). Leading organizational change is like climbing a mountain. *The
Educational Forum. 68*(3), 234-242.
doi:10.1080/00131720408984635

Zinth, J. (2009) Middle Grades. The progress of education reform. Education Commission

of the States. *10(*4) 1-6. Retrieved from ERIC database (ED506951)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ELECTRONIC QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

1. How would you describe the differences between "then" and "now"? Then would be defined as August 2008. If you were not here then, please describe the difference between when you started at our school and now?

2. What kinds of data are important? What kinds of data are useful? Why do you think this?

3. Describe the strengths you bring to the discussion about students, learning and teaching?

4. How did those strengths change this school year? What brought about the most change? Why?

5. How are the changes viewed? Would you say the changes are viewed equally by teachers, parents, students, the community, the district? Why or why not?

APPENDIX B

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How would you describe the differences between "then" and "now"? Then
    would be defined as August 2008. If you were not here then, please describe
    the difference between when you started at our school and now?

2. What do we need to feel safe with change?

3. What kinds of data are important? What kinds of data are useful? Why do you
    think this? How do you use data to change teaching and learning?

4. Describe the strengths you have that you believe need to become "norms" for
    our staff.

5. What do you believe about middle school students?

6. What do you believe about our school?

7. How are our students involved in this process?

8. How do we share what we know?

9. How are the changes viewed? Would you say the changes are viewed equally
    by teachers, parents, students, the community, the district? Why or why not?

10. What do you see as next steps? How can you affect those steps?

APPENDIX C

CODED SAMPLE OF ELECTRONIC SURVEY

	Person Number 7
How would you describe the differences between "then" and "now"? "Then" would be defined as August 2008. If you were not working at _____ Middle School "then", please describe the differences between when you started and now.	Major decisions are made in IC by a committe which reflects teacher views. Bottom up decisions. Teachers are meeting in peer groups to plan for better educational and behavioral outcome of students. In Advisory students are asked to think how school/ education will effect what they want to do in life. How to set short and long term goals. (Making school more relevant for each individual student)
What kinds of data are important in schools? What kinds of data are useful in schools? Why do you think this?	Teachers need to be aware of the cultural differences and cultural values of their community. Teachers need to be able to teach to different learning styles and to be accepting of differing values. Each student needs to feel secure in the learning environment.
What kinds of data are important for you? What kinds of data are useful for you? Why do you think this?	Data important and useful to me is best practice information from other teachers. With this information, I can become a more effective teacher.
Describe the strengths you bring to discussions about students, learning, and teaching.	My personal educational background and classroom teaching experiences.
How did those strengths that you described in the previous question change over the past school year? What brought about the most change? Why?	I think that I am always critically analyizing, problem solving, trying to reach each student so that they are challenged and love learning. Has this goal changed over the past school year...no. I think that in an environment where I am valued, treated as a professional, and have a voice in the general education process, I am more focused on becoming the best I can be.
How do you view the changes in education that have taken place over the past ten years? Would you say teachers, parents, students, the community, and the district have viewed those changes equally? Why or why not?	I do believe that society has been changing; most children are coming from blended families or single parents. There are so many negative outside factors that are impacting the lives of children. The standards of doing your best, work ethics may not be taught to children. In general, the educational system continues to feel the void and tries to provide for children way beyond academic needs. _____ has some wonderful, caring students. I think that the parents are supportive of both

	their student and of [ ] I do not think that parents can see the changes in education that have occured over the past ten years. The parents have their personal school experiences when they were young, but they are not exposed to the changes in education as teachers have.
How has restructuring affected your instruction? How do you think restructuring has affected instruction at [ ]?	The PLC has given me a better insight into the community. IC gives teachers a voice, therefore, teachers are treated as competent in their profession. I think that goes back into the classroom and positively affects instruction.
How do you contribute to the creation of the learning environment at [ ]?	I am part of the positive learning environment. I want to share the love of learning.
How has accountability helped you change your practice?	Accountability has made me analyze more what and how I teach. It has made me a better teacher.
Please select one:	I have a bachelor's degree and at least one master's degree.
How many years have you worked in education at any level, in any position, or at any school?	20+ years
How many years have you worked at [ ] Middle School?	6-12 years

APPENDIX D

CODED SAMPLE OF ORAL INTERVIEW

Interview #1

R. The difference between then and now. And in this case I'm referring to 2008 so we're really looking at the last three years at [ ]. So I'd really like I know some of the differences you see at our school within the last three years.

S. I think there's better leadership of both students and faculty in knowing what the expectations are and in terms of actual instruction. I think that teachers have done their best to keep up with the directives about differentiating instruction and incorporating strategies. For example: the race strategy. I think the implementation of an instructional coach to help guide teachers with those kinds of things has been really helpful. So those are the positives. I feel like on the negative side, has been the increasing kind of suffocation from the federal, state and district levels of teachers' freedom to be creative in their teaching by handing down directives that I don't really believe have children's best interests at heart. It's more about numbers and test scores and legalities and I just kind of think it's sucking the life out of teaching. The ever increasing mandated testing protocols and policies I think has steered education in the wrong direction.

R. You segued into the next question beautifully because really looking at the policies and mandates that have affected you view education in general, how did you change what you did based on these policies and mandates in working with kids?

S. I had the luxury as in the fact of an SLP, a speech language pathologist; I wasn't bound to a set curriculum for my program. My program [ ] and that provided me much more leeway in deciding how I wanted to support that so a lot of the mandates didn't directly impact me. But I saw how they directly impacted students and their classroom settings and I feel that the emphasis is in having students being able to name the standard on which they're working to be aware that another test is coming around the bend in terms of DBA tests or SBA tests or whatever acronym they put in front of us at any given time. And I don't think we need to be putting that onus on students; I think it sends the wrong message about what school is about and what learning is about and it doesn't really address motivation and the passion and desire to learn. It becomes robotic.

R. There have been a lot of changes. What do we and you need to feel safe with change? Because everything that you're describing is change, change, change. Some is good, some is not. So how do we build in safety? What do we need?

S. I do think the creation of something like the Professional Learning Communities, either the form they're currently in or an evolution of that concept, is helpful. Anything that lets teachers work together constructively because I think in the environment we have currently in education it would be easy for teachers, often they're in a classroom with students all day so it's kind of isolated to begin with. That's kind of the paradigm of teachers through the ages is you're with kids all day and you don't get to talk with adults nearly as much as you need to so when this kind of change is coming down the pike it would be easy to get increasingly frustrated and to get discouraged and for morale to really lag and so all the more important for teachers to have a venue to do more than just vent but to really feel like they have some kind of control in directing what's happening.

R. What kinds of data would you say are important or useful and why? And a second part of that question is how do you use data to inform your instruction and to change what you do also?

S. Data is not my strength but it's been good for me to really think carefully about data now that that's being emphasized because data does have a place in education. I think that data is helpful when it motivates students and I pretty much think that all other data is either not useful or can either be hurtful to the process of teaching. I think that should always be the litmus test. Is it making students want to come to school, want to learn more, get excited about the content and

that should decide. And for myself, the data I find useful or that I have tried to use in the last few years is the type you can just see directly like are we making progress? But it needs to be in areas that they know or feel or believe to be important.

R. So you would see it at student directed at teacher guided?

S. Yes, exactly. That there has been discussion with kids about what would you like to get better at, what do you think it would be important to improve in and why, what will that do for you 5 years down the line, 10 years down the line, that kind of thing.

R. Describe the strengths that you have that you think would be a good thing to become norms for a staff, for our staff, for staff members in general?

S. My personal strengths in working in a school setting I believe is connecting with kids. I believe I'm good at creating a good environment that draws students in and makes them wants to be there and makes them that I'm excited about learning, that I like being here and then there's some contagion around that so then they come in and they want to be there. And then when they're in there, just how I relate to kids. That I look at them as whole people; I don't look at them as my speech and language students. I want to know about them. I want to know what they're good at in life, what they want to do someday, what frustrates them, what they wish people knew about them.

R. What do you believe about middle school students?

S. I think middle school students are hilarious. I think they're fascinating. I don't think there's any other time in life when human beings are so complex as middle school. This whole half child half adult thing is really interesting and I absolutely love the analogy of middle school students being like the metamorphosis of in the chrysalis from the caterpillar to the butterfly; we see the caterpillar, that's the child and we see the butterfly and that's like the adult but I heard that if you cut open a cocoon during the metamorphosis what you'll find inside is this goopy weird stuff that doesn't even look like a creature. You don't see the caterpillar in it or the butterfly in it; it's this really different kind of substance in it and I kind of think that's the way middle school students are in that sometimes you can't identify really what they're about but they're fascinating and in that sense I have such a heart for them. Because, poor things, I think they know that they're in that weird, goopy metamorphosis stage and they don't really know what to make of it and they're just trying to do the best they can. So people who have a heart for that need to be working with them so that they can reassure them that it's okay to be goopy and you're pretty cool even goopy and hang in there because you won't be goopy forever.

R. What do you believe about our school?

S. I believe that our school, not unlike any other school, is rapidly changing in terms of demographics and I think that recognizing that and embracing that is part of the key to keeping it a good school or making it a better school rather than bucking that trend and pretending it's more homogenous like it would have been maybe 20 years ago or fifteen years ago. I think that ☐ has a lot of potential and I think it's starting to realize that potential. The physical plant has gone through and incredible metamorphosis in the last 3 or 4 years and looks so much better and communicates a pride just to the eye when you drive up when you walk in that wasn't there before which is great. It's great for the community to see and great for parents to see and really good for parents and teachers to feel good about the place they spend their time everyday. And I think we have some amazing students which is why I get distressed when I feel like too much time and energy is being put into mandated things that really don't serve a useful purpose when we could be putting out time and energy even more into developing exciting programs to keep kids really motivated and give them a lot of ownership of what their education is about; both academic education but also social education and service education and the broader scope of education that's not just reading, writing and math.

R. Which is what we do. So how are our students involved in this process?

S. Well, obviously we have student council. That's a good start. And kids know about student council and I think the [   ] student body is aware of only of the existence of their student council but that their student council really is a representative body and plans some really cool things for them. I think there are a lot of teachers on staff who invite student input into what the mission of that classroom or the vision of that classroom can be and how are we going to track that and see how we're doing with that. So there is a lot of new blood in terms of the teacher pool at the school. There's been a lot of turnover and now we have a lot of new younger teachers with an openness toward that who aren't as married to traditional teaching. So that's benefitting the students and the students are getting to take more ownership because of that.

R. And talking about their education.

S. Yes.

R. How do we share what we know?

S. With students or with anyone?

R. With anyone. You have "X" amount of knowledge. How do you share it with fellow staff members, the community…?

S. I've been able to do a little bit through in-services or I know if I'd still been here this year I would have used those Lunch and Learns, those are such a great concept and the times that we've gotten to do it already I think have really benefitted staff. I think that's a great way to share knowledge in little snippets that people can absorb and take or use right away. I think just encouraging, well obviously the PLC's. I know some of the PLC's look more specifically at specific students, but I know there are also times when some of the PLC's can just share what different teachers are doing in their classrooms. I think even in just the teacher's lounge if sometimes people use that time to share what they're excited about with their teaching; what's working and new ideas, that's really helpful.

R. How are the changes viewed? Are they viewed equally by teachers, parents, students, the community, the district? Why? Why not?

S. I think it's viewed differently by each of those groups. I believe that students are viewing the changes as just something they have to do because students tend to do that. The students and the people around them are telling them what to do especially when you're just in middle school. So it's just inevitable, change, whatever, tell us what to do and we'll either do it or we won't. I think teachers in general are viewing a lot of the changes as punitive and rightly so because a lot of them are and I think that they're viewing a lot of the changes as morale depleting and again, rightly so. And I think the community views the changes as, I think in general the community is hopeful that the changes will result in a lower drop-out rate and a higher literacy rate but I think the community is starting to become skeptical and I think they're starting to see those changes for what they are; that a lot of it is just kind of this façade handed down by people who don't really know education and it's not necessarily going to result in kids being elevated to the level it was touted as being able to do.

R. What do you see as the next steps? If we want to create this positive, creative learning environment, where do we need to go? There are so many things outside of our ability to change so we do answer to others but what kind of steps could we be taking?

S. I think we have directives to do things like post standards in the classrooms and talk to kids and this is just kind of an example. So I go into some classrooms and the way it's implemented is it's they're doing what they've been told to do by the district, by the state or whatever, and that has to be posted and if someone walks off the street, they should be able to walk up to a kid and say what standard are you working on and the kid should be able to say it. I think that what we can do is we

know we have to post the standards but what we can do is figure out creative ways to engage kids in that so it doesn't just feel by the book, that we're not just checking that off the checklist; yes I have them posted, yes I told the kids what standard we're working on right now. We use our creativity because teaching is a creative profession a lot of the complaints about the directives have been that it's been taking away teacher's ability to be creative. Well let's just put our creativity to use in a new way. Let's use it to take those directives and then play with them so that kids kind of see that, okay yeah, that's a standard and that's kind of boring, but my teacher told me that, whatever. So I just think we need to take our creative abilities and take what's being handed to us that's very dry and just counter that somehow. Kind of beat the system, in other words. We'll do what they're telling us to do but we're going to use our creativity to make it be good for kids.

R. Based on the kinds of questions I've been asking you and the study that's based on change in middle school is there anything else you want to add because these questions certainly can't cover the entire topic. But something you wished you'd been asked?

S. My think is all about student motivation. I'm just thinking wouldn't it be cool to get students somehow engaged in communicating with Washington, with Santa Fe, with the superintendent of [   ] about what works for them and what doesn't work for them for their learning. We go ahead and start equipping them to, we're teaching them advocacy skills, which is a perfectly legitimate thing to be teaching in school but we're channeling some of that advocacy work to try to communicate through kids back to the policy makers what is and isn't working.

R. In my day we would have called that citizenship.

S. Yes exactly. Because I don't think that the policy makers have been really listening to teachers and I don't think that they are going to be listening to teachers. Partly because they think teachers just have their own agenda and they're out to just protect their jobs or to protect their old way of life so they're not going to really listen to teachers. But some well thought out communications from students I think could speak to them. I think they might hear it.

R. Thank you so much.

S. You're welcome.

END OF TAPE

APPENDIX E

EXPLANATION OF STUDY AND CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

The University of New Mexico
Consent to Participate in Research
A Case Study of Reluctant Change at a Middle School
07/02/2011

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by Kathy Alexander, who is the Principal Investigator. This research is studying the connection between teacher understanding of restructuring and the policies and mandates that affect that restructuring. It will also study what teachers believe will lead to a positive, creative school culture.

This study is being conducted to answer the following research questions. How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring? What are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies? What are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment? With the rapid changes being faced by schools, it is important for school educators to understand what mandates and policies led to the changes teachers in restructuring schools face each day. There does not seem to be one prescribed method for changing the professional culture to work positively for all stakeholders. This study will give insight to the changes and creative ways one middle school met the challenges of restructuring.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you teach in a middle school and work with middle school students. This form will explain the research study, and will also explain the possible risks as well as the possible benefits to you. I encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. If you have any questions, please ask me.

What will happen if I decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:
☐ You will be scheduled at your convenience to participate in an interview not to exceed two hours in length.

 Interviews will be audio taped.
 You will be allowed to review and to amend your interview transcript.

How long will I be in this study?

Participation in this study will not exceed two hours over a period of no more than one to two sessions.

What are the risks or side effects of being in this study?

There are minimal risks associated with this study. I believe that it is possible that someone responding to the interview questions may feel uncomfortable in the event that she/he is not able to answer a question completely or feels that he or she is not knowledgeable enough about the topic. If at any point in the interview you do not wish to answer a question, you are not required to do so.

What are the benefits to being in this study?

A benefit to this study will be the chance to present personal ideas and understandings about what has changed middle school education and to give your opinion as to what could make the changes positive in nature.

What other choices do I have if I do not want to be in this study?

There is no penalty for not being included in this study. If you choose not to participate in the study, your job or work environment will not be affected.

How will my information be kept confidential?

I will take measures to protect the security of all your personal information, but I cannot guarantee confidentiality of all study data.
Information contained in your study records is used by study staff and, in some cases it will be shared with the sponsor of the study. The University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center Human Research Review Committee (HRRC) that oversees human subject research, and the Food and Drug Administration and/or other entities may be

3

permitted to access your records. There may be times when we are required by law to share your information. However, your name will not be used in any published reports about this study. A copy of this consent form will be kept in Kathy Alexander's office.

The transcript of your interview will be labeled with a pseudonym. Hard copies of the transcripts will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Principal Investigator's house. Electronic files with the transcripts will be named using your pseudonym and stored in a password protected computer to which only I have the password. Data will be stored for one year after my dissertation is accepted, and then will be destroyed and/or erased.

What are the costs of taking part in this study?
There is no cost associated with this study.

Will I be paid for taking part in this study?
There is no payment for taking part in this study.

How will I know if you learn something new that may change my mind about participating?
You will be informed of any significant new findings that become available during the course of the study, such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participating in the research or new alternatives to participation that might change your mind about participating.

Can I stop being in the study once I begin?
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point in this study.

Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?
If you have any questions, concerns or complaints at any time about the research study, Kathy Alexander will be glad to answer them at 505 821-6139 or you may contact Dr. Allison Borden at 505-277-1285.

4

Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research subject?

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may call the UNMHSC HRRC at (505) 272-1129. The HRRC is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human subjects. For more information, you may also access the HRRC website at http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/hrrc/.

5
CONSENT

You are making a decision whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you read the information provided (or the information was read to you). By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research subject. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this study. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

_____ _____ _____
Name of Adult Subject (print)   Signature of Adult Subject   Date

INVESTIGATOR SIGNATURE

I have explained the research to the subject and answered all of his/her questions. I believe that he/she understands the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

_____
Name of Investigator/ Research Team Member (type or print)

_____ _____
(Signature of Investigator/ Research Team Member) Date

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM AND EXPLANATION OF STUDY FOR ELECTRONIC SURVEY

HRPO #: 11-273 Page 1 of 1 Version: 07/20/11
APPROVED: 07/21/11 OFFICIAL USE ONLY EXPIRES: 07/20/12
The University of New Mexico Institutional Review Board (HRRC/MCIRB)
Informed Consent Cover Letter for Electronic Questionnaire

STUDY TITLE
A Case Study of Reluctant Change at a Middle School

I am a doctoral student, in the Educational Leadership Program in the College of Education at the University of New Mexico and I am conducting a research study. The purpose of the study is look at how staff at one middle school understands and works with policies and mandates that affect schools in restructuring. It will also look at processes that are used to build a positive, creative school environment. You are being asked to participate in this study because you teach and work with students at XXX Middle School.

Your participation will involve completing an anonymous short answer, electronic questionnaire.
This questionnaire should take about 30 minutes to complete. Your involvement in the study is voluntary and you may choose not to participate. There are no names or identifying information
associated with this electronic questionnaire. Although this questionnaire does not ask for any
identifying information, a breach of confidentiality is still a risk since it is possible that I might be able to identify respondents based on their detailed open-ended responses. None of the questions are personal and none of your responses could be used for evaluative purposes nor could they affect your job status in any way.

The survey includes questions such as: "How has restructuring changed your classroom? Your
school?" You can refuse to answer any of the questions at any time. There are no known risks in this study, but some individuals may experience discomfort when answering questions. All data will be kept for one year in a password protected Survey Monkey account and on a password protected computer. Only my dissertation advisor, Dr. Allison Borden, and I will view the responses to the questionnaire.

The findings from this project will provide information on how schools create positive changes

during restructuring. If published, results will be presented in summary form only.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (505)8216139.
If you have questions regarding your legal rights as a research subject, you may call the UNM Human Research Protections Office at (505) 2721129.
By selecting "yes" in response to the question below, you will be agreeing to participate in the above described research study.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Kathy Alexander Doctoral Student in Educational Leadership
University of New Mexico

APPENDIX G

RECRUITMENT LETTER

My name is Kathy Alexander. I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at the University of New Mexico (UNM). I am also the principal of xxxxx Middle School at this time. For my dissertation, I am conducting a qualitative research study about change in middle school. My three research questions are: How do middle school teachers understand school change in a school designated as restructuring? What are the connections among teachers' understandings of change and how they respond to or act on mandates and policies? What are the processes that will reshape school values and culture to build a positive, creative learning environment?

The IRB at UNM and at my school district have approved my research proposal and have granted me permission to contact you. Please consider volunteering to participate in this case study research.

There are two ways to participate in this study. You may complete an anonymous, online, electronic questionnaire. You may volunteer for a face-to-face interview. You may participate in one or both parts of this case study.

The interviews will be audio taped, transcribed, and you will be asked to review the transcripts for accuracy prior to data analysis. Transcripts will be sent to you from my personal email account to your email account. The interviews will not exceed two hours and may be conducted in one-hour segments.

If you would like to complete the anonymous electronic questionnaire, please click on this link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/TQX573B

If you would like to participate in this study by taking part in a one-on-one face-to-face interview, please send me an email at kathydalealexander@gmail.com so that we can set up a time for the interview.

I will not be able to link your responses to the electronic questionnaire to you. Everyone will receive the same link to the questionnaire and I will not be able to tell who the participant was that completed the questionnaire.

In the case of the interviews, I will assign a pseudonym to the transcript of your interview and the transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet to which only I will have access.

Your responses will not in any way affect your job or your work environment.

Thank you.

Kathy Alexander