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EXPERIENCING SCHOOL REFORM:  
PERSPECTIVES FROM A SITE REFORM  
LEADER ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AT A  
SCHOOL FOR AMERICAN INDIAN  
STUDENTS IN NEW MEXICO

Pedro Vallejo

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**EXPERIENCING SCHOOL REFORM: PERSPECTIVES FROM A SITE REFORM  
LEADER ON EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AT A SCHOOL  
FOR AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS IN NEW MEXICO**

By

**PEDRO VALLEJO**

B.A., Liberal Studies, University of California, Riverside, 1992  
M.A., Education, Claremont Graduate University, 1994

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 2015**

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## **Dedication**

Yá'át'ééh shi Diné. Shi' eiya Pete Vallejo yinishyé. Chíshí Diné nishloo' dóó Naakaii bá shíshchiin.

Greetings to my people. My name is Pete Vallejo. I belong to the Chiricahua Apache clan and I am born for the Hispanic people.

I would like to thank my wife, Rose Vallejo, for all of her unwavering support and patience. I would also like to thank my sons, Xavier and Gabriel, for their understanding when I could not make it to their soccer practices/games. I also want to thank my mother and grandparents and other family members for their support and encouragement. Finally, I want to acknowledge my father who is no longer with us, but always present in my life through his teachings. Both my parents taught me the value of culture. I am very proud of my Navajo and Mexican-American background and hope to continue these teachings with my own children.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge my dissertation committee members who were committed to this study, Dr. Robin Minthorn, Dr. Vince Werito, and Dr. Chuck Foster. Their guidance and inspiration has given me a purpose for exploring American Indian education and tribal school reform. A special appreciation goes to my dissertation chair, Dr. Alicia F. Chávez, whose ongoing advice, wisdom, and nudging when needed, helped me through the entire process. Her time and energy were what kept me going when I had those moments of frustration. Ahéhee'! Thank you!

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of my study was to examine how a site reform leader implements the *Native Star* questionnaire at a school for American Indian students and how he describes and experiences school reform efforts at a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) school in New Mexico. This was accomplished through a qualitative review of how the site reform leader reports using the *Native Star* as well as interviews of the individual responsible for the overall reform efforts at the site. Constructivism served as the theoretical grounding by which the case study was conducted to allow for the participant to describe his experiences and to give their own meaning to the data. To further this approach, I used an American Indian Paradigm as the cultural research platform to allow a focused opportunity for the tribal school official to present a voice on his experiences with *Native Star* and site reform efforts.

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## Chapter 1

### Problem Statement

#### Conceptualization

Education for high school American Indian students has been inconsistent, in part, because of varied oversight. Currently, one oversight organization is the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) which oversees a total of one hundred eighty-three elementary, secondary, residential and peripheral dormitory schools across twenty-three states. Of that number, one hundred twenty-six schools are tribally controlled under P.L. 93-638 Indian Self Determination Contracts or P.L. 100-297 Tribally Controlled Grant Schools Act meaning that tribes are in control of these schools with money given to them from the BIE. Fifty-seven schools are operated directly by the BIE (BIE, 2010). In New Mexico, there are 37 public schools that serve American Indian communities as well (Appendix A). The issue of differing oversight includes how the schools address their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) status. This affects how each school addresses efforts needed to improve student achievement scores. It also creates problems in how efforts are monitored for data on American Indian students as a group. In order to better concentrate my efforts, I am primarily focusing on how the BIE understands where schools are in terms of educational impacts for American Indian students. The Bureau's need for data led to the development of a common assessment tool which was developed from an established instrument through the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII). The instrument addressed various components to school reform efforts. The end product was named *Native Star*. This consistently used tool allows for direct comparisons between BIE schools in order to better gauge how each of the high schools is doing regardless of oversight type. From this established vantage point, I narrowed my focus

to a BIE schools and the person or responsible for implementing *Native Star* and other school reform efforts to describe how they lead their site's reform efforts and how they experienced changes they have identified for their school. I explored how this leader facilitated and experienced changes they identified for their school.

Research on educating American Indian students is burgeoning, yet it is still lacking in many areas such as examining how these students are educated and any specific efforts for school wide reform. In-depth analysis studies regarding American Indian education are often specific to a program at a school.

Also, different educational systems oversee schools for Native students around the nation, but research on measurement efforts is not in place. This research needs to occur so tribes and communities can document and assess efforts to raise scores for American Indian students. This type of research is on the horizon with the efforts of the BIE and CII with the *Native Star* instrument (BIE, 2012; Indistar, 2010). It will give tribal communities and communities with a high American Indian population opportunities for comparison through the use of a common tool with their own voice. This will also allow for the creation of policies to better address gaps revealed from the data. It will definitely provide a stepping-stone for more specific academic research to occur in Indian country.

### **Terminology**

It should be noted that I will primarily use "American Indian" in my study. "Native American", "Indian", "Indigenous" people, and "Native" as descriptors of Indigenous Peoples within the United States are used when referred to as such in research. It must be noted that my family and friends of Indigenous backgrounds use these terms regularly and interchangeably when we are together to describe anything or anyone connected to any tribe

in the United States. However, again, for the purposes of my study, I used the primary term of American Indian. I only used “Alaskan Native” when referring to Natives from the Alaskan region as this is the term used by the United States Department of Education for Native peoples in the Alaskan area (Department of Education, 2007). I also referred to specific tribes throughout my research when my research, data, or interviews referred to a specific tribe.

### **Purpose**

For this study, I wanted to gain a leader’s perspectives of reform efforts including how he used *Native Star* in these efforts. Specifically, I used qualitative methodologies, in addition to the school site’s *Native Star* endeavors from a BIE school in New Mexico with American Indian students, to assess the school’s reform efforts. The questionnaire’s component areas for exploration are curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability. From my experience as an educator, many schools have identified similar areas in need of reform at their sites and I explored how this is a part of overall site change initiatives. I also interviewed the person responsible for its implementation as well as investigated other strategic change initiatives to see if the reform efforts were working in concert with one another. He also gave direct information to address my research questions and see what has already been put in place, the perceptions of the site leadership of the reform efforts, and how the changes impacted the Native students and staff.

## Research Questions

Throughout the country, the number of schools in School Improvement or Restructuring status based on Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) scores is growing. As of 2011, 48% of schools did not make AYP an increase from 39% the previous year (Usher & Yoshioka, 2012). In order to make AYP, reform efforts are needed at each school site not making AYP. With my study I want to examine how reform efforts are perceived by the leader at a BIE/grant-funded school in New Mexico. My research questions included:

- How does the site reform leader describe the school reform used at the school?
  - How does the leader describe reform the primary 3 to 4 focus areas such as: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability?
- What are the leader's perceptions of how Native culture is incorporated in reform efforts?
- What role has the *Native Star* instrument played in reform efforts?
  - Sub-question: How does the leader describe the use of *Native Star* instrument in relation to reform efforts at their school?

## Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Perspectives

For my study, I wanted to work with an overarching paradigm that enabled me to make meaning of the data collected by working with BIE schools. A focused and detailed table of "Themes of Knowledge" compares several paradigms. It was created initially by Guba and Lincoln in 2005 and then updated by Susan Lynham in 2008. Based on this table of direct comparison by many researchers of each paradigm, I was able to best determine the basic belief approach for my study. In the area of Ontology, "the worldviews and assumptions in which researchers operate in their search for new knowledge" (Schwandt,

2007, p. 190), I was able to observe what approach best fit my needs. In this case, Constructivism, defined as the assumption that “reality as we know it is constructed intersubjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994) was the best fit. Our interactions with one another and our individual lives are what we use to construct meaning. Within my study, this seemed to be a good fit as the operative paradigm framework for how I design and conducted my research.

**Constructivism.** Within a constructivist frame of research each individual participant was offered the opportunity to share their experiences pertaining to the school. Positivism focuses on a single truth that can be measured and Post positivism goes one step further with an additional piece that nature can never fully offer the flexibility of gathering data in different forms and interpreting the data from multiple truths according to the respondents in my study. Critical paradigms, which includes Feminism and Race, asserts that human nature is based on a struggle for power. Groups of people, including women and various races as distinct groups, are either in a state of privilege or oppression (Kilgore, 2001). However, each takes on an assumption of oppression of which there is no immediate sense of oppression and therefore, do not seem to fit my study. Post-modernism is described as a type of subjective-objective reality, where “knowers can only be knowers if known by other knowers” (Heron & Reason, 1997). In the case of my study, I do not know what relevant pieces of data the respondent may have, nor do I know what he has experienced. As such, the post-modernism paradigm does not fit well.

Epistemologically, the relationship between what is researched and the researcher (Creswell, 2007), I find that the outcomes are similar. Constructivism, again, seems to be the



paradigm most fitting what my study intent reflects, that “social reality is a construction based upon the actor’s frame of reference within the setting” (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 80). This allows for each participant in the study to develop their own meaning and sense of place based on their own actions. Conversely, Positivism and Post-Positivism focus on total objectivity and the ability to only approximate nature, not define it exactly (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1991; Merriam, et al., 2007). This type of approach does not work well with Natives in my experience as approximating how the respondents feel as a whole instead of allowing for individual voices to describe their individual experiences is problematic. Critical pedagogy, including Feminism and Race theories, assume conflict of freedom and oppression, power and control, and the change of structures based on empowerment (Merriam, 1991). Once again, the oppression component is not seen overtly in the community where I plan to conduct my study. This American Indian community is self-determined and is able to work on community and local school needs. Post-Modernism is perceived as replacing the “traditional relation between ‘truth’ and ‘interpretation’ in which the idea of truth antedates the idea of interpretation” (Heshusius, 1994, p. 15).

In my case study, truth and interpretation came at varying times dependent on the respondent. Through a constructivist lens, I was able to express how the reform leader at the tribal school constructs their educational realities and make meaning to their communities from our conversations. This type of narration allowed me to get at *what* and *how* the *Native Star* and other site reform efforts affect their schools from their vantage point. Any resulting data from specific strategic initiatives used and how they relate the information to me were used as artifacts to reinforce and further clarify our discussions.

**American Indian paradigm.** Within the constructivist theoretical framework for my study, the theoretical perspective I used was an Indigenous or American Indian paradigm. It evolves directly from constructivist theory in that it allows the participant to create their own meaning through their own experiences. In this case, it pertained directly to the unique perspective of American Indians and their reality of life. Three important areas of consideration that tie my study to an American Indian paradigm are knowing what American Indian paradigm is, ensuring sound epistemology, and using appropriate methodologies.

First, I will conceptualize my sense of an American Indian paradigm. Wilson (2008) wrote that the “foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience. Indigenous researchers ground their research knowingly in the lives of real persons as individuals and social beings, not on the world of ideas” (Wilson, 2008, p. 60). Cajete (1994) reinforced these thoughts with his statement, “Historically, the views guiding the evolution of modern Indian education have not been predicated upon assumptions that are representative of Indian cultural perspectives” (Cajete, 1994, p. 19). I used these perspectives to guide me as I conducted research as a Native person describing experiences from leadership of tribal high schools. They fulfilled my own need to respect how the educators from other tribes perceive *Native Star* and site reform efforts in a way that non-Native researchers may not be aware. They also allowed me to be cognizant of my role as a Native in telling the story of a tribal school I work with in an honorable and good way.

Second, I need to keep in mind that an epistemology of American Indian paradigm, or relationships between everyone involved in the study is of importance. Kovach (2012) describes American Indian epistemology through her work with Indigenous methodologies. She presents the need for emphasis on its “non-fragmented, holistic nature, focusing on the

metaphysical and pragmatic, on language and place, and on values and relationships” (Kovach, 2012, p. 57) based on a tribe’s sense of understanding. From my own life experiences with Indians, I know that these relationships are varied and come from reservation and urban areas, from the traditional life of substance and religion to the newer forms of relating to the world such as the Native American Church and Christianity. It includes the use of English as well as traditional languages, many of which are not written, to communicate intent and experiences. It also demonstrates a fierce independence and need for self-determination allowing American Indian peoples to hold on to what they believe is sacred. Vine Deloria’s “Power and Place” described an American Indian perspective of how Indian education and traditional ways of learning ensure the nature of these relationships and interconnectedness of people such as personal growth first then to develop professional expertise. He furthered the thought by stating that the purpose of human societies cannot really flower until they understand the parameters of possibilities the human personality contains (Deloria, 2001, pp. 43-44). Yet another perspective comes from the Meriam Report from 1928 which recognized

It is essential for those in charge of education for the Indian to remember that the Indians’ attitudes towards society have been determined largely by his experiences, and that these can, wherever necessary, be changed to desirable social attitudes by exposing him to a corresponding set of right experiences in the relationships of home, family, and community life (Merriam, 1928, p. 354).

Collectively, a sense of how American Indians view their relationships with the world, including the educational needs of their children, gives rise to the thought of the way research and relationships should be addressed with American Indian students and

communities. This applies directly to my study as it requires me to understand who it is I am working with and our relationship together. If I do not acknowledge an American Indian perspective in its many forms as a researcher, then I would be no better than any other researcher who has come to Indian country to do a study and left with only information and data without regards to how American Indian people themselves hold significant roles in educating American Indian youth in New Mexico.

Third, I used methods that support an American Indian paradigm. Kovach (2012) identifies several methods such as story, open-ended conversation, sharing circles, using sample populations, using a small group of people from which larger community inferences can be made, and cultural protocol, knowing how to approach elders and other persons with information, as a guideline when working with tribal knowledge holders (Kovach, 2012). Wilson (2008) emphasizes the means to develop relationships between people, the environment/land, the cosmos, and ideas as the methods to do research. Communication, in its many forms, is the tool for gathering information. Similar paradigms such as critical race theory and tribal critical race theory also value “narrative and stories as important sources of data” (Brayboy, 2005). It is about using methods that not only can be used to gather information, but also about the accountability “that the knowledge gained will be utilized practically” (Hart, 2010, p. 9). For this study, I used conversation in the form of interviews with the site reform leader. I used a non-American Indian paradigm method with relation to site developed data associated with reform efforts and *Native Star*, but I developed a relationship with the participant in order to garner understanding. I held myself accountable to knowledge gathered with the intent of forwarding American Indian education research in New Mexico.

In summary, I feel that an Indigenous paradigm is entrenched more in ecological education and tribal sovereignty globally, including the importance of the need for cultural and environmental sustainability. This is the paradigm that scholars like Cajete, Smith, and Wilson work from. (Cajete, 1994; Wilson, 2008; Weber—Pillwax, 2004) I feel that the educational experiences American Indians have had in the United States is unique. The manner in which American Indians have endured specific policies based on imposed colonial perspectives is the reality of our tribes who work within BIA/BIE oversight. The reality of the history the War Department's Indian Affairs, BIA, and the BIE and their impacts on American Indian education is not necessarily found in other countries.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations of my study. The first is that I am only focusing on a BIE school. There are many more BIE schools in New Mexico and nationally that are serving students K-12 as well as non-BIE high schools that predominately serve American Indian students that can be used in future studies for comparison or replication. Also, I am using only the existing site leader responsible for the *Native Star* and site reform efforts. The site staff, students, and community may have other information for use, yet only the reform leader's perspectives will be included in my study. A broader perspective from other site staff, students, and community gives a more single site perspective approach. However, this implies an in-depth story for the individual site to tell. Also, there are several other instruments schools are using nationally that may focus on other aspects of schools and school reform that I am not going to be able to address within the confines of my study. Comparing tribal schools to non-tribal schools presents another opportunity for research that is a separate focus from my study.

My research questions are related to the *Native Star* instrument and other site reform efforts and the related experiences from the school site reform leader. I am using Constructivism as my theoretical framework and American Indian paradigm as the theoretical perspective. Other pedagogical approaches could have been used such as Critical or Feministic pedagogies, but were negated based on the intent and approach of my study. A quantitative approach was possible as well if I strictly focused on the potential quantitative aspects of reform.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

American Indian education was under the auspices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) until recently when the newly formed BIE took on the task of educating over 46,997 Native students, according to the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs (USBIA) Bureau-wide Annual Report Card 2008-2009. These American Indian students attend 186 different schools throughout the United States. Achievement levels in 2008-2009 show 61.78% of students not at proficiency in Language Arts, down from 62.52% in 2007-2008. In the area of Math, 66.74% were not proficient in 2008-2009, down from 67.1% in 2007-2008 (USBIA I, 2009; USBIA II, 2009).

Nationally, reform efforts are in place at most schools in their effort to reach AYP goals. However, due to the need for BIE-funded schools to use AYP goals of the state in which a school resides in, tools used by the state for taking that measurement becomes the yardstick by which schools for these Native students are measured. As a result, there is little consistency across states. Indistar has recently partnered with the BIE to form *Native Star* as a way for schools to have a common tool for reform efforts regardless of location (Indistar, 2009).

### **History of Indian Education**

As a precursor to the idea of using a current research instrument to administer and analyze a high school that serves Native students in New Mexico, I needed to know where the historical underpinnings are. For this, I needed to explore the history of Indian education on a national level and how things developed in New Mexico.

**Historical developments at the national level.** There are different understandings of the historical data on what has occurred with educating our Native youth. The four varied approaches I chose to represent the historical timeline of American Indian Education demonstrate only a sample of interpretations. Each offers specific examples of historical eras dependent on the author's focus (see Appendix B). Houston and Yazee's compilation is more of a brief timeline with notations that generally describe the period. The paper is researched, but it offers only a glimpse of each segment of the American Indian education experience to give the reader a sense of cursory information about American Indian student educational experiences (Houston & Yazee, 2002). Juneau's paper for the Montana Office of Public Instruction is well-researched, with the Montana region in mind when explaining each era. Many of his citations come from scholars with Montana tribal or college/university connections. National Policies that have impacted Natives over the centuries are included, as well as, illustrating regional implications. It also gives a good foundation for understanding the conversation regarding American Indian education (Juneau, 2001). Reyhner and Eder's book is among the cornerstones in the field. The level of research in each describes eras along the historical landscape for American Indian education is in-depth and gives a rich, dense background throughout the book (Reyhner & Eder, 2004). Another keystone work is Szasz's work on Native education. She also gives a detailed accounting of the history of the genre. Her approach to the field is more contextual. Stories of individuals and their experiences are woven around the historical policies and impacts throughout time beginning with colonialism, but especially focusing on the more recent events, since 1928 (Szasz, 1999). This is a well-researched and insightful endeavor with clear demonstrations on the educational conditions in recent memory. We have elders and grandparents, my grandmother



included, who still remember what has happened since the 1920's and 1930's. These are the stories that directly impact our immediate lives and yet a part of the larger history of American Indian people for the past 400 plus years of governmental change and its policies impacting Indian country. In the case of the *Native Star* instrument, it represents a potentially powerful source of information examining American Indian students and the school reform efforts directly from the BIE for the first time in American Indian education.

**The New Mexico educational approach to Indian education.** The history of New Mexico's Indian education is embedded in the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Office of Indian Educational Programs (BIA-OIEP), the BIA, as well as religious efforts to educate American Indian students. The initial efforts in New Mexico can be classified from the late 1800/early 1900's to acculturate American Indian students. A second set of efforts describe how tribes have taken over or are newly created to reinforce tribal needs such as incorporating language and culture into schools (Reyhner & Eder, 2004, p. 179).

The Office of Indian Affairs, initially created in 1824 under the War Department, transformed into the BIA in 1947. From there, the Office of Indian Education Programs was created in 1972 under the BIA (Henson, 2011) and, in 2006, it transformed again into BIE, separate from the BIA (Department, 2012). In 1910, 8 regions with 34 schools were identified as servicing American Indian students in New Mexico. In 2012, within the BIE's New Mexico operations there are 26 BIE schools and 18 Tribe/Tribal grant schools. Administratively, the BIE set up many of its offices in Albuquerque. Four post-secondary institutions exist in the state as well. All of the tribal colleges serve students from tribes across the United States (BIE, 2012; see Appendix C). There are thirty-seven other schools

that work directly with the reservations, pueblos and American Indian students in New Mexico, but are not tied to the BIE (Appendix C).

New Mexico has done much to address education for American Indians over the past 30+ years. The New Mexico Indian Education (NMIE) Act, Article 23 A (22-23A-1 to 22-23A-8) was passed in 1978. It strives to ensure that equitable and culturally relevant learning occurs for Indian students. It also reinforces the maintenance of American Indian languages, the implementation of educational systems to positively affect educational success, increases tribal involvement and control over schools located within tribal communities, formal government-to-government relationships between New Mexico and tribes, assists with urban Indian educational issues, ensuring all community leaders, policy makers, tribal leaders, and educational leaders, K-21 and post-secondary universities and colleges work together, promotes curriculum development input, aligns assessment programs to match BIE efforts, and encourages parental involvement. The Act also created an Indian Education Division within the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) and Indian Educational Advisory Council to advise the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of Education on educational matters. An annual report on the progress of Indian Education is required to describe the accomplishments of the Indian Education Division. Through the Act, the Indian Education Division is funded by the state (NMPED II, 2012).

The website for the Indian Education Division offers detailed information regarding several aspects of American Indian education impacting New Mexico including: American Education timeline from 12,000 B.C. to 2011 A.D. (world, national, New Mexico, and New Mexico tribal events and legislation/policies); NMIE Act; district information and Indian Education contacts; tribal officials and contact information; NMIE Division information;

NMIE initiatives and data; Programs and grant information; tribal education status reports, and NMIE Advisory Council information (NMPED II, 2012).

### **Educating Indians – Reports and Reform**

**Reports.** Within a context of historical points of view regarding American Indian education, I explored what has been put in place over the years as well as negative aspects associated with attempts to assimilate, acculturate, and destroy American Indian culture through the manipulation of the educational system for Indians. “The Problem of Indian Administration” written in 1928, more commonly known as the Merriam report after Lewis Merriam, Technical Director for the Institute for Government Research, highlighted several problematic areas of national Indian policies, including the education of American Indians. Problem areas were identified as the need to recognize the individual; better qualified personnel, low salary schedules, cost to run mediocre schools, underestimating the importance of students’ home lives, the need to include adults in the community to become educated, the lack of civic education through directed experiences, the need to combine education to Indian businesses, the over-reliance on routinization, the lack of understanding that Indians are capable of education, the reality that intelligence quotients lose their significance when testing American Indian students, the lack of experienced teachers, the difference in Indian psychology from other races, the need for an accurate Indian school census, low enrollment issues, the high number of over-aged students, illiteracy in English, attendance problems, lack of teacher training, the sense that both Matrons and Disciplinarians (caregivers/proxy-parents and rule monitors) were needed, and electing applicants with educational backgrounds/experience (Merriam, 1928).

Other areas in the extensive report indicate several issues regarding the course of study for American Indian students such as the underutilization of special curricular needs, curricular revision, and school as an organization issues such as ensuring full day programs are available for Indian students. The need for appropriate teaching methodologies, using tests in core content courses, vocational need surveys and training for various occupations, the lack of health education, physical education and recreation, consistent religious education were other identified issues. Failings of the educational system were directly identified such as the lack of community participation, overall finance and supervision of students at the schools, school social workers, post-secondary opportunities, adequate secondary education, funding, appropriate up keep on the physical plant, poor equipment, text adoption, and qualified administrators (Merriam, 1928).

Forty years later, a special sub-committee on Indian Education was convened by Robert and Edward Kennedy from which a 1969 report entitled, “Indian Education: A National Tragedy-A National Challenge” was released. The report is also known as the “Kennedy Report” (Special, 1969). It reviews several aspects of Indian education and assesses progress in varying areas. It chronicles “400 years of failure” of American Indian issues and reviews various aspects of adverse policy and application such as the mission period of schooling, treaty creation and manipulation, allotments of American Indian land to non-Natives, the Indian New Deal, the termination period, and the 1960’s fight for civil rights, including American Indian rights. It also lists the failures of public schools to address American Indian student issues and offers a summary of these findings. It continues with a section which addresses the failure of Federal schools for American Indian students. Academic performance, budgetary inadequacies, differing goals and philosophies, the lack of

quality instruction, guidance and counseling needs, discipline, parental participation issues, organizational and administrative problems, and addressing personnel concerns. Elementary and Off-reservation problems are given a separate section as were vocational, adult, and higher education concerns. A host of recommendations regarding policies and actions to better define the Federal and tribal self-determination roles for all stakeholders is presented with rationales for the need for reform. Many of the same issues from the Merriam Report are discussed again due to the lack of remediation (Special, 1969).

In 2001, the United States enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). It is an unfunded mandate put in place to address what were considered national problems with the educational process across the country. In 2005, The National Indian Education Association (NIEA) conducted a series of hearings to assess how the NCLB was affecting students in Indian country. A consistent, negative point of view about NCLB and the current state of education for American Indian students prevailed at all 11 of the meetings. Some topics of the hearings included general statements about educational needs, language and culture, accreditation, federal and inter-agency cooperation, local/tribal/parental community involvement, data and research, information dissemination, NCLB comments and impacts, funding, dropout information, early education, and Alaskan Native needs. Specific concerns from the hearings include the lack of flexibility for operating provisions to address specific American Indian student needs such as the Title VII provisions regarding American Indian education and the contradictory general mandates for states enacting NCLB. The other issue was funding, or better said, the lack of funding and the impacts of not appropriately funding the national effort and the reduction of monies for other programs meant to assist American Indian students that had to be diverted in order to address NCLB specific efforts. Culturally-

based education was among the various programs that reduced resources as a result of budget cuts. Tribal language and cultural efforts suffered as a result. Also impacted was the Federal government's fiduciary and trust responsibility to Indians, including education, being compromised as NCLB was handed over to states without financial assistance and did not have to clearly connect the Title VII program to their NCLB efforts. Also community, poverty, health, and trauma and how education impacts these issues did come up as other concerns at the hearings (NIEA, 2005). Again, we see similar continuous problems when compared to the Merriam and Kennedy reports.

**Reform.** Several thoughts on the reformation of Indian education make up the more current approach to American Indian education. Research in this area in general is progressive and growing in terms of information on reform types, reform focus and a call for more research. John Tippeconnic (2000), for example chose four areas for discussion he believes are vital to this discussion. He feels the topics of tribal control, focus and priority, language and culture, and research best frame current needs. Tribal or tribal community control over the schools that serve their students can become more than just a place of classroom learning. Parental involvement and health assistance are beyond traditional non-reservation schooling needs, and yet in many areas in Indian country, the school is the center of the community. This is important, especially now that there are more tribally controlled schools than BIE run schools. In terms of focus and priority, since the education of American Indians is a priority to Natives and few others, we need to have American Indian educators and supporters in positions of power and decision making to keep American Indian education at the forefront of mainstream society (Tippeconnic, 2000). This includes making education a priority within tribes, especially when finite resources and economic development projects

can re-prioritize tribal concerns and focus away from education. Schools are also a common location to assist with language and cultural revitalization efforts where intense language efforts are embedded into everyday course curriculum. Culture and reframing core content within the context of tribal and religious doctrine are possible and cater to Indian children's learning styles. Finally, with the self-determination policies toward American Indian education, research protocols and an increase in American Indian scholars, research on American Indian education is growing and necessary to further improve current endeavors for our children (Tippeconnic, 2000).

In a report on rural education, the New Mexico Tribal Coalition, managed by the Santa Fe Indian School, was a part of the Rural Systemic Initiative (RSI) (Boyer, 2006). Twelve BIE funded schools working with students from the nineteen pueblos were part of the initiative to strengthen math and science instruction with Pueblo values at the core of the community-based education effort. New Mexico standards are considered only part of the base of knowledge Pueblo leaders want for their children. Expectations for learning were increased and the use of inquiry-based instructional approaches put in place. Teacher surveys revealed a lack of confidence to teach the New Mexico core standards for math and science. Building teachers' knowledge in the two subject areas has given teachers motivation to increase expectations of students as well as use the Pueblo culture as a source of influence. Administrative support is also given as principals belong both to the New Mexico Tribal Coalition schools and to the Coalition of Educators of Native American Children.

Positive change is offered to include reflection work as part of the inquiry-based learning. Also professional development in the form of modeled lessons and time to develop ways to overcome problems with instruction. Project-based learning was used in the science

classes and part of the criteria for judging a science fair. The highlight of the fair was an award for the American Indian students with culturally based projects. Yet another successful approach to this type of education was the pairing of a science instructor with a tribal community expert who team taught activities (Boyer, 2006).

David Beaulieu's 2000 piece, "Comprehensive Reform and American Indian Education" goes into historical detail for both the national scene of reform and the concurrent impacts to American Indian education. He acknowledges progress, but indicates that there are still issues that have not changed over the previous thirty years including: Indian students often start school unprepared; score lower on national exams compared to other students; there continues to be a high drop-out rate; schools with high enrollment numbers of American Indian students are in small or rural communities; there are high unemployment and poverty rates in American Indian communities and on reservations; and few Indian students enter and finish college. Beaulieu also recognizes that in 1994 and in 1998, federal action was taken to address American Indian education. The 1998 Executive order required a policy that would address the fragmented services made available to Indians, the complex inter-governmental relationships that affect American Indian education, the improvement of academic conditions for American Indian students, and reducing the drop-out rate for American Indian students. He suggests several issues that need to be addressed in order to improve the state of Indian education: staff turnover, mobility rates, drop-out rates, and limited cultural and educational needs and knowledge of strategies that work to positively affect school reform (Beaulieu, 2000).

Some sources reinforce what needs to be changed in order for improvement to occur (Butterfield, 1994). Intercultural harmony to avoid racism and to strengthen academic and



personal/cultural identities by attending schools with other American Indian students is high on the list. Improving teacher professional development for how to understand American Indian cultures, creating work and lesson plans for American Indian students are also needed. The third factor to improve Indian education is the inclusion of Indian parents to assist with improving students' academic and behavioral issues, especially in the middle school grades. Finally, she indicates that varying and appropriate types of evaluation and assessment are needed to address how and to what extent learning is occurring (Butterfield, 1994).

Similarly, Richard Smiley and Susan Sather (2009) wrote about the "Indian Education Policies in five Northwest Region States. The study was guided by three research questions: What state policies govern the education of Native American students in the five Northwest Region states?; What Indian education policies are common in all five Northwest Region states?; and What policy mechanisms are used to adopt Indian education policies in the five Northwest Region states. Thirteen indicators were found within the five states, but only six policies were common among the five states: Academic standards to address Native American culture and history; Native American culture and history are a part of the school curriculum; involvement of Native American communities; highly encouraging teacher certifications in Native language; students' opportunities to learn their language as part of the regular course offerings; and college scholarship programs provided for Native students (Smiley & Sather, 2009).

### **Comprehensive School Reform**

The Education Commission of the States created a report that discussed restructuring the education system. The need for change in several areas for effective reform was presented: standards/curriculum, assessment/accountability, governance, professional

development, higher education, finance, cross-agency collaboration, diversity/options. Each area lays out actions to generate effective changes and offers examples from across the country in states and districts with a reform effort in progress (Education, 1992). Similarly, the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research examined restructuring efforts in 44 schools in 16 states. They found four key factors instrumental to successful restructuring efforts: Student learning, authentic pedagogy, school organizational capacity, and external support (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Still another perspective on school reform comes from the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. It offered seven steps for district leaders to change educational opportunities for children. The steps include: commitment to success, choosing turnarounds for the right schools, developing a pipeline of turnaround leaders, giving leaders the “big yes”, holding leaders accountable for results, prioritizing teacher hiring in turnaround schools, and proactively engaging the community (Center, 2009). The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory identified at least 13 reform models from the rural schools in its studies (Carlson & Buttram, 2004).

Overall, many studies focus on improvement at the site level, but not specifically within BIE funded New Mexico schools. An example of this comes from the Center on Education Policy which examined reform in Maryland (Neuman-Sheldon, 2006). The study lists out-of-school tutorials, test preparation through daily instruction, increasing instructional time in reading and math, using assessment data diagnostically, focusing on marginal students, and other strategies. These “other” strategies can be any combination of increased staff development, differentiated instruction, reallocated resources to increase staffing, special education inclusion co-teaching models, alignment of school instruction, and explicit

test preparation. A similar study on comprehensive school reform analyzed twenty-nine models. The results for individual models varied, but of note from the study is that the longer reform implementation was in place, the more the intended effect of positive change had on the school (Borman, Hewes, & Brown, 2002).

Some research on predictive factors for the roles of teachers, leadership, and curriculum and the impact on student achievement for the Indian Education For All (IEFA) program may be helpful. This research identifies school reform efforts within the three role domains. This culturally relevant curriculum study focuses on Montana and outcomes from Native American student data for those students impacted by a specific program (Lipkind, 2009).

An additional study focused on barriers to school improvement within four domains based on New Mexico Public Education Department's standards for school improvement: effective leadership; quality teaching and learning; collaborative relationships; and support for system-wide improvement. This research focused on Navajo-majority serving schools in New Mexico. In this qualitative study, six barriers were identified that crossed all four domains as well as others from each individual domain. This study included interviews and other state data from the two public school districts that service most Navajo students in the state (Irvin, 2008).

### **Leadership of Indigenous Schools**

American Indian paradigm is pervasive among tribal communities and extends to school leadership. "Self-determination and local control in American Indian education is viewed by many American Indians as means of cultural preservation and growth" (Snyder-Joy, 1994, p. 1). However, defining who the administrators are and what their roles are has

been in question for some time. Traditionally, there is apprehension and distrust of the BIE/BIA as being overly intrusive and inefficient (Deloria & Lytle, 1983, 1984). The continued growth of autonomy for tribes and the need for American Indian administrators to not act in isolation created a need for American Indian administrators who are more effective and work with each other. Public Law 95-561 added new responsibilities for administrators by adding operation and maintenance of the “instructional environment” (Foster & Boloz, 1980).

The role of administrator expanded into a leadership role in recent years. Administrator training programs include the creation of Master’s degree and doctoral degree programs around the United States, such the Penn State program, allowing for the development of leaders to take on the various leadership roles in the BIE/BIA. A sense of change from the upcoming American Indian administrators did not solely remain in the BIA, it also developed with American Indian education advocacy agencies such as the National Indian Education Association (Lynch & Charleston, 1990). The perils of maintaining this growing cohort of American Indian leaders comes from “burnout” and the increase of responsibilities to achieve student success. A study in 1995 showed that stress was a major factor with burnout. The positive indirect outcome from this study was that it was a study on Native administrators by Native researchers (Warner & Hastings, 1995). The idea of leadership, whether by school administrators or by other leadership roles in educational research, had now grown to what non-American Indians had taken for granted. This connects directly to the American Indian paradigm because it demonstrates American Indians working with each other for the benefit of the tribes and the culture as well as the understanding for the need of relationships to address community needs. For my study, I worked with the

leader of reform efforts at a BIE school to give voice to his experiences with his efforts in support of each of the tribe he works with.

### **Developing Frameworks and Tools to Monitor Reform**

When states do not have their own self-assessment tools, groups such as the National High School Center, create their own assessment tool for schools and districts. It includes a self-assessment section for each of its eight elements. Within each element, areas of focus, characteristics of effectiveness, evidence of implantation rankings, and a graphic organizer to additionally represent implementation levels. Each element is supplemented by a next steps section to allow for the identification of gaps, resources needed, and whom to involve addressing the results of the self-assessment (National I, 2008). Indistar has compiled an assessment tool that allow for rating progress and a compilation of possible indicators for its clients to select. A rubric to identify progress is part of the Indistar tool (Indistar, 2010). The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement created a list of evaluation tools for school improvement based on a meta-analysis process to determine best practices. It included a list of states, districts, school climate evaluations, school improvement and reform evaluation tools, instructional evaluation tools, and program evaluation tools (Center, 2009).

With efforts of researching what it means to put in place comprehensive school reform models, come the tools that illustrate student, staff and community perspectives about their school site's reform. The National High School Center created a high school improvement systems checklist that focused on several major components with sub-component indicators. The major elements include: curriculum and instruction, assessment and accountability, teacher quality and professional development, resources- financial and other, leadership and governance, organization and restructuring, student supports and

interventions, and additional contextual factors (such as specific educational laws, partnerships, sources of authority/governance, demographics, rural/urban issues, community/parent/ business involvement) (National I, 2008). Other groups, such as Accountability Works, focused solely on indicators. Eleven school improvement indicators are described with instruction in the classroom as the primary route towards school improvement (Accountability, 2007). The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement identifies school improvement strategies with six indicators with examples of what the indicators look like when put in place. These indicators are aligned and rigorous curriculum, effective instruction, the use of informative assessment and student assessment data, positive school climate focused on achievement, and family and community engagement all shown in the indicator collection.

Indistar took the reform effort and indicators tool and created a flexible instrument that is built around a client district's needs. "Goals are typically constructed around a district or school's core functions, such as Leadership, Curriculum, Professional Development, or Instruction" (Indistar, 2009, p. 6). It is this flexibility, online access and data reporting ability that attracted the BIE to select the Indistar instrument for monitoring school reform efforts for each of the schools the bureau funds or operates.

The National High School Center (NHSC) created a "Mapping Framework" to describe each of its eight elements of high school improvement with their "respective characteristics of effectiveness" (National II, 2008, p. 3). Rigorous curriculum and instruction, assessment and accountability, teacher quality and professional development, student and family supports, stakeholder engagement, leadership and governance, organization and structure, and finally, resources for sustainability are the overarching eight

elements covering numerous characteristics that serve later as foundation for measurement of how the school is accomplishing the various characteristics within the elements (National II, 2008).

As general comprehensive school reform efforts are enacted and the foundations for frameworks further the use of reform efforts, subsequent related tools and rubrics enable “the school to assess the degree to which practices and/or processes is in place that indicate adherence to the standard or indicator. For each indicator, the school may check if the practices and/or processes are highly functional in the school, operational, emerging, or not evident.” (AdvancEd, 2008, p. 1). This opportunity to self-assess and monitor progress allows for a snap shot from which to better influence effective change. Many states began to create their own tools such as Kentucky, which put together a complete instrument. Its “School Level Performance Descriptors for Kentucky’s Standards and Indicators for School Improvement” (Kentucky, 2004), contains 110 pages of standards and indicators with corresponding rubrics so that districts and schools within the state can self-assess to better affect reform efforts.

### **Need for This Study**

When considering the history of national and New Mexican Indian education, the information on historical and recent report and reform efforts, as well as the movement for comprehensive school reform, there is a clear need to research what is going on in schools, including those serving American Indian students and communities such as BIE schools. For my study, I focused on a BIE funded school in New Mexico to complete a case study on reform efforts and experiences from the school leader who is charged with implementing the reform. Tippeconnic reaffirms the need to “clearly demonstrate success in Indian education

program and schools” and that “policy-makers and budget appropriators want hard evidence that education approaches are successful” (Tippeconnic, 2000, p. 45) for addressing American Indian students in public schools. It is not hard to bridge this same need to BIE schools as well.

Ultimately, as an experienced educator of Native descent, I feel that education should be more about what is important to the tribe, especially for cultural and linguistic survival balanced with current assessments and external expectations. We need to spend more time on this kind of reform, we need more resources to make sure we are putting a cultural component, for example, into professional development, into teaching and content, training administrators, making sure that tribal ceremonies and family activities are a part of school structure, scheduling, and that these actions are considered a priority. We need to remember that when educating our Native youth, this is not just about survival, but also for our Peoples to thrive in the present and in our future. My study comes from this personal desire to begin walking down the path of discovery of what the current state of reform looks like in my state.

### **The *Native Star* Assessment Tool for School Reform**

As part of the foundational components of the survey instrument, the CII used a meta-analysis approach to creating a survey instrument based on current research of best practices regarding several aspects of comprehensive school reform and used them in several schools (Indistar, 2009). A review of all Indistar and *Native Star* school data was made available in 2012 by the CII. The BIE recently began to use the instrument as a way to monitor reform and progress in its schools as part of its School Improvements Grants process (BIE, 2010). This ability to monitor indicators for rapid school improvement gives a snapshot as to how schools are performing and the means by which to develop data for immediate analysis. At



this point, the instrument is used by all Bureau of Indian Education schools. The collection of data and subsequent research to determine progress is being done by Center for Innovation and Improvement and will be done on a national level, inclusive of all schools nationally. Site specific data for BIE schools are not scheduled at this time unless you work directly with individual schools and their site specific data. This was the primary reason for my interest in examining a BIE school. I wanted to be able to do research directly with our American Indian students, educators, and tribal schools in order to address what Tippeconnic and others suggested as important, the need to have research to understand if/how current reform efforts in our schools are working for American Indian students from the perspectives of school leaders in their own communities.

As part of the exploration for my topic, I provided a national perspective on American Indian education history from various notable researchers to New Mexico's own experiences with educating American Indians. Also, I wrote about educational reform from historical and present perspectives. Finally, I offered an examination of the creation of the *Native Star* instrument, which truly is from recent BIE and school reform efforts that begin to monitor changes in BIE schools. From this foundation, I discuss in detail in chapter 3 my proposed research design to add to the current knowledge base for American Indian education.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design

Bureau of Indian Education schools are using the *Native Star* indicators to identify where they are in their school reform efforts and using that information to plan for respective strategic change initiatives (BIE, 2010). This phenomenon led to schools implementing their reform efforts in different areas based on site need, rather than uniformly. Awareness of this lack of consistent application and the ability for each site to voice its individual and collective experiences has not been heard. Meeting the challenges of educating our American Indian youth so communities become more vibrant and capable of sustaining tribal culture is vital to their future as Indigenous people. If their experiences are not told, how will our tribal, state and national leaders know how to address their needs?

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand how the site leader addressed school reform and the experience of implementing of *Native Star* and other change initiatives. It also examines how American Indian culture at the site was addressed by the reform.

### Research Questions

- How does the site reform leader describe school reform used at the school?
  - How does the leader describe reform of the primary 3 to 4 focus areas such as: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability?
- What are the leader's perceptions of how American Indian culture is incorporated in reform efforts?
- What role has the *Native Star* instrument played in reform efforts?

- Sub-question: How does the leader describe the use of the *Native Star* instrument in relation to reform efforts at their school?

### **Positionality**

I am part Navajo. I participate in Navajo and other American Indian tribal events and ceremonies. A large part of how I maintain my sense of being Navajo is working with Navajos and students of various tribes, especially in an educational context. My immediate interest for this study lies within American Indian culture and education. I have continued to work to educate American Indian students on many levels as a fellow student, research fellow, teacher, and as an administrator. In another aspect of my life, my primary professional role of 19 years has been in education at the high school level. The two life perspectives have drawn me to this study, working with a BIE school in New Mexico that is in the midst of reform.

My experiences in education, working with other Indians, as well as in understanding the nature of relationships in Indian cultures, gave me potential access and trust that many researchers would not have when taking on this type of endeavor. This insider role allowed me to enter into the school with reduced barriers. Although a concern of being American Indian doing research on American Indian education may on the surface appear to be biased, I see my role as adding to the understanding of how American Indian researchers can enhance how research strengthens our communities by giving a more culturally accurate telling of how education impacts our youth and tribes.

Limitations to my positionality, such as the lack of objectivity, could cloud my study. As an example, the potential concern of being an insider is that cultural relationships take precedence over the research. The converse can cause issues as well. The role as outsider,

since I am not from the tribes serviced by the school, could lead to unknowingly violating tribal norms thereby jeopardizing my access and study.

### **Mode of Inquiry-Qualitative**

With a philosophical framework of Constructivism and a theoretical perspective of American Indian paradigm as discussed in chapter 1, the approach I took impacts how the mode of inquiry will be used. Considering that both Constructivist and American Indian paradigms focus on lived and shared experiences and the belief that potentially many types of “truths” are possible, a qualitative approach is the most appropriate method for my study. Bogdan & Biklen (2003) gave five features of qualitative research which captured my intent for the study. The first, a naturalistic approach, meant the data was collected at a site. For my study, this data was collected at a BIE school in New Mexico. The second is that this type of data was descriptive. The data for my research came from describing the experiences of the leader at the school. It also explored the overall reform efforts at the site. The narrative also included how American Indian culture is woven into the reform efforts and its impact. Next, is the concern for process rather than outcomes or products. What happens along the path of discovery is just as valid as an outcomes based study. For my study, this is seen through the interviews and site reform data generated. Fourth is the tendency to analyze data inductively, the need to allow for abstractions as the data collection occurs, rather than proving or disproving an initial hypothesis. Again, the importance of what voices and experiences come from the reform efforts of the school is vital just as the outcome of the reform efforts and the *Native Star* questionnaire. The fifth feature to qualitative research is the interest in how people make sense of their lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, pp. 5-7). In my study, this is reflected in how a school for American Indian students impacts Indian students and the tribes

they go home to. This last feature is seminal to the constructivist and American Indian paradigms. A quantitative study would focus on a specific indicator and whether or not it was correlated to an identified comparative indicator. Culture and education are both inclusive of various interactions and lived moments. Limiting the study to finding a single factor does not allow the participants the ability to express themselves. Also, a quantitative design includes measurement and analysis for specific variables. Vogt explained this further as measurement is an observation expressed as a number. Operational definitions typically include rules for measurement (Vogt, 2007, p. 9). My desired approach to analysis is more of a reporting of data rather than a measurement of a specific independent and dependent set of variables and therefore not conducive to my study. Another way to look at this comes from Teddlie & Tashakkori who examined this from a purist point of view from either the quantitative or qualitative approaches. The differences in their underlying paradigm assumptions would not allow for both approaches to be used in a study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 3).

### **Study Site**

I selected a BIE school in New Mexico for my case study. Most schools on reservations are BIE schools whether by direct funding or through grants for tribes to administer in running their own tribal school. This immediately served my interest in researching a school with a large population of American Indian students. New Mexico is part of what is considered “Indian country” as over 23 federally recognized tribes are encompassed by this state. Also, an inherently high American Indian community population and strong cultural ties are more likely to be present on these reservations or tribally controlled schools, thus giving the opportunity for more of a culturally-based response when answering questions pertaining to my study. In addition, I am familiar with several of the

tribes in the area and gained access to the local BIE schools through friends who spoke on my behalf to reduce the level of mistrust of an outsider. I chose a non-Navajo school due to the layers of access needed to do research at a Navajo school which is more involved and various levels of tribal approval are required for research at schools serving the Navajo tribe. This tribal school has been around for over 100 years serving the same Native community. I have been unable to find the initial student population, however of 70 students currently attend the school. The original school is no longer used and in a different part of the reservation. The school is now located in a newer building.

The principal, Mr. Clark, has been in education for over 20 years in New Mexico and is a highly respected administrator. He was newly retired when he decided to return to education. He is Caucasian and is comfortable with learning about the tribe and focuses on what his students need to demonstrate academic growth rather than get negatively stuck on racial differences.

I worked with the site principal and school board to gain approval for on-site access, utilizing the interview questions, I was able to gain access to the school and participant groups- staff and community members. I achieved this, in part, by letting them know what I would be doing with my study, my intent to be minimally disruptive, what I would do with my findings, why I chose them in the first place, and what they would get out of my work at their school. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, pp. 78-79). I will have a final meeting with the school reform leader to disclose my findings and offer a copy of the study for their use.

### **Participants/Data Sources**

For my study, I interviewed the leader responsible for the *Native Star* and other reform efforts at a BIE funded school to gain his perspectives about school reform. I

understood that along with working with this site's leader, I would keep in mind that not only was I "sampling people, but also settings, events, and processes" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 41) and that surroundings and process could impact my time with participants and data gathering. Based on my experiences as an educator, I planned to use various subset topic areas similar to those in *Native Star* to gather data about how school change efforts are experienced by the participating leader.

## **Methods**

I applied various qualitative methods for my study to explore my research questions:

- How does the site reform leader describe the school reform used at the school?
  - How does the leader describe reform from the primary 3 to 4 focus areas such as: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/ accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability?
- What are the leader's perceptions of how American Indian culture is incorporated in reform efforts?
- What role has the *Native Star* instrument played in reform efforts?
  - Sub-question: How does the leader describe the use of *Native Star* instrument in relation to reform efforts at his school?

I applied qualitative methods of data collection from my research study including: individual interviews, document analysis, and participant-observations. I invited a site leader who was responsible for implementing site reform to participate.

## **Sampling**

I applied purposeful sampling in my study to interview the participant. Bogden and Biklen define this as the selection of which "particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of a developing theory" (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p. 65).

Merriam further defines purposeful sampling as being based on “the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). For this study, I attended a meeting specifically for BIE schools in New Mexico so that I could introduce my study to them and begin the process of identifying a school reform leader who would take part in my research.

**Semi-structured individual interview method and sampling.** I conducted semi-structured interviews with the participating leader who led his site’s reform efforts. I visited with him three times to conduct the interviews to be sure the various facets of reform were discussed and to address the study research questions. Each meeting lasted approximately one hour at times and at locations that were mutually agreed upon. Our meetings covered each research question in depth to be sure they were sufficiently explored. This was helpful for ensuring an in depth discussion about his perceptions of when and how the *Native Star* was used, the nature of other site reform activities, reform outcomes, and the relationship regarding how American Indian culture factors into reform. See Appendix D for a complete set of semi-structured interview questions.

The individual site leader to be interviewed was a principal. Interviews are effective tools to get at the stories people have. In this case, I was interested in how a school reform leader experienced changes on campus that he put in place based on what they determined as needed for their own site. Seidman reinforced this approach as he described interviews as a means to “understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 9). Bogdan and Biklen pointed out that interviews are used “to gather descriptive data in the subjects’ own words so that the researcher can develop



insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 95). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

In keeping with ensuring an American Indian paradigm in this process, the semi-structured interview was a means to gather “knowledge that allows for voice and representational involvement in interpreting findings. A powerful method for achieving this desire is the use of story, life history, oral history, unstructured interviews, and other processes that allow participants to share their experiences on their terms” (Kovach, 2012, p. 82). The semi-structured type of interview questioning allows for a mix of questions to help focus the interview to target participant views on specific areas of reform and still offers flexibility to allow for his personal stories to come through. I chose not to use a completely open-ended approach because I was concerned that it would give non-relevant information to have to address. This might have redirected my study away from its goal of examining the existing reform efforts through the site leader’s perspectives, the way they lived the changes, and their perspective on its cultural impacts. An approach of directed or completely structured questions could also create problems with my study by potentially biasing the questions posed to the respondents. This would result in leading them to a specific response away from a full sense of their own descriptions.

**Participant-observation.** This method is a common qualitative research method that is used to allow a researcher to enter “the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know them and earn their trust, and systematically keeps a detailed written record of what is heard and observed (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, p. 2). DeWalt & DeWalt (2002) further this idea with their belief that “the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as

objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 92). I was a participant-observer at the BIE school site for a site observation walk through pertaining to reform efforts. However, with an American Indian education paradigm, creating relationships and allowing for the relationship to reach the data needed for a participant-observer method is paramount. This is reinforced by Weber-Pillwax who wrote in a journal for Indigenous research methods, "Relationships drive the core of the research" (Weber-Pillwax, 2004, p. 85).

**Document analysis.** Document analysis methodology includes any documents or materials that can be used in conjunction with participant-observer methodology. Personal, official, and popular culture documents are all types of documentation to consider for analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Once artifacts are found, assessing them for authenticity is important. Among concerns to consider with this determination are: document history, incomplete documentation, the author(s), biased/non-biased information, other supporting documentation (Merriam, 1998). Despite possible issues with documents and other material, the information gathered benefit qualitative research "because they can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 126). For my research, documents and materials gathered were compared to individual interview and participant-observer information. Meeting minutes, materials for professional development, artifacts from trainings, technical assistance information, power point presentations are all potential documents for analysis.

### **Analysis**

I analyzed the site reform data individually and in an overall comparison by coding the data to search for any patterns within each type of data as well as across the data and for

each research question. This approach is in line with Dexter who stated that interviews should not be the primary source for data “unless the interviewers have enough relevant background to be sure they can make sense out of interview conversations...” (Dexter, 1970, p. 17). Coding and transcription of interviews was vital so that the information presented allowed for comparisons and still kept anonymity of the participant. Further data was pulled from the participant-observer role I used at the participating sites from their reform effort meeting to establish and reinforce interview and any gathered site reform information. The analysis of the interviews, documents, and participant observations demonstrated differing aspects of the data. Overall, the full experience description by the leader will not be known until the interview analysis is compiled and compared from an overall cross-method analysis to garner larger themes across as many of the data types as possible, describing themes and illustrating with data across methods.

### **Standards of Quality/Rigor**

The standards of rigor applied to all aspects of my study. Respondent validation, the systematic solicitation of feedback, will be used to rule out “the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and perspectives they have on what is going on...” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). I used three data collecting techniques- individual interviews, participant-observer methodology, and documentation analysis as a means of comparing data rather than relying on a single source of data. In my effort of triangulation, meaning that more than one source of analysis are better “in a study than a single source because multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena you are studying” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 107). The use of varying sources increases the standard of quality of the data gathered. Ultimately, the incorporation of rigor from the onset and varied,

in-depth individual interviews combined with document analysis and participant observations enabled me to collect detailed information that is varied enough to provide a “full and revealing picture of what is going on” (Becker, 1970, pp. 51-62) as a way to address issues of validity and credibility in my study. Standards of quality and rigor can be broken down into three sub-groups: goodness, trustworthiness, and generalization.

**Goodness.** Arminio and Hultgren (2002) gave six characteristics to demonstrate ‘goodness’ or the demonstration of rigor of the research. Foundation (philosophical stance), approach (Methodology), representation of voice (researcher and participant), meaning making (interpretation), and implications (recommendations) all must be present in order to have “goodness”. It ensures that research conducted has form and purpose to give meaning to the act and outcome of the qualitative research conducted. In the case of my research, it ensured that I made meaning not only to the readers, but also of the experiences of the school leader I worked with.

**Trustworthiness.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined this to have four elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The expectation is that there should be consistency in the results of observations made by researchers over time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The need for a valid study is at work here. How well the respondents “fit” what is being researched was at work here. A strong “fit” for my study was that I was speaking directly with the school leader responsible for school reform efforts of the tribal school in New Mexico to discuss his perceptions of school reform. This indicated a high credibility for my research. The same could be said for transferability. The “fit” in this case was the idea that it was applicable to American Indian schools in general. My research was a tool to allow for the leader’s voice to be heard and could speak for schools in similar

situations. Dependability could be seen with methods in that it was transparent where my information came from and that it was authentic information directly from the school reform leader directly and not from a second or tertiary source with information degradation from different interpretations. Lastly, confirmability, objectivity or neutrality, could be demonstrated by the reporting of the experiences of the school leader from his own voice. Merriam (1998) added to this with her idea that triangulation, the use of various methods of data collection and analysis strengthens the level of reliability and internal validity (Merriam, 1998, p. 207).

**Generalization.** This assumes that the research analysis can be applied to all BIE schools. However, Guba & Lincoln (1981) suggest that due for the need for internal validity; general application of the research is not entirely possible. If the qualitative research reports the experiences of specific people, then their experiences are theirs alone. It may be similar to another person's, but each person is unique and therefore, not completely generalizable. A single voice may not reveal some similarities between all tribal schools nationally, but it would show their experiences for each participating school site that many tribal school leaders could identify with. I kept this in mind as I conducted the individual interviews, participant observation, and analyzed any documents from the school.

### **Ethics**

As a researcher at the University of New Mexico (UNM), I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative: CITI Social/Behavioral required training for investigators involved in human research. I received consent for this study from the Human Research Protections Office at UNM. I understood that ethical issues must be considered and addressed for individual interviews, document analysis, and participant observations due to

the personal nature of these methods (Patton, 2002). I informed the participant of the intent of my study as well as any associated risks. I reminded the participant that he was under no obligation to take part and could remove himself from the study at any time. The participant received and signed the consent form.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Findings**

#### **The Meeting**

I drove out to the reservation just after lunch. It was my first visit to this reservation. It is a beautiful place among the mesas and plateaus of New Mexico. Spring days seem to highlight the mountains just right so the drive out was pleasant and restful. I had been by there before on my way to another reservation for feast days and to see some friends, but I had never been to this reservation, much less the school. Once I entered, as is the way with many reservation schools, it was down the road, across a bridge, following the road up and after a while, it would be on the right side of the road. I couldn't miss it. At least, that is what the helpful woman told me at the health clinic had directed me to do. The directions seemed shorter than the actual drive somehow. I found the newer built school, signed in and met my school site reform leader. He was the principal, Mr. Jack Clark, his pseudonym. His title is deceiving. In fact, he is the principal, executive director of all central office duties, and any other role needed for the day in order to keep the school running and implementing the reform movement on his campus. He is in his second year here following a few other principals at the site. His mannerism and congenial demeanor demonstrate that he is genuinely happy to be here and to work with the staff and students at the school. He may not be American Indian, but he feels that he has been accepted into the community as much as he is allowed to be.

#### **Determining Focus Areas**

During the 2009 school year, the ELO and Acting School Principal at the time worked on the School Improvement Grant (SIG) to address a multitude of school issues at

the tribal school. A needs assessment was undertaken to discuss the process and how best to include school staff in the process for reform. A three hour meeting followed that included the school staff, school board, parents, and tribal community representatives. Each of the areas in the SIG application and final answers were documented. Once the results were determined, discussions followed to determine what possible improvement and implementation strategies could be designed to change the school. The *Native Star* instrument and its data collection website were to be used as a part of the documentation process to demonstrate progress towards the required actions.

The school had recently become eligible for another three year SIG grant for the upcoming year. The data from both grants were made available to me and will be used to document the recent efforts of reform by the tribal school staff and community. As a format for my findings, I used the first set of SIG application information from document analysis to present the starting point for making meanings of these reform efforts. I then followed with the *Native Star* data. The new SIG application data followed to determine comparable actionable progress and any new directions Mr. Clark, his leadership teams, and school community decided to go in. Finally, I used my observations and interviews throughout to further describe the reforms efforts by Mr. Clark, his staff and the tribal community. Documents, such as the SIG grants, *Native Star*, any other supporting documents, interviews and conversations referred to throughout the chapter, will not be available for review to maintain anonymity for the school and its staff, as well as the tribe.

Focus areas were pre-determined by the Bureau of Indian Education and the immediate efforts for reform from a few years ago due to various issues regarding the need for change. The SIG was applied for to financially assist the work towards reforming a



school in need of immediate improvement. Several areas designated for change based on the SIG included: curricular/instructional changes, professional development, governance, and assessment/accountability. The grant covered a three year span. According to Mr. Clark, he came to the school during year two of the grant and had to work with this improvement grant to be sure its goals and financial support were continued.

### **Describing School Reform**

As we entered his office, I noticed it was very organized, yet it in a state of action with his latest projects. Computer boxes, paperwork and various other items were in their places on his desk and a nearby round table. We caught up from our last conversation when he accepted to be interviewed for my study. We went over our experiences of working with the Bureau of Indian Education, local educational districts, and friends and peers we have in common. Developing and maintaining relationships are important in New Mexico and American Indian communities and this dynamic was in full play as we prepared to begin our talk. As he cleared a place for us to have our discussion, I prepped for our first interview. I had to remind myself to be cognizant that I cannot identify the site specific related material except in generalities and not within the references to safeguard the school and Mr. Clark's actual identity in the study presentation. As I still needed to gather data, my recorder and notepad were at the ready.

Our conversation covered several topics, including his role in the reform efforts on campus. He described the tribal school as a local educational agency. Despite being a single tribal entity, there are requirements through the Department of Performance Accountability (DPA), through three directors in the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Associate Deputy Director-West (ADD-West). As a reference, Mr. Clark gave me background information

regarding the role of the structure within the Bureau of Indian Education. The ADD role covers three distinct regions (East, West, and Navajo) and was created to better serve the various regions of schools and colleges overseen by the Bureau of Indian Education. He further informed me that the Division of Performance and Accountability is the data collection division of the Bureau of Indian Education. Under all of the agencies, there are certain requirements if you are a school in need of improvement or reform. There is flexibility with site decisions on how to specifically address the reform. As an example, there is a mandatory amount of instructional minutes of reading and math within state mandates, but Mr. Clark is able to dictate the instructional and curricular programs he uses.

We then covered the reform efforts at the school since September 10, 2012, when he arrived. He knew the tribal school was in the midst of reform, but he was told this was due to school being one of the lowest functioning Bureau of Indian Education schools in the country. As such, they were able to apply for and receive a school improvement grant (SIG) prior to Mr. Clark's arrival. However, as a condition of the grant, if scores did not improve, the principal would be removed. A point not addressed with Mr. Clark initially when he joined the school. Also, the grant stipulates a minimum of 50% of the teachers would be replaced as an option. The Department of Performance Accountability tied improvement to the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), a formative assessment rather than summative like the Standards Based Assessment (SBA). Some schools among tribal schools in New Mexico were utilizing SBA. However, all tribal schools were required to do the NWEA and therefore chosen to use for the grant by the tribal school in my study. The NWEA provides testing for kindergarten through high school grades. The SBA is another round of tests whose results are used to demonstrate student academic growth. As the site

leader of a school in need of improvement, Mr. Clark has had much to contend with. He balances reforms based on existing grant needs, re-examining site needs for other opportunities for change, and celebrating positive outcomes as they occur. As we spoke, his tone was upbeat and determined despite the level of effort he describes putting forth.

### **SIG 2010**

The School Improvement Grant that currently covers the school reform was written in 2010 for implementation during the 2011-2012 school year. It states,

School Improvement Grants (SIG), authorized under section 1003(g) of Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Title 1 or ESEA), are grants to State Educational Agencies (SEAs) that SEAs use to make competitive sub-grants to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) that demonstrate the greatest need or the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools.

The grant offered four different models to select from. Two of the models, Restart Model and School Closure Model were not applicable for the process. The two remaining models were options to select. The first was the Turnaround Model. It required “replacing the principal, screen existing school staff, and rehire no more than half of the teachers; adopt a new governance structure; and improve the school through curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.” The Transformation Model, the one selected for the 2011 SIG application, indicates “replacing the principal and improve the school thorough comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies.” It also indicated who was to be the lead person for each

of the actionable areas and a calendar to determine benchmark dates and deadlines. The school received the grant and it is currently in its final stages.

### **SIG Required Actions for Reform**

**First SIG required action - Replacing the principal.** The first SIG required action called for the replacement of the principal who led the school prior to the commencement of the transformation model. A lack of leadership was identified as a problem at the tribal school. A number of principals over the previous several years led to “few expectations for staff, lack of accountability and little or no supervision of staff or the daily operation of the school” according to the SIG grant application. The action plan called for the hiring of a new principal who had the experience needed to lead the school transformation process and who could establish a leadership team to support the school’s reform efforts, initially using the *Native Star* Rapid Improvement School Indicators ID01-ID08. The previous administration that initiated the SIG grant was removed per the requirements of the grant. As part of the interview with Mr. Clark, he explained that he came in during the second year to implement and maintain the changes required by the grant. He came with over 20 years of education administration experience, much of which has included reforming the school or agency he has taken the helm for. This included working with staff to supervise and adapt to the needed changes. He did need to familiarize himself with the *Native Star* instrument and the website to document his efforts as required by the grant based on AYP. There has been concern regarding the process and data used to determine how the principal is removed. Per Mr. Clark,

There was no determination on replacing my predecessors before I got here based on current data information at my school. This aspect of the SIG grant calls for

principals to be removed if the school does not make AYP. However, it was not based on the most recent test that just occurred in Spring. That's the one reason I really disagree with the way the law is set up or the way the US Department of Education handles it under the SIG grant. The other thing that really concerns me is that they are replacing principals based solely on limited data and not compiling other info or data points. In the SIG grant, the DPA, the Department of Performance Accountability, is supposed to come out to perform quarterly audits if you will or quarterly reviews of the school. They are required to spend two to three days in the schools. It would be nice if they would occur with consistency and occur with some type of template or they could evaluate a school to see if a school is improving or not and that this type of information would go into the formula of replacing a principal. You only have one earmark to go by and that's if you improve. If you have low scores, but you show that you improve your reading and math scores by 10%, you are fine. If you did not, you replace the principal.

Ultimately, he has not been removed although things were somewhat tenuous at times over the past couple of years through the changes. He has been asked how long he was going to be at the tribal school. He smiled at me with a grin and then told me his response was, "As long as they'll have me."

**Second SIG required action - Teacher development and evaluating systems.** The second required action in the SIG application called for, the use of rigorous, transparent, and equitable evaluation systems for teachers and principals that, (a) took into account data on student growth (as defined in the regulations) as a significant factor as well as other factors such as "multiple observation-based assessments of performance and ongoing collections of

professional practice reflective of student achievement” and (b) “are designed and developed with teacher and principal involvement”. The plan for the evaluation systems was to assure quality and professional development. This action presumes that once the professional development has been given to ensure appropriate training, the evaluation effort would then focus on how well the teacher is able to utilize the training. In this section, the application data and my conversation with Mr. Clark cover both components of the professional development and the subsequent evaluation.

The standard summative evaluation system used by the BIE is a format based on “critical elements” for each position and a 5-tier performance rating indicated in the SIG application. However, a formative component was additionally used since the tribal school is eligible for the SIG money. As a result, six processes and procedures were used to strengthen the formative evaluation:

1. Multiple observation-based assessments of performance would be completed for each teacher using a focused classroom walk-through process. Specific feedback would be provided after every visit.
2. Teacher teams would be formed (grade level/cluster) and would be scheduled to meet at least two times monthly to prepare and improve lessons on the basis of students results- from common formative assessments (curriculum embedded, DIBELS, and Aims Web). Teacher teams would formulate goals for which all team members would be held accountable for achieving.
3. Principal would meet with grade level/cluster teams on a regular basis. Instructional coaches would assume responsibility for facilitation of grade level/cluster teams.

4. Instructional coaches would support improved instructional practice through modeling, teaching, discussing, and mentoring staff. All teachers would be coached.
5. Instructional coaches would be held accountable for achieving the grade level/cluster team goals.
6. Each teacher would have an individualized performance improvement plan and an accompanying/supporting individualized coaching plan.

The principal's evaluation took student growth into account based on them being "successful" according to the 5-Tier performance evaluation plan. The Educational Line Officer (ELO) conducted multiple observations of the principal's performance to increase the capacity for site leadership in the improvement process and strengthening the leadership ability to support teachers and to guide instruction. He was also held accountable to support each grade level/cluster teams' achievement goals and meeting the established goals. The process in completing the performance evaluations developed with teacher and principal involvement and reviewed by BIE Human Resources was to align with Union and collective bargaining agreements. It did allow for ongoing development of a rigorous evaluation system with the goals of improved teaching and learning as an action item. It was to be reviewed prior to the 2011-2012 school year to ensure a common understanding by staff of the performance expectations. The goal was to develop the evaluation system by the end of the grant's first year with year two implementation. Mr. Clark communicated during one of my visits that an evaluation system was created by using Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching as a guide for evaluations and conversations regarding instructional improvement. It contains four domains with elements within each domain. Domain 1 covers planning and

has six elements: demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, demonstrating knowledge of students, setting instructional outcomes, demonstrating knowledge of resources, designing coherent instruction, and designing student assessments. Domain 2 works on the classroom environment with five elements: creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture of learning, managing classroom procedures, managing student behavior, organizing physical space. Domain 3 covers the instructional components of the class and has five elements: communicating with students, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, using assessment in instruction, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness. Finally, Domain 4 covers the professional responsibilities of teachers: reflecting on teaching, maintaining accurate records, communicating with families, participating in a professional community, growing and developing professionally, showing professionalism. They also use the GANAS method for indicating effective instruction when observing classroom instruction. It is based on goals/guiding questions, accessing prior knowledge, new information input/intellectually engage students, application/use, and summarizing/sense-making. Student and Teacher actions are the focus with space for comments on the form. Classroom management is an additional component to the form as is a follow-up on what changes or improvements the teacher the teacher wants to work on based on the follow up. Pre and post documentation forms are filled out to give the principal and the teacher the opportunity to prepare and reflect on instruction and assist with evaluating the teacher. The professional development associated with the evaluation and trainings are numerous to be sure they understand what is expected. Mr. Clark has high hopes for his staff. He feels that “with all of this professional



development, they can't stay stagnate. They'll move forward". He further describes the evaluation process during our conversation,

The government requires us to use their performance evaluation, but when my first came in, they brought in the Charlotte Danielson framework for teaching. We went through training and we went through a formal classroom observation training on how to evaluate under that. I think the state of New Mexico is using that framework. They are using Teachscape, but the state of New Mexico is using all 22 components of Charlotte Danielson's four domains. The BIE chose five components. It's been real quality to sit down with a teacher in a pre-conference and to do a formal observation. We use a form called GANAS that the outside agency came up with to observe a teacher's beginning lesson, their main lesson, and their summary. Then the Charlotte Danielson gives us a good framework with the post-conference, but we are focused on all 22 components like the State of New Mexico, but we are really evaluating the five components in Charlotte Danielson.

As Mr. Clark continued his thoughts, they changed to reflect his perception of how this impacted his staff.

My teachers and I feel it's real comfortable when we sit down and talk and say, 'I saw a lot of this today'. I don't necessarily put it in a computer. I have to give it to a teacher one on one. With me being at a small school and only evaluating six teachers, I can almost have an observation daily and be in a real comfortable professional situation. When it comes to observations, the smallness of my school is a real important quality to be able to formulate your evaluation into quality instead of quantity and with, with like the public school system. I just don't see how they can

get enough quality into that observation so the teacher grows. I think it's more of a check-off list versus it being a quality instrument to improve instruction. We talk a lot about their planning and knowing where their students are struggling going into a lesson and what are they going to do in their lesson as they are planning their lesson. Then, we'll talk a lot about that in the pre-conference. Then, we'll talk a lot about their engagement techniques and their content knowledge when I go in there and observe. When they come back from their observation, we'll do a lot of self-reflection and then I'll give them my personal thoughts after the self-reflection. Usually they'll answer their own questions about what content knowledge they might need, especially in math or in reading to determine what the students are struggling with. For example, if it is fluency and we are not practicing fluency and the teacher is doing all the talking or the teacher is doing all the reading, then how are we working on fluency? So we'll talk about the instruction as far as two things, content knowledge and engagement strategies they are using. We'll also talk about it in the pre-conference and the post-conference and what I'll discuss is their culture for learning, to ensure it is demonstrated as high academic rigor and something that looks urgent, like we really need to learn about this guy because this is going to help us be successful. Or are they just passing out papers and not really giving students immediate feedback and all these stuff. Then we talk a lot about their professional development.

His conversation turns to address the idiosyncrasies of tribal schools, especially in the local area.

So, we use those five things and you can take this with you. Those are the five things we really engage with teachers in the conversation about and those are really the elements in the federal system. Actually, our line officer, who was on the committee with other line officers around the country, got everyone trained on Charlotte Danielson in the BIE. I think there were four or five of them, but I think our line officer was a real instrumental and saying, 'Guys, we can't go with 22,' or, 'we can't go with 10.' For a few years, this will lead us to improved academic outcomes and improving teaching practices because this is what it's about. It's not getting rid of people. We have to start keeping people and helping them get better. So it was mainly line officers to decide it. I wish they would've asked teachers, but they did a pretty good job with the five they came up with.

He went on further to detail teacher teams, their function, and their effectiveness within the scope of professional development and evaluations.

At first, we had two teacher teams. We went to one. The teachers said we are too small. You know, if one person misses, now we are down to two or three in our group. If we have a whole group, we have seven and if we, you know, when all seven of us are here, it's still not that big. If one or two are missing, then we are at five and it's still comfortable to have a conversation. We do our peer observations every Monday where teachers use this form. They have to verbalize it and they have to give it to their colleague. On Fridays, we do professional learning communities and we always center it around either student work or we'll do it around data or we'll do it around the GANAS form itself. Now that our teacher team is now just one group, we spend about an hour a week trying to pinpoint some area of need and how we can

grow from there. It's becoming effective because your final part of that question was about how much I'm I doing? How much are the teachers doing? We were at 90-10. I was doing about 90% of the talking and teachers were doing about 10%. Now we are about 50-50.

Mr. Clark's conversation changed paths slightly again as he became more reflective about his own role in the reform at the tribal school.

The difference now is that we are using cognitive coaching. I have been becoming better at giving them quality open-ended questions so that they can self-reflect instead of questions that puts somebody on the spot or as a yes or no. I'm still learning from my cognitive coaches who are principals that are 40 years experienced that are consultants out there, they can come in and help. They've been through it several times and they were highly successful. It matters to me how we get teachers to be more engaging with other teachers by allowing them to be more self-reflective... Teachers don't like to share with other teachers that well and I think it's just that they were trained that way. They were trained to close their door and teach with kids... We've got to be more self-reflective. What are you doing when you are teaching fractions? What are you doing when you are teaching phonetic awareness?

He returned the conversation back to evaluations at this point in our conversation.

Whatever the case might be, we just started it this year in the New Mexico North and South again under our line officer. I didn't understand it right away because I had a cold when we were in the meeting. I thought it was to improve the GANAS form and it ended up being the guy that came in for cognitive coaching with the principal. It turned out to be okay because it wasn't matter of just, like we are doing right now.

Watching him handle a preconference and then going to an observation with them and comparing notes, but then watching them in a post conference. It was amazing. Under Charlotte Danielson, she talks about a teacher being unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, or distinguished. If the person is unsatisfactory, you've got to make moves and you've got to do it in a hurry or you are going to hurt kids. If a person is basic and they are willing to grow, then you want to use a lot of self-reflection and you want to use a lot of mentoring with other good colleagues. If you have a good person, then they'll grow over time. You are not going to change things overnight and, and if they are proficient, they probably need to grow too, so this cognitive coaching self-reflection is good. Initially, it wasn't explained well, so I volunteered. I said, "Oh, I'll go first. Send the person over and we'll work on the GANAS form...I think it's working out real good for me and my professional growth."

He then gave an account of the resource person who came in to observe and train his staff as a part of the professional development.

He is here every Monday and is here for math. He is willing to do anything when he gets here, but that's what he gets paid for. He mainly works with staff every Monday when he goes in. We'll do a peer observation and he'll be part of that peer observation group. He'll also go check in with all the other teachers throughout the day to ask them, 'What are you doing? Do you need any assistance?' Often times especially teachers in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth, will say, 'You know, I'm having trouble with percentages or I'm having trouble with this and that,' It's nice that this instructional coach has 30 years of teaching experience. Some of the time a teacher will say, 'Can you do something for 20 minutes with my kids and I'll

observe it.' And he will. And that's the best instructional coaching you can get.

That's one piece that we get with the instructional coach.

His conversation moved from coaching to how data from the classroom instruction was addressed.

The other piece we get is a lot of data analysis. Our teachers study data every Friday. I've gotten better at putting data together for my teachers. I have just completed beginning of the year and middle of the year data on reading and math of NWA for all my teachers for every kid in the school. The instructional coach is always helping me work on data and he is always putting things together for our teachers, constantly analyzing where their students are at and what needs they have so that differentiated instruction can occur. Instructional coaches in all six schools have been done away with by ADD West. Now, at least six schools have hired consultants to come in on an occasional basis to be an instructional coach. The schools that had instructional coaches through other grants, ADD West did away with those and took all the money and brought it back to ADD West. They are providing everybody with professional development that they need. I don't know if I necessarily agree with that because it's always nicer to have a body in the building that can assist teachers.

As we spoke about professional development, our conversation moved to what happened with staff who do not improve despite training and the future of teacher licensure in the BIE.

We only have one employee on a plan for improvement and it's not a teacher. The nice thing is that all teachers in BIE all have an individual development plan which is a teacher doing that on their own through the BIE process. They do their own individual development plan. Most of our teachers may be impacted by what's going

on in the federal government for the BIE operated schools. The BIE operated schools director spoke with President Obama at Standing Rock this summer. From that speech, which was the first time since Abraham Lincoln a president had spoken on tribal land, there are possibly a lot of things coming. One of the things possibly coming is that at some point it'll be mandatory, but it's not yet, that all teachers will be nationally board certified. A lot of my recommendations to my teachers, and one that other principals are giving to their teachers, are on their individual development plan which calls for what are you doing immediately and what are you doing long term with their licensure. In the short term, it is for them to possibly put down that they are either going to investigate national board certification or they are going to become nationally board certified. I've asked all the teachers to consider that and the line officer has shared that seventy-eight teachers in New Mexico have signed up to start becoming nationally board certified. None of my teachers have, but my teachers have all stated on their individual development plans that they are going to be looking at applying next year. For us, some of my teachers that are close to the end of their career, that's a heck of a decision.

For a single element within the SIG application, this required action encompasses several facets to satisfy the six processes it covers. Due to the extent of the work required by Mr. Clark and his staff to complete this required action, periodic action and reflection seemed to have been routine.

**Third SIG required action - Human resource actions for results.** The third action in the SIG grant was the need to, "identify and reward school leaders, teachers, and other staff who, in implementing this model, had increased students achievement and/or higher

school graduation rates and identify and remove those who, after ample opportunities have been provided for them to improve their professional practice, have failed to do so.” The plan was for staff that increases student achievement to be rewarded and to remove staff who failed to improve their professional practice. The leadership team would work with BIE Human Resources to establish an incentive system and identify how the evaluation system would result in the removal of staff if improvement did not occur. Financial incentives are currently in place for all staff, not just teachers per Mr. Clark. When he got there, he was in favor of the incentives as “it could create stability. Even with teachers that aren’t as dedicated with attendance, they can’t stay stagnate, they’ll move forward. As we continued our conversation about incentives, he offered the following insight about incentives, including the incentive for his role on campus. The principal’s incentive and that offered to staff differed per the grant per Mr. Clark,

They were given out for signing your initial contract. Twenty-five percent was the incentive because the grant awarded it because you were being hired as a highly qualified level three instructor or a level three administrator. So, now that you are under the SIG grant 25% and then under the SIG grant, you could also have had a good chunk of change to give out a Star award for movement of 90% of your class. It was given when academic scores went in a positive direction, you had certain levels, certain monies you could award. You know, but you couldn’t receive up to \$2500. It is as simple as signing your annual contract in order to be eligible for the incentive. Mr. Clark adds, I would say 25% paid that first year on top of my salary. It was like, wow! The second year, because I knew I was going to get it, that’s why one of the reasons I came. However, for staff in their second year not to get it and the third year



not to get it, 25% is a chunk that you could have used. So here you are and so you are thinking you lost it but it wasn't lost, it was just an extra incentive to get you to come here initially. It was a one-time deal, but for some people it could have been for three years. So, that initial principal would have been able to stay for the three years with the grant. However, that principal, they removed. They could have received 25% on top of their salary for three years. So it was a one-time signup, but it was for as long as that grant was available.

Regardless of how the incentives were distributed, a signing bonus to attract highly qualified staff helps to entice veteran teachers who can assist students in need. Without it, I am not sure the staff he has would still be there.

**Fourth SIG required action - Professional development.** The fourth required action in developing and increasing teacher and school leader effectiveness was, according to the grant application, to “provide staff on-going, high-quality, job-embedded professional development (e.g., regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects deep understanding of the community served by the school, or differentiated instruction) that is aligned with the school’s comprehensive instructional program and designed with school staff to ensure they are equipped to facilitate effective teaching and learning and have the capacity to successfully implement school reform strategies. This was developed because the school did not have a structured and student-focused professional development plan. Staff evaluations and instructional practices were unfocused and teachers did not align their instructional practices to lower performing student needs. The result, according to Mr. Clark, was to work on a “feedback-focused walk-through model centered on identifying and supporting teachers’ individual strengths and addressing areas that need improvement.” This

was done with the help of an outside agency contracted to work with staff on improving professional development as well as instructional assistance. Classroom visits were conducted by Mr. Clark and representatives from the outside agency to identify instructional and learning needs as well as to align differentiated professional development to the needs of staff. Timely feedback and various forms of communication such as direct personal contact, emails, and observation checklists, were used. During a walk to visit classes, Mr. Clark let me know he felt this was an important factor for working to improve teacher effectiveness. He also reiterated the use of content specific consultants to support the school's needs including, professional development, observations with specific feedback, modeling lesson delivery, co-planning/co-teaching lessons, videotaping and analyzing performance together, and facilitate grade-cluster meetings. Further conversations with Mr. Clark revealed more specific approaches to professional development.

We have to now look at our data. We do that on Friday afternoons. We do a lot of researching with our professional learning communities. It is based on one of the *Native Star* indicators regarding the need to develop our professional training using data based on collaborating over our data and determining what needs the students and the teachers have. All of this is based on either the contract that we signed with an outside agency and it has to be tied to one of the indicators and *Native Star* now. Our professional learning community time is where we get together and analyze data and we say this is what our kids need and ask ourselves if we better get training or this is what we need or will this help move the school board. This kind of tells you 71% of us were there. We determined the type of training and over how many days. Just to give you a good idea, we work with the BIE, which is nice, the government says you

have to pay them their professional salary to do this. So, employees benefit. For professional development, I have to save all that money to pay them an honorable professional salary to go to these professional developments is good. Also, it's all based on reading and math and common cause standards, all of it. It's part of the fourth domain of the evaluation. It's part of being in education today.

The level of professional development initially available from the SIG grant was impactful for the time it was in place. Many schools were not able to provide as much professional development when financial resources are not available. Mr. Clark appeared to be mindful of this fact, but also about making sure they were compensated for any extra time given to participate in the professional development.

**Fifth SIG required action – Incentives.** Another required action in the grant was to “implement such strategies as financial incentives, increased opportunities for promotion and career growth, and more flexible work conditions that are designed to recruit, place, and retain staff with the skills necessary to meet the needs of the student in the transformation model”. Recruitment and retention were problematic and it was considered this was due to the high administrative turnover rate. This required action allowed for award programs, staffing differentials, and other financial incentives to be used to recruit and retain staff. This was in conjunction with the revised evaluation and reward systems previously mentioned. Mr. Clark detailed this by giving me the example of money awards of up to two-thousand five hundred dollars that he intended to give as an incentive if 90 percent of a classroom progressed by at least one full grade level. He further explained that educational levels also impact overall incentive amounts. This conversation was covered in tandem with the fourth SIG action. He did comment about forms of incentives to appeal to potential and existing staff,

I'm going to tell you what I wrote but they didn't accept. It was really simple. I tried to give them off on Fridays at 3:00 o'clock, like I give them a free hour. Or I try to give them an hour or two off when the governor says there is something going on. And with pay ... as a way of telling them that we really appreciate it and we need you to be a part of this family. The other main thing was that it was not accepted in *Native Star*. I had to come up with a lot of money to make it work. One of the things that I think really works with retention is not interruption academic time all morning. Every morning at my school is academic time only. That first year I go there you know. However, the governor was changing things or people were coming in and wanting to do things or we had requests from the tribal educational office. Anything can be accommodated. We'll accommodate hearing test and eye tests. We'll do whatever. We'll get kids there to get their teeth cleaned you know, all these little things that go on in education. We'll do anything from 12:30 on, but from 8:30 to 11:30, which is three hours, we are going to do academics. It's going to be a safe, regular, and predictable environment. I think the teachers stated this in the accreditation to the external review team. They mentioned that (they) now, hopefully, have all day. But if (they) don't, (they) know that special assemblies may come, but if (they) do want it, (they) can say we'll build it into the academic time. Gary will give us a month in advance. An example of this was when we had a professional author of children's literature stop by. She was driving through New Mexico and asked if any principals would like her to talk to their kids. I agreed since it was a one-time experience. I had four teachers that said, 'She talked to them about being an author. She talked to them about writing'. And so it was still academic, but we won't do anything outside of the

academic day in those first three hours. That's sacred time and I think that's a retention tool. I think people get frustrated about the intercom going off. I think they get frustrated about interruptions in their classroom... And I think that's what helped us move our scores, although small, but forward. It happened after that first year.

That was an added thing in a tribal school that you may not find in public schools.

The incentives included "sacred time" which is a luxury many schools do not have nor do they have the same reasons for the need for "sacred time" due to tribal obligations.

Ultimately, Mr. Clark had the foresight to work with tribal officials to work around some of the academic time as frequently as possible. This appears to come partly from the staff wanting adequate teaching time, but also the tribe's need to balance family and culture with knowing the educational needs of their children.

**Sixth SIG required action – Governance.** The final required action in this area was the need to adopt a new governance structure. The BIE structured a new governance framework for schools receiving SIG monies. All schools who received the grant money were to work with the Turnaround Office within the BIE. The school would also identify a support team to assist with implementation. The other actions regarding governance included working more closely with school improvement planning and updating vision and mission statements. Mr. Clark worked closely with his ELO, ADD, and the Turnaround Office with regular updates and discussions at different times with each office. According to Mr. Clark, the different oversight offices can have differing needs and not agree on what next steps to take. At times, he needed to wait for the governing entities to reach consensus or come to an agreement as to how to proceed as they negotiate between what satisfied requirements for the

grant and their respective departmental demands. The other changes included tribal and parental governance.

The changes in governance that we put in place with the parents, for example, address that our parents don't attend school frequently, but the parents in this tribe, they work so hard. They have to travel all the way to the nearest large city and there are those that have jobs that are far or they work in a tribal office and the government takes a lot of their time between being a tribal employee and a tribal member. A lot of the parent situation is that they want one meeting a month and they would like one hour for academics and one hour for activities such as fund raising. Also, we have teachers come to our PSO meetings and they always perform, they always state their curriculum and what they are doing and what the test scores look like. The parents show up. They like that. But, when the BIE/government see the parental involvement plans, they don't like what we do here because we don't get to work our parents enough. But, in listening to our community and the surveys and so forth, they are happy because it's what they can contribute to the school. So, the governance, kind of the way we've set up as we all run this school together on this reservation. We feel like we have a pretty good situation. Usually it's been a pretty good majority, I mean 100% across the board. They like when our parent-teacher conferences are. They like the structures we have set up to govern the school. I think what we've done is we've listened well and we balanced everybody's life because as a tribal member, they've got to use a lot of their own personal time. I don't know how they can do half of the things they do. For example, when a man or woman has situational tribal responsibilities, I don't know how they manage their employment life with their

personal life with all the activities that are involved. We've been able to balance it because women, for example, are a backbone of the school with their children. They are the ones that are deeply concerned about their child's education. Not that the man isn't, but they are embedded in it. They are trying to, to foster their children.

It is interesting to see how the dynamics of school district play out in a tribal school that is its own singular entity. Mr. Clark was the principal, but his role extended to working with the tribal school board and was responsible for working with several groups to ensure the physical plant, budget, human resources, curriculum/instruction, and ancillary services are addressed with the tribe and the BIE. The inclusion of parents and other tribal members was similar to how a Parent Teacher Association/Organization (PTA/PTO) work with the school, but with much more input due to the need for tribal culture to be embedded into the school. After all, the children are seen as the future of the tribe. Their academic success and reinforcing their cultural and linguistic responsibilities will strongly impact the tribe's future.

**Seventh SIG required action - Comprehensive instructional reform strategies.**

The next two required actions were based on the instructional reform changes that occurred at the tribal school. The first of which was the use of "data to identify and implement an instructional program that is research-based and vertically aligned from one grade to the next as well as aligned with State academic standards. The school lacked a uniform standards-based curriculum, a structured instructional program, assessment and instructional alignment, consistent curricular materials, and no coordination between grades and classrooms. Core curriculum selection for Reading and Math that were standards-based, vertically aligned, and aligned to New Mexico state standards and grade level benchmarks were to be purchased for all students to access. For students who did not demonstrate sufficient progress, additional

corrective reading and math curriculum were purchased. As indicated in the grant, staff looked at the following assessment information to make the decision: SBA, NWEA, AIMS Web, DIEBLS data”. Mr. Clark laments, “This information indicated that the school remained in the bottom 5% as measured with other schools from the BIE.” During the 2012-2013 school year, according to student assessment data, students began to make positive incremental growth. It was not the 20% to 30% growth suggested in the grant, a level of rapid growth Mr. Clark felt was “just not a reachable number” and “ludicrous”. There was growth nonetheless after the instructional changes were put in place, enough to demonstrate that the changes were generating high scores from students in various assessments. Other concerns with instructional change are in the area of English Language learners, which is at 100 percent at this school. Mr. Clark commented,

Our ELL strategy for our English language learners, is based an assessment that shows they aren’t moving forward like we want them to. In other words we are not exiting kids out of the ELL category. One of the things that we’ve tried is that we spend Friday afternoons and our professional development looking at the data, looking at all the observations, and all our discussions. What we have noticed is that we are not reading, writing, thinking, speaking and listening enough. It’s too adult driven and it needs to be more student driven. When we are dealing with our English language learners, we look for strategies like pair-share every day. We look to see that in every lesson if there is a consistent theme with how much reading is the student doing. Sometimes there is none at all. How much speaking is the student doing? How much listening is the student listening to other students? So we’ve narrowed it down to where we want the teachers to incorporate reading in their lesson



plans and when we observe them, we want to see student engagement as far as students reading, listening, and speaking. We just started this year based on the stagnant ELL assessments. Our ELL test scores have shown us that in our lesson plans, we are not thinking. That's why we wanted to think about the students' needs first. And it's the, you know, the old coaching way of keep it simple in the lesson plans. I know that there are all kinds of great theories of how to do lesson plans, but it's sort of like, what are you going to do as the adult? What are they going to do together with the students so you can have all those components? And then what do they need to do to learn concepts? So, how can we slow this thing down? How can we make it simple so we can hit the targets that we are trying to reach? Well, the target is to remove all kids from ELL. You know, that the assessment scores are at a range where they don't have to test anymore. So, that's what we are trying to do. For your report, it's the WIDA assessment... so they can exit off from having to take the WIDA assessment the following year.

Instructional reform at Mr. Clark's school is still moving in a positive direction. The fact that the school did not make AYP based on a ten percent growth compared to the previous year should not be overlooked. Continued incremental growth over the past couple of years under Mr. Clark's direction may eventually reach the school's reform goals.

**Eighth SIG required action - Assessment data.** The second required action regarding instructional reform included promoting "the continuous use of student data (such as formative, interim, and summative assessments) to inform and differentiate instruction in order to meet the academic needs of individual students". The needs assessment indicated that creating information and using the resulting data for decision making was not the norm.

As a result, the plan to remedy this was to use data not only for decision-making based on student performance data, but also to drive policy to “improve organizational performance”. This plan directly addressed the Rapid Improvement School Indicators IID02 and IID03. A Response to Intervention (RtI) model was also to be developed based on the idea that some students needed more time and support to meet agreed upon goals/standards. The intent was to establish a schoolwide system for academic interventions and allowed for the hiring of additional staff to create an effective implementation of the intervention program.

Technology was also integral to this effort. Mr. Clark expresses that the “technology literacy component attitude of classrooms has really assisted our school reform.” The grant allowed for technology to be purchased so that all teachers had their own computer and a smart board in their classrooms and computer labs were able to be created. He proudly showed off the rooms as we toured the school. They will not only be used for instruction as needed, but also for the new state testing needs he explained. Also, assessment reports have become regular agenda items at grade level, leadership, and board meetings to further discuss instructional needs and academic progress. He details this further,

For formative and summative assessments, we are using PARCC and the SBA. We use the NWEA at the beginning of the year, middle of the year, end of the year. We also use Accelerated Reader here. We were allowed to because we are not in the grant anymore. We were able to choose, so we decided we didn’t have to use DIBELS or AIMS web. I told teachers, ‘Okay, friends, you can use it if you want to. But I don’t want you to worry about monitoring and testing kids out of the world.’ What I asked them to do is use Accelerated Reader because our reading scores are so low that anything we can do to create reading or have our kids read is what we need to use.

With Accelerated Reader, a student reads a book based on their Lexile score and then they take a test, a computer test, and they pass it if their comprehension level on reading that book is 70% or greater. It's an incentive for the kids to get them to read so they can feel good about themselves that they pass this test on this book. But it's also an incentive for the teacher because they set it up like, 'Let's see if we can get you to read 10 books this semester,' or stuff like that. So we use also accelerated reader in those assessments.

Again Mr. Clark addresses instructional reform, in this case, in the vein of assessments. Incremental growth, as demonstrated by data from several assessments, illustrates that the changes put in place are working. The number of different assessments and the frequency by which they are given is not an issue lost on Mr. Clark. He was able to allow for his staff to use specific assessment tests as they determined their needs during the time frame of this SIG grant.

**Ninth SIG required action - Increase learning time and create community-oriented schools.** Allotted time and instructional minutes were focused on in order to “establish schedules and strategies that provide increased learning time (as defined in the final requirements)”. The tribal school did not allow for enough instructional days to meet minimal standards. This, in conjunction with days off due to tribal cultural and religious needs, put the instructional calendar behind what was needed. The school decided to extend the school day and school year with built in teacher professional development time on Friday during the second part of the work day. Also, the plan was to allow for students identified as needing intensive intervention to receive assistance after school and/or during a summer session with teachers who were willing to work on extended contracts. The school calendar

was revised to 225 days total with 193 of those days for instruction time with students and 32 days of teacher training. This was more than the 184 days of combined instruction and professional development time in surrounding public school districts. In this approach, Mr. Clark felt, “we can make it fit the needs of this tribe.”

An afterschool program was created as well as a summer program that targeted specific students. The summer program was delayed initially due to physical plant issues. Culture was considered in this action to ensure tribal needs for children to participate in summer tribal activities. It not only respected cultural needs, but it also allowed for time in the day to offer culture and language classes to students taught by elders from the community. He furthered that,

The governors have stated that they would try to keep these kids here at least half a day protecting our academic needs, you know for those sacred, safe, regular, predictable mornings. Every time a governor gets elected, we sit down like this and I share with them that. And, it makes a lot of sense to the governor so they’re conscientious about it. The last two have been really good about it.

Fortunately, Mr. Clark’s relationship with the tribal leaders appears to be strong. This relationship is vital to his success at the school and for meeting the cultural and academic needs of his students.

**Tenth SIG required action – Engagement.** The next required action was to “provide ongoing mechanisms for family and community engagement.” Parent involvement was minimal and lacked any parent communication regarding school policies, homework policies, and student support strategies. Student-led conferences are inconsistently conducted. To remedy this, a Home/School Liaison was to be brought on board to support families and

the tribal community, as well as conduct home visits and parent training. A counselor was to be hired as well to address community-oriented activities such as anti-bullying and anti-harassment and positive behavioral support per the grant. The counselor was also to identify a screening tool to determine if students needed more support and to make any referrals as determined by screening outcomes. The inclusion of programs for the overall engagement of the parents and tribal community as well as behavioral supports was to be a component of the counselor's functions if they were able to hire one.

Proudly, Mr. Clark lets me know that professional development for parents regarding academic interventions and special education were provided. Newsletters were developed and sent home to inform parents of school events. Emergency messaging was developed to alert parents of any emergency on campus. Also, parents were provided opportunities to participate in decision making on campus. These opportunities came from his work during school board and school planning meetings. Other opportunities came through implementing school climate and positive behavior initiatives asking for parent input, ideas, and support. Cultural norms and traditions are a part of the meetings and information when appropriate or required. With this comes the need for developing and maintaining relationships. As Mr. Clark puts it, "It's a real kind of basic thought, but being a servant leader and developing relationships is the biggest component of school reform." This sense of the importance of connection and community by Mr. Clark and the leadership team also led to the arrival of one of the then new tribal leaders with an agricultural background to come to teach traditional methods of farming and agriculture to students at the tribal school. As we continued to speak about parental participation he offered the following thoughts,

When I first got here, they had just reviewed the mission and vision about general practices. Now as we set up the governance structure, how we want to operate, what we believe in, we need to revisit that on an annual basis. However, this past Spring, it came up on my external review report on my accreditation for the school. There needs to be more parent involvement in deciding the mission and vision of the school. I asked him if he felt the accreditation committee had an understanding about tribal communities, their schools and parental engagement. He responded,

I hadn't thought about that, especially when we get the blessings from the governor and speak to the governor about moving the calendar. When we set up the calendar, we sat down with the governor. The governor is just going to meet the needs of tribal law and he'll help me change it. Actually, in New Mexico, they are really making a conscientious effort to become familiar with (parental engagement and tribal needs). Thank goodness, because an American Indian educational leader led the accreditation team when they came out and did ours. They used to be the educational liaison for a local tribe. So that person is teaching the director of the accreditation a little bit about that and then so they asked me to be trained and start evaluating. I'm going to go evaluate another tribal school and I'm going to be on the team that goes to another local tribal school probably.

When we spoke about community engagement and the need he felt for a liaison, he gave additional thoughts.

I wanted to have a liaison and it didn't work out. What we have now is a social worker that works with the tribe. We also have a great relationship with the judge. The tribe has a judge right now and a social worker and we have a committee of

people that are set up to work on the disciplinary policy of the tribal school. We also work on the attendance policy that balances a little bit with the state statute and the tribal beliefs. It is an ongoing effort overall, but now we have a referral process to the social worker as an intervention with kids in need. Our counseling services are not great, but they've gone from nothing to having kids that are in need of services being addressed. There wasn't money in the past for the liaison. There is not money now, but people are pulling together.

Despite financial barriers, Mr. Clark has been resourceful. He, his staff, and the tribe have been able to come up with work-arounds to meet the needs of his students.

**Eleventh SIG required action - Provide operational flexibility and sustained support.** This fourth area of reform focus began with the need to allow the school sufficient operational flexibility (such as staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement a fully comprehensive approach to substantially improve student achievement outcomes. The tribal school actually had flexibility in terms of calendars, budgeting, etc. This area was written to assist with transitions, such as the time and training of the new principal as well as time for implementation of reform actions. Fortunately, Mr. Clark reports that he has a good working relationship with regular guidance from the ELO regarding all short and long-term reform actions and finding resources ensured school improvement efforts. Also, the school's computer network and technology were updated with the initial grant implementation and his follow up of purchasing more technology. Both efforts are confirmed as successful through the eyes of Mr. Clark. He offered this thought on the topic regarding operational flexibility and the BIE.

They have a huge role. We have to develop our own budget, but we have to follow every BIE line item with all the mandates that it carries. Money is really tied to a certain thing. You know, educational assistants are tied to Title 1. Teachers are tied to regular ed. Every time you do a professional development, it's tied to Title 2. The DPA has a quarterly budget review which had us changing a lot of things in order to meet the mandates of how that money should be spent. So they are monitoring that like a watch dog.

When I asked him about flexibility with the SIG monies, he was a little more content with these monies.

You know the SIG grant was effective because the grant gave you money to be flexible with student incentives for example. You had a student incentive line item and you could reward students for being quality academic achievers or well behaved. The incentive was effective because of things like meeting student and teacher technology needs. The smart boards in every classroom have really helped our students. Technology is engaging for kids. It allowed us to be flexible to spend money where we knew we needed it or previous principals spend money where they knew this school needed it. It helps to allow the school to have some local autonomy with money.

Ultimately, Mr. Clark has had flexibility with the finances from the SIG grant that he did not have with his regular site budget. Operationally, the changes made were within his prevue and was able to put them in place working with his staff and the tribe. Sustainability of all of his efforts in this required action section is in question at this time. Only time will tell if continued benefits will be available for him.



**Twelfth SIG required action - Ongoing support.** The final required action in the 2010 grant and in the area of flexibility and sustainability worked to “ensure that the school receives on going, intensive technical assistance and related support from the ELO/ADD and the SEA turnaround office”. In the plan for this action, the tribal school agreed to work with the assigned intensive support team from the Turnaround Office located at the BIE offices in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It also agreed to participate in any SIG related training and professional development available through the BIE. Mr. Clark and his staff have participated in any trainings the BIE has offered through its various offices and administrative and oversight levels.

This first SIG grant is supported by the *Native Star* indicators instrument from the Bureau of Indian Education and the Center on Innovation and Improvement that is used to help tribal schools identify site needs to focus reform efforts. The indicators fall under the following groupings: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability. Mr. Clark currently focuses on twenty of the ninety-nine indicators based on his work with his Educational Line Officer (ELO), the person who is his immediate supervisor from the Bureau of Indian Education. The SIG and the *Native Star* inventory are overlapping and define the reform efforts on campus. All purchases with SIG money and any reports to demonstrate progress of the school rest primarily on information the reform indicator reports. When I asked him if one particular agency or department was more supportive than others, he was definitive about this.

Primarily the Educational Line Office is. The other ones make you feel like you are fulfilling needs for a report, making changes to the way you are doing some things so

that you can give them a new report so that you are meeting their requirement. I think the line office probably would be the one providing the technical assistance like finding the cognitive coach to come in or trying to assist you with school board bylaws and BIAM federal guidelines. If you need help walking through some issues or problems, it's probably the line office that will assist.

The Educational Line Officer (ELO) had been a strong proponent of Mr. Clark and has assisted him with navigating through this SIG process and with site needs. The BIE has several departments that impact tribal schools. Due to their individual narrowed scope of requirements meant to ensure federal compliance in specific area, the ELO and their office has the most impact regarding technical assistance due to their role as the direct department overseeing the educational process. They also assist with site needs within a regions covering several schools.

### ***Native Star and School Improvement***

*Native Star* is an annual indicator instrument used by Bureau of Indian Education schools to assist with indicating ninety-nine high leverage indicators of effective practice for rapid improvement. A school is able to go through the indicators to focus on a sub-set of the indicators. In the case of Mr. Clark's school, he works with the *Native Star* indicators established for the Associate Deputy Director –West regional schools are the most relevant to Mr. Clark's school. The indicators are used to demonstrate progress towards school improvement. Mr. Clark uses a website created by the Center on Innovation and Improvement to login and input his data for monitoring purposes. This includes a model that includes the ability for the school to assess indicators, create and revise objective plans, and monitor progress. The *Native Star* indicators are aligned to the SIG objectives to finance

many of the changes at the school. He works with his staff to put specific improvement efforts in place. This has allowed for a more directed approach towards school reform as a result. As principal, he is the designated leader responsible for ensuring the indicators are addressed and for any related reports and monitoring that need to be completed.

### **Active Reform**

As we spoke more about specific site reforms efforts, Mr. Clark showed me the *Native Star* web site and let me know that several components that run concurrently and in alignment with each other that make up the reform on campus. Of the seventy-nine *Native Star* indicators the school staff has worked on, the Bureau of Indian Education had identified the twenty indicators known as the “High Leverage Indicators of Effective Practice”, which was further pared down to six indicators by the Associate Deputy Director –West regional schools. These were broken down into three areas with their own indicator subsets. Under School Leadership, establishing a team structure with specific duties was implemented. Its primary focus was to formalize time for instructional planning and focusing the principal’s role on building leadership capacity achieving learning goals and improving instruction are identified.

From the area of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instructional Planning, the indicator identified is assessing student learning frequently with standards-based assessments. The final area focused on by the Associate Deputy Director –West regional schools has led to three indicators selected: (a) expecting and monitoring sound instruction in a variety of modes-Preparation; (b) expecting and monitoring sound instruction in a variety of modes-student directed, small group and independent work; and (c) expecting and monitoring sound homework practices and communication with parents.

The *Native Star* inventory and the School Improvement grant are similar in what is identified as needing improvement/reform. The *Native Star* is for identifying areas for growth based on the ninety-nine indicators. It occurs annually to ensure school sites are sustaining their efforts to maintain growth for student academics and site programs. The School Improvement Grant is much more of a site based self-evaluation that not only identifies the specific areas in need of change, but also to demonstrate that after 3 years of implementation, the model selected has changed the school to the betterment of the school and tribal communities. Their alignment and consistent execution has driven the reform efforts for the past three years with Mr. Clark at the helm for last two years. Initially, he found it “a big surprise that there were 99 indicators that we had to report on, that what we were doing was based on research.” His concern was that he had to justify each indicator. He decided however that even though he may not like it, he feels loyalty to the BIE. He told me, “I’ll try to do my best on it.” He did feel fortunate that the ADD’s agreed that the tribal school should only work on 20 indicators. Once that was decided, he met all summer long with his leadership team to create a plan to address the 20 *Native Star* indicators and the SIG requirements. The role of the *Native Star* is not as prominent as the SIG grant. Mr. Clark, describes the instrument and online accounting piece as the BIE wanting it to have a larger role in how schools begin to look for answers but Mr. Clark reveals, “I don’t know if the school sees it that way.” As we speak further, he gave more details about *Native Star* and its role at the tribal school.

*Native Star* has changed over time because when I first came here we had to answer to ninety-nine *Native Star* indicators, ninety-nine! So then we went to thirty-three.

Thirty-three felt like a huge burden off your back. Now we are at six. It’s sort of like

Charlotte Danielson's going in and working on six things is a lot easier for a principal. One of the six *Native Star* indicators are you have to work with teachers 50% of the time, either in the classroom or working on instruction 50% of the time. When I'm working on a pre-conference or I'm working with the teacher, all those minutes matter. But, I can focus on one out of six *Native Star* things and how could fulfill 50% of my day working on instruction. I can formulate that in my head and I can work on it. Or, if one of the indicators say to look at pre- and post-classroom assessments for a unit, study and look at your data and desegregate that, you can do it weekly or, monthly, but you've got to do it and look to see what needs students have and see what professional development needs your staff has. I can learn one out of six *Native Star* indicators that say that and I can really embed it and try to make my school better. Before, with 99 or 33 indicators, I basically used time to fill out a report and then put it on a shelf and not make it a continuous improvement practice. With six, I can make that all a continuous improvement practice daily because it's manageable for me and for my staff.

The BIE has made the reform effort more attainable with fewer indicators from the *Native Star* instrument used to indicate areas needed for change and improve the ability to manage the actions and efforts from tribal schools. However, it is still a process beyond the SIG requirements, which based on the number of required actions, can cause issues prioritizing implementation.

### **SIG 2013**

According to Mr. Clark, a new grant was being written for implementation this upcoming school year. Mr. Clark and I had some conversation regarding the new grant as it

was nearing the submission phase at the time of the study. The information regarding the new application comes primarily from the application. Mr. Clark was hoping for the approval of the new grant so that he and his leadership team could continue the growth on various levels at the tribal school. He was able to get me a copy of what was submitted. It identifies several challenges in need of reform. The most vital of which was the need for continued strong leadership. In addition, other priority areas were acknowledged, including:

- No defined, consistent K-8 curriculum existed
- Lesson plans were not developed or submitted for review
- New Mexico content standards were used to develop instruction
- No procedures existed for collection, analysis, or reporting of data
- No vertical alignment between grades or between site programs
- Staff supervision, classroom observations or staff evaluation were not implemented consistently
- Professional development was either not provided and not targeted to specific to site needs such as improving instruction
- Organized parent involvement was not in place.

As part of this grant, strategies to address these areas were written into the grant, including:

- Replacing the principal
- Improving the instructional program and teacher effectiveness
- Develop and implement a rigorous evaluation system
- Develop and implement ways to reward staff as incentives based on student growth
- Provide ongoing professional development
- Changes in governance to increase accountability

- Use data for program alignment purposes and for all relevant instructional decisions
- Extend learning time in staff contract calendars and student instructional days
- A Home/School Liaison team to engage the community will be established

This grant continues its focus on required actions information for this new grant. The primary difference from the previous SIG grant is that it is presented as a Plan of Operation that includes sections for the required actions, strategies, person(s) responsible, timelines, and evidence of completion and evaluation. There are a total of eleven required actions in this grant, similar to the original grant.

The first is the need to replace the principal. The strategy for this action is that since the original principal from the first grant had been replaced, Mr. Clark will stay in place. There was discussion initially, but he will be allowed to stay at the tribal school. Other staff was replaced as well since then and current staff will not be changed.

The next action mandates the use of a rigorous, transparent evaluation system for teachers and principals that take student data into account. This takes form through the collaboration between the Division of Performance and Accountability (DPA), the Area Deputy Director- West (ADD-West), New Mexico South Education Line Officer (NMS-ELO), and the school leadership team. The principal also uses a research-based evaluation model to evaluate and improve instruction as he did in the previous grant. This is supported by a program that improves student learning through professional development between teachers, the principal, and peers to address effective instruction connecting the Common Core to existing classroom instruction. Also, the school has 100% English Language Learners (ELL) and the school has a guided language acquisition program to assist with English language acquisition.

The third required action in this grant calls for rewarding school leaders, teachers and staff who increase student achievement and to remove staff who, even after professional development, do not increase their students' academic growth. This is determined by the use of NWEA and PARCC assessments and the goal of 50% of students in each class will be proficient or advanced at the end of the year. Financial incentives vary per role on campus such as teachers, educational technicians, and other staff.

Ongoing, high-quality professional development aligned with the school's comprehensive instructional goals is the next required action. The tribal school has chosen various reading and math materials based on elementary and middle school goals. It is a continuation from previous adopted materials the school has found success in implementing. They will also be continuing relationships with outside agencies that can assist with reading and math goals and professional development goals regarding literacy and academic language proficiency. Middle of the year and end of the year reviews will occur with an external evaluator assessing progress. The tribal school will also prioritize Common Core curriculum in collaboration with other BIE schools.

The fifth required action in this grant implements financial incentives to recruit and retain staff. It reiterates the financial incentives again dependent on various roles on campus. In this iteration, the focus includes teachers who are working towards National Board certifications (NBCT) and the yearly incentives to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. These actions are meant to increase the number of staff who will work to improve student proficiency in state and national exams. Completion of the NBCT program and participation in professional development efforts on campus are the evidence of completion/evaluation.



The next required action focuses on the use of a research-based instructional program that is vertically aligned between grades and is aligned to state standards. Staff used data to determine these programs two years ago. The instructional programs that align with Common Core State Standards and allow for vertical alignment were selected. This new grant application calls for the continued use of these programs. State required test results, such as PARCC and the NWEA will determine progress toward academic goals and proficiency rates.

The seventh required action focuses on classroom formative and summative assessments to inform and differentiate instruction for students. It increases the need for formative and summative data from NWEA, PARCC, reading and math Common Core State Standards and adopted instructional material for each grade level to address targeted instructional goals toward proficiency.

The next action addresses strategies that increase learning time for students at the tribal school. Additional time includes allotments for instructional needs and for enrichment activities. This will be increased with input from the tribe, the school board, the leadership, and the ELO.

Provisions for ongoing family and community engagement are the next set of required actions. It seeks to retain a consultant to develop and analyze a community-needs survey to develop family and community engagement opportunities. Completion of the survey and the development of the engagement opportunities will determine the progress of the action.

The tenth required action calls for operational flexibility for staffing, the school calendar, and budgeting to increase classroom instructional time. It helps to support students

and families to fulfill their cultural obligations throughout the academic year and still work to keep students in classrooms to receive instruction with reduced absences. The school board, the ELO, and Mr. Clark will continue to work on this.

The final action is to ensure that the school receives ongoing, intensive technical support for the strategies in support of increased academic growth from the ELO, ADD, and SEA Turnaround Office.

### **Final Determination for the SIG 2013**

Despite all of the work on the 2013 SIG grant, they did not get approval to receive it. Mr. Clark explained to me why.

We haven't made AYP. Our scores are between five and eight percent improvements for three years in a row. However, because we didn't make safe haven, 10%, we didn't get it. From my clearest understanding with No Child Left Behind and with all the ramifications or instructional improvements that have come from that, schools were put into different classifications. One of the things you could be put in if you did not make AYP is a school in need of restructuring, which is where we put. We applied for and received the SIG grant. However, within that restructuring plan, it does speak about if you do not make AYP and you are under the SIG grant, then you need to replace the leadership or you need to replace the principal at the school. Your question is about what is my feeling towards that particular aspect of the restructuring plan. I've got real, real mixed feelings about it. It kind of hurts me and my colleagues all across the country that go through this because what I have discovered is I didn't know AYP is not based on immediate feedback like we give to students based on the test. So AYP information is from two years previous. For example, the 2013-14 New

Mexico standard base assessment scores came out as of May 15<sup>th</sup> in our school. But, our school is still in restructuring because it's based on the fact that we didn't make AYP in the 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> school year. So they don't use the 13/14 information. So yet they make you restructure everything within the SIG based on information from two years ago.

When I asked him if he would reapply for SIG grant if it comes around again, He lamented the following,

If it comes out, we will just because even though there are a lot of requirements to it, there are a lot of benefits from it as well. And it's not like applying for a grant that's \$1000 and okay I've got to do 20 hours of work towards fulfilling a grant. With the SIG grant, you put 20 or 30 hours' worth of work to fill out the SIG grant application and if you get it you are going to get years of financial benefits out of it. That, hopefully, has long-term positive effects for kids so you have to go for it. There is a lot of negative but the good aspects of it outweigh that for the kids.

Considering the growth at the school with the assistance of the initial SIG grant, continued growth is now in question. As I mentioned earlier, only time will tell if his previous reform efforts or any adjusted endeavors due to lack of financial backing from the SIG will continue the positive changes at Mr. Clark's school.

### **What Would He Do Differently...**

Hind sight can be a valuable tool. I asked Mr. Clark what he would do differently looking back on his experiences.

I would have learned the SIG grant that I had and I would have pushed to get my money sooner. I would have learned processes and paperwork faster. I would have

gotten more prepared and I would have utilized all the resources that that grant had for me a lot faster and I would have tried to maximize them so I could have more long-term benefits for the kids. Maybe more smart boards or computer labs or incentive type of items. I could have possibly hired an additional teacher or two, even if it was for that year, just to give kids more added benefit. If I had studied the ins and outs of it before stepping on the job, I could have utilized it better. That's definitely what I would do. Not just short-term needs, but also long-term needs.

When I asked him about the possibility of an application being available this year, he explained his understanding of the process.

It's based on Congress. In February, we'll know about the budget. They'll pass the budget in January, but in February, the US Department of Education could give something information to the BIE or to the DPA on whether it's there or not or if you are allowed to apply for it or not. In some form or fashion, I would think there is going to be a big grant for a restructuring school to apply for. It may not be SIG, but it'll in the form of a school improvement grant. So I would think that there'll be something in February or March that we'll have one month to turn it in and we'll just have to get after it and do it.

When I asked him if he would have changed or done anything differently if he was present at the writing of the first SIG grant, he responded candidly.

I would have done what I did eight years ago in my previous job. I would have probably found a way to clean some of the house out and brought in my own offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator, you know. I would have brought in probably searched for my own team a little bit, hind sight being 20-20. As far as

being principal, I think I got lost in just trying to learn the federal system and I'm still learning it. It's so bureaucracy oriented. But even with all things considered, I still think I would have brought in who I consider top educators to my tribal school to help the students.

He also included his thoughts on cultural considerations now that he has had a couple of years' experience.

You know, the one thing that I'm trying to do now and I would have started on day one is, I think I would have spoken to the governors about every time that I meet with about the need to remove myself at every tribal activity or culture event... There are too many misconceptions about why you are at a particular place. So instead of being seen at this person's house because you are invited and you are just going to enjoy your visit, I would probably just remove myself so that I'd be the educational person 100% time during education. Sometimes, you are not seen as just an invited guest and often times you are seen as, why is he there and why is he not over here? That's what I've been trying to do just pretty much now, trying to remove myself. For example, for first Holy Communions, you know, instead of going any more to family gatherings, I may just go to the church. I don't want to disrespect the tribe or the families, so you do whatever you can and thank them for the invitation. When I'm outside the reservation, I'm going to be with my family 100% of the time.

As an experienced administrator, his observations and reflections regarding the reform changes over the past couple of years will be used to help steer the school for the next phase of efforts. From my time with him, I have come to believe he will continue to bring positive change to his school for, as he put it, "as long as they will have him".



## Chapter 5

### Summary

Mr. Clark faced challenges since he took the helm of his tribal school. He implemented many reform efforts and has begun to stabilize the school near the completion of his second. His experiences during this time frame are important to document what he went through in his own words, using his documentation as evidence, and using observational data from our time together and touring his school allowing for staff and student observations to occur.

As I worked to document Mr. Clark's experiences, I designed a series of research questions to allow for Mr. Clark's experiences to be examined. My research design was made up of qualitative methods including a series of interviews with the principal, Mr. Clark, and document analysis to explore the following research questions:

- How does the site reform leader describe school reform used at the high school?
  - How does the leader describe reform within the primary 3 to 4 focus areas including: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability?
- What are the leader's perceptions of how American Indian culture is incorporated in reform efforts?
- What role has the *Native Star* instrument played in reform efforts?
  - Sub-question: How does the leader describe the use of *Native Star* instrument in relation to reform efforts at their school?

I was able to use various methods to gather data in response to my research questions. In keeping with qualitative methodologies, I used interviews, document analysis, and participant-observations as the means by which data was gathered and used to understand

Mr. Clark and his experiences. American Indian theory was the pedagogical perspective used. Research by American Indians regarding issues that impact and are about American Indians to ensure American Indian cultural perspectives are paramount. My American Indian heritage places me well within the theoretical perspective.

## **Results Summary**

*Research Question 1: How does the site reform leader describe school reform used at the high school?*

*Sub-Question: How does the leader describe reform within the primary 3 to 4 focus areas including: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/ accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability?*

Through interviews with the principal, Mr. Clark, and some document analysis of the original SIG proposal and reports I was able to learn that reform at Mr. Clark's school has been a process that continues with or without the added benefit of grant funding. It was driven by the specific needs of the original SIG application, the *Native Star* instrument and state requirements.

The SIG application allotted 3 years of funding. Much of the school's reform directed much of the change through the use of a transformational model to direct the change and had twelve subsequent required actions. This included: possible replacement of the principal, addressing the teacher evaluation process, human resource actions for increasing student achievement, identifying and increasing professional development opportunities, using financial and other incentives to retain staff, revising the governance structure, addressing



comprehensive instructional reform strategies, promoting the use of student assessment data to inform and differentiate instructional needs, increasing learning time, increasing community engagement, providing operational flexibility, and the need for ongoing support from the various departments of the BIE. The *Native Star* instrument was used to identify six rapid improvement indicators the school was to use to help further clarify reform needs at Mr. Clark's school. It was used in conjunction with SIG, but had a secondary role to SIG. Due to the lack of overlap of the *Native Star* indicators and the required actions of SIG, it was easier for Mr. Clark to use the SIG grant required actions to drive reform on site due to its more directed impacts. The third component Mr. Clark had to consider for reform came from the state requirements, including some of the specific state assessments and evaluation and licensure processes needed in New Mexico.

*Research Question 2: What are the leader's perceptions of how American Indian culture is incorporated in reform efforts?*

Once again, through interviews with the principal, Mr. Clark, and some document analysis of the original SIG proposal and reports, I was able to learn that culture permeates many facets of the school. The formal language and culture class and the integration of culture in content classes is evident and well imbedded at the tribal school. Students are considered English Language Learners due to the strong linguistic and cultural influences from the tribe. Tribal commitments take precedence over academics, although the tribe tries to include the academic needs of students when determining the role of school when a religious need or ceremony is necessary.

*Research Question 3: What role has the Native Star instrument played in reform efforts?*

*Sub-question: How does the leader describe the use of the Native Star instrument in relation to reform efforts at their school?*

My discussions with Mr. Clark and some analysis of the *Native Star* instrument revealed that the *Native Star* instrument and its online supports, including data storage and monitoring, had a secondary role impacting site reform. It did give light to specific indicators that could be used for rapid reform opportunities, but the process for implementing and monitoring how this affected actual reform was cumbersome. Mr. Clark attended to the needs of the *Native Star* as it was requirement of the BIE, it still did not rise to the level of consistent attention due to the importance of the SIG requirements. It may have a have a different role now that the tribal school is no longer using the SIG grant as the primary reform mechanism.

Based on my study, I believe expanding the study parameters can be used to go further in understanding reform at this school, including observations of school activities, interviews with teachers, students, parents, board member. I further discuss possible study opportunities in the future research section of this chapter.

### **Reform Efforts**

Mr. Clark described the reform efforts in his school through the lens of the overall changes that are in place as identified by the annual *Native Star* indicator instrument and through the school's progress with the School Improvement Grant. As he began his principal and reform leader roles with the school, the indicated reform needs were already in place, but they needed to be tended to. The transformation model called for "replacing the principal and improve the school thorough comprehensive curriculum reform, professional development, extending learning time, and other strategies. His appointment addressed the first need of replacing the existing principal. As soon as he was able, he put his efforts into ensuring the

balance of the transformational model requirements were worked on. The grant has allowed Mr. Clark to proceed with staff and curricular/instructional development. The past year was the most fruitful working with the outside agency with Math content inservices and monitoring instruction. This and other instructional supports listed in the SIG grant applications were selected by the tribal school's leadership.

The *Native Star* indicator instrument divides its ninety-nine indicators among eight sub-components: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability.

The School Improvement Grant clarified the areas that needed to be specifically addressed by the school and are easily overlaid on the *Native Star* indicators. In this case, I have re-introduced the SIG requirements with the *Native Star* sub-components in parenthesis to illustrate the relationship between the two leading documents used to inform change at Mr. Clark's school.

- Replacing the principal (Leadership/governance)
- Improving the instructional program and teacher effectiveness (teacher effectiveness/professional development)
- Develop and implement a rigorous evaluation system (assessment/accountability)
- Develop and implement ways to reward staff as incentives based on student growth (teacher effectiveness/professional development)
- Provide ongoing professional development (teacher effectiveness/professional development)
- Changes in governance to increase accountability (assessment/accountability)

- Use data for program alignment purposes and for all relevant instructional decisions (assessment/accountability)
- Extend learning time in staff contract calendars and student instructional days (assessment/accountability)
- A Home/School Liaison team to engage the community will be established (stakeholder engagement, student/family support)

The ease by which they co-exist means that staff and students are not burdened with two opposing intervention approaches and are not undertaking dual work as they move forward. Any actions taken to address reform needs are also reported on with the same information to address the two distinct reform processes.

The tribal culture permeates most areas of the school. Formal language and culture classes as well as the integration of the tribal culture with content instruction occur where appropriate. Tribal customs are given priority over all other needs at school, reinforcing the importance of culture to the students. This validates them as people from this tribe and demonstrates mutual respect between staff and students. Education is important, but so is culture, and here, the two exist in harmony most days. In the instance of needing to close the school to address an immediate tribal need, the tribe takes precedence and educational flexibility allows for students to pick up where they left off when they return. The inclusion of the tribe at the school is evident as the governor regularly stops in to visit with the principal and visit the students. As the tribal governor changes annually, the task of getting to know the new governor and working with the new tribal dignitaries gets underway. Working with the tribal governance structure and respecting their authority and its potential impacts on

the school are roles that most school principals throughout the state are not subject to. For a principal that is not American Indian and is a first-time tribal school principal, children who love to learn and an accepting tribal community are indicators that Mr. Clark has done well the past two years.

The *Native Star* instrument has allowed the school site to determine its focus areas and to electronically monitor the progress towards those goals on a web-based site. The site offers reminders of what reform algorithms and indicators are in play, electronic data gathering and storing of data as well as notes on actions taken such as meeting minutes and parties responsible for various reform activities on campus. Its ability to work in tandem with action specific grants has been to its benefit. It has also been helpful that the Bureau of Indian Education has allowed the three regions within the United States to focus on a few specific indicators. In Mr. Clark's case, the six *Native Star* indicators chosen for his region align with the educational reform grant the school is using. The *Native Star* is not the primary process to address change at the school. If it was not the Bureau of Indian Education's mandatory means to assist with school reform, I believe the School Improvement Grant would be the sole approach to change. The *Native Star* only indicated which indicators the school site feels matches its needs. The school then input information on the website to demonstrate action related to the indicators. It is up to the school as to how and why it undertakes reform efforts. The School Improvement Grant required not only the identification of what had gotten a school into the educational problems it was in, but also the proposed remedy, the persons responsible for the reform at the site, and a calendar to demonstrate deadlines by which change should have occurred. For this school site, the reform is more meaningful. It also comes with financial assistance for three years to further increase the likelihood of site

reform success. For Mr. Clark, the added benefit was that the school is possibly eligible for another 3 year School Improvement Grant to continue his changes.

### **Reform and Culture**

On my second visit, Mr. Clark gave me a tour of his school as a part of the day's data gathering. Culture is integrated throughout the physical campus and is visibly integral to the staff and to instructional reforms they have put in place. Our first stop was an outdoor plaza. The plaza consists of items that have tribal significance. Views of the reservation and traditional land boundaries can be seen. He let me know that the tribe is private and very traditional in their ways. He respects them and their culture and works closely with the tribal government regarding various aspects of the school. Tribal events take precedence on this reservation and the school closes so students can participate in tribal events. Mr. Clark and his staff include anticipated events in planning for the year. When the tribe has an unforeseen issue to address, planning is adjusted as needed to accommodate cultural priorities.

Culture is also addressed among staffing. The majority of his staff is American Indian from the reservation and surrounding tribes. Also, five of the seven teachers working at the school are American Indian as well. Two of them are from the reservation and are the tribal language and culture teachers to ensure students are learning and maintaining their cultural identity. Instructional lessons for content classes are partially designed so that standards are taught using tribal knowledge and cultural perspectives. An example of this is an ongoing science lesson teaching students when and how to plant tribally important crops and maintain them. This is a project based learning approach that the school has been working on to allow for students to engage the standard and to demonstrate comprehension. Parents, community members, and tribal officials frequent the school and work with Mr. Clark as needs arise.

School reform here may have begun with *Native Star* and site determined reform needs, but it is encompassing various approaches to affect the whole child rather than solely focusing on test scores.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations of my study. The first is that I am only focusing on a BIE school. There are many more BIE schools in New Mexico and nationally that are serving students K-12 as well as non-BIE high schools that predominately serve American Indian students that can be used in future studies for comparison or replication. Also, I am using only the existing site leader responsible for the *Native Star* and site reform efforts. The site staff, students, and community may have other information for use, yet only the reform leader's perspectives will be included in my study. A broader perspective from other site staff, students, and community gives a more single site perspective approach. However, this implies an in-depth story for the individual site to tell. Also, there are several other instruments schools are using nationally that may focus on other aspects of schools and school reform that I am not going to be able to address within the confines of my study. Comparing tribal schools to non-tribal schools presents another opportunity for research that is a separate focus from my study.

My research questions are related to the *Native Star* instrument and other site reform efforts and the related experiences from the school site reform leader. I am using Constructivism as my theoretical framework and American Indian paradigm as the theoretical perspective. Other pedagogical approaches could have been used such as Critical or Feministic pedagogies, but were negated based on the intent and approach of my study. A

quantitative approach was possible as well if I strictly focused on the potential quantitative aspects of reform.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

As with any study, there are a number of recommendations for further research. Based on my study, I offer five recommendations. The first is that I suggest that more studies of schools for American Indian students in the middle of reform in New Mexico or other states be conducted. In order to see if similar processes and outcomes exist, more studies are needed. What works at one school as an element of reform, may not work at another. There is a chance that there are similar experiences, but in outcome only and not in process. Further studies would shed light on this and other potential outcomes.

The second recommendation is analysis based. My analysis was exclusive to the site reform leader. Future research should explore possible comparisons between school site reform leaders of schools serving American Indian students. This would give opportunity to evaluate potentially different site leaders in the midst of change. Mr. Clark's experiences as a principal may differ for a program director or lead teacher who takes on the task of site reform.

Third, I recommend that research on the challenges schools face in other *Native Star* indicator areas or School Improvement Grant (SIG) models be studied. Based on site decisions from the *Native Star* indicators, a change in leadership may not be needed in a school and instead a focus on separate set of indicators is needed. Also, if an Educational Line Officer (ELO) and the tribe determine a different model for the SIG process, the implications of removing the principal and only up to half of the teachers returning in a rural



or reservation setting. A location where finding qualified staff is difficult to find or retain could pose a problem.

The fourth recommendation is based on the fact that this was merely a snap shot as to the experiences of the school reform leader to this point. Short and long-term potential outcomes need to be investigated. It would be prudent for another study to occur a few years from now to see if the reform efforts are still in place or if a new leader with a different vision of reform is in action.

The fifth recommendation is that reform in a Native school should be studied from multiple perspectives. Interviewing teachers, other staff, parents, board members, and students for their experiences and observing many reform activities would add other perspectives to research regarding Native education.

Finally, the sixth recommendation is that any study for school reform of schools serving American Indian students be conducted, in part, by American Indian researchers. The cultural perspective and inter-personal relationship nuances that exist for American Indians are often times not valued or understood. The field of researchers in American Indian education is small in comparison to educational researchers as a whole. I am not naïve to believe that we need to forego any research for the sake of pride. I am endorsing the need to ensure that the cultural perspectives of American Indians be maintained and that the researchers who could best detail this perspective are American Indians themselves in the same manner that researchers of other races and cultures do for educational systems that serve their students.

While my study represents the experiences of the school reform leader through his efforts, it is my hope that this is only a springboard for further dialog and research about

school reform in schools for American Indian students. The research from this school site answered only a few of my initial questions; many questions remain unanswered.

### **Recommendations for Educational and Leadership Practice**

**Recommendations for educational practice.** Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations for educational practice are presented:

1. The first educational practice recommendation is the need for increased and efficient communication within the BIE, its constituent tribal schools, school boards and state educational departments. This will allow services to be streamlined in order to reduce duplication of requirements and allow tribal schools to better meet numerous oversight needs from various agencies and departments.
2. Consolidation of academic performance requirements should occur to reduce the number of formative and summative assessments needed to demonstrate content growth or mastery. Also, in-depth analysis time should be allotted for as well to address any gathered data.
3. There is a need for specific professional development of leaders to prepare for working in schools serving American Indians and on-going support once they are in positions of educational leadership.

**Recommendations for leadership practice.** Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations for leadership practice are presented:

1. Mr. Clark should continue site work with his leadership team to align grade-level curriculum, instruction and assessment to state standards, benchmarks as well as grade-level assessments. Despite funding issues, the alignment should be occurring in

some form to ensure students have access to grade-level core content and appropriate assessments to verify if mastery of the standards is reached.

2. Mr. Clark and leadership team should continue developing the site professional development plan aligned to the New Mexico Teach evaluation framework, *Native Star* indicators for rapid improvement, and assessment data.
3. A tribal-based program for acculturating school leadership and staff that is new to the school should also be considered. Due to the unique needs of this tribe, and every tribe, an introduction to the culture based on what tribal leaders agree is acceptable cultural information to pass on to the new leadership and staff needs to be in place. This will increase the understanding of the principal and staff to the specific needs of the tribal school, its students, and the community. It will also reduce any unintentioned action or comment based on lack of familiarity of local tribal culture. The principal can also use this information when addressing culture within various instructional approaches to better serve students.

## **Conclusion**

My study has provided a snapshot of the perspectives and experiences of a site reform leader in the midst of educational change at a New Mexican school for American Indian students. The qualitative lens that I have used has offered a unique look into the reform efforts at his school.

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## Appendix A

### 1910 Office of Indian Affairs School Regions in New Mexico

Region	Schools Within The Region
Albuquerque Indian School, Albuquerque, NM	Albuquerque Indian School, Acoma Day School, Cañoncito Day School, Isleta Day School, Laguna Day School, McCartys Day School, Mesita Day School, Pagate Day School, Paraje Day School, San Felipe Day School, Seama Day School
Jicarilla Indian School, Dulce, NM	Jicarilla Indian School, Jicarilla Day School, La Jara Day School
Mescalero Indian School, Mescalero, NM	Mescalero Indian School
Navajo Indian School, Fort Defiance, AZ	Navajo Indian School (AZ), Chin Lee Day School (AZ), Cornfields Day School (AZ), Rehoboth Mission School in Gallup (NM), St. Michael's Mission School (AZ), Tohatchi Day School (NM)
Pueblo Bonito Indian School, Thoreau, NM	Pueblo Bonito Indian School
San Juan Indian School Shiprock, NM	San Juan Indian School, Methodist Mission School in Farmington, Presbyterian Mission School in Liberty, Waro's Camp Day School in Blanco
Santa Fe Indian School Santa Fe, NM	Santa Fe Indian School, Cochiti Day School, Jemez Day School, Nambe Day School, Picuris Day School, San Ildefonso Day School, San Juan Day School in Chamita, Santa Clara Day School, Sia Day School, Taos Day School
Zuni Indian School Zuni, NM	Zuni Indian School, Zuni Day School
<p>Note: Spelling in the 1910 report may be different from present-day spelling of locations. Adapted from Department of the Interior. (1910). <i>Routes to indian agencies and schools with their post-office and telegraphic addresses and nearest railroad stations</i>. Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office.</p>	

## Appendix B

### American Indian Education Historical Periods

Author(s)	Period Descriptor	Years
Houston/Yazee (2002)	Self-Determination	0-1492
	Colonial	1492-1776
	Early US-Indian Relations	1776-1830
	Removal	1830-1850
	Reservations and Wars	1850-1880
	Allotment and Assimilation	1880-1920
	Reorganization	1930-1945
	Termination	1945-1965
	Self-Determination	1965-2005 (present)
Juneau (2001)	Colonization	1492-1786
	Indian Treaty	1787-1886
	Allotment and Loss of Indian Land	1887-1933
	Federal Boarding School	1860— Present
	Tribal Reorganization	1934-1943
	Termination	1944-1969
	Beyond Self-Determination	1970-1990 (Self-determination) 1990-Present (Beyond Self-determination)
Reyhner/Eder (2004)	Colonial Missionaries	1500-1776
	Treaties/Western Removal	1776-1867
	Reservations	1867-1887
	Allotment and Dependency	1887-1924
	Mission Schools/Government Boarding Schools/Students and Parents/New Deal	1924-1944
	Termination and Relocation	1944-1969
	Self-Determination	1969-1989
	Higher Education/New Directions	1989+

Author(s)	Period Descriptor	Years
Szasz (1999)	Background/Federal Indian Education	1870-1926
	W. Carson Ryan: From the Merriam Report to the Indian New Deal; John Collier and Willard Walcott Beatty: New Deal architects of Education; New Deal Innovations: Progressive Education and Anthropology; Theory Confronts Reality: Cross-Cultural Education; Training Teachers for Cross-Cultural Education; The Johnson-O'Malley Act: Indian Children and Public Schools	1928-1945
	World War II and the Post War years; Hildegard Thompson: Education for an Urban, Technological Society; New Directions in Federal Control; Indian Organization and Leadership; Indian Controlled Schools; Indian Children and Public Schools	1945-1972
	Policy and Indian Education	1928-1977
	The Indian Voice	1980's-1990's

## Appendix C

### 2012 Bureau of Indian Education Regions and Public School/Districts Servicing

#### American Indian Students in New Mexico

Region	Tribes Serviced	Schools
BIE Administration Albuquerque, NM	Associate Deputy Director-West, Deputy Director Operations, Division of Performance and Accountability, BIE- Human Resources	Various BIE and Grant funded schools
NM Navajo Line Office- Central (Eastern) Crownpoint, NM	Navajo	<i>Dibe Yazhi Habitiin Olta'</i> (Borrego Pass) (K-8), <i>Dzilh-Na-O-Dith-Hle Community School</i> (K-8) (9-12 Dorm), <i>Hanaa'dli Community School/ Dormitory, Inc.</i> (Huerfano)(K)(1-12 Dorm), <i>Lake Valley Navajo School</i> (K-8), <i>Mariano Lake Community School</i> (K-6), <i>Na'Neelzhiin Ji'Olta</i> (Torreon Day School) (K-8), <i>Ojo Encino Day School</i> (K-8), <i>Pueblo Pintado Community School</i> (K-8), <i>T'iis Ts'ozhi'Bi'Olta</i> (Crownpoint Community School) (K-8), <i>Tse'ii'ahi' Community School</i> (Standing Rock) (K-4)  Total- 10
NM Navajo Line Office- North Shiprock, NM	Navajo	<i>Aneth Community School</i> (K-6), <i>Atsa' Biya' a'zh Community School</i> (K-6), <i>Beclabito Day School</i> (K-4), <i>Cove Day School</i> (K-6), <i>Kinteel Residential Campus, Inc.</i> (Aztec) (9-12), <i>Navajo Preparatory School</i> (9-12),

Region	Tribes Served	Schools
		<p><i>Nenahnezad Community School</i> (K-6),</p> <p><i>Red Rock Day School</i> (K-8),</p> <p><i>Sanostee Day School</i> (K-3),</p> <p><i>Shiprock Reservation Dormitory</i> (9-12),</p> <p><i>Shiprock Northwest High School</i> (7-12),</p> <p><i>T'iis Nasbas Community School</i> (Teecnospos) (K-8)</p> <p>Total- 12</p>
<p>NM Navajo Line Office- South Gallup, NM</p>	<p>Navajo</p>	<p><i>Alamo Navajo School</i> (K-12),</p> <p><i>Baca/Dio'ay Azhi Day School</i> (K-6),</p> <p><i>Bread Springs Day School</i> (K-3),</p> <p><i>Chi Chil Tah/Jones Ranch Community School</i> (K-8),</p> <p><i>Ch'ooshgai Community School</i> (Chuska) (K-8),</p> <p><i>To'halli' Community School</i> (Toadlena) (K-8),</p> <p><i>To'Hajilee Day School</i> (Cañoncito) (K-12),</p> <p><i>Wingate Elementary School</i> (K-8),</p> <p><i>Wingate High School</i> (9-12)</p> <p>Total- 9</p>
<p>Northern Education Line Office- Espanola, NM</p>	<p>Eight Northern Pueblos- (Taos, Picuris, Nambe, Pojoaque, Tesuque, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Ohkay Owingeh), Jicarilla Apache</p>	<p><i>Jicarilla Dormitory</i> (1-12),</p> <p><i>Ohkay Owingeh Community School</i> (San Juan) (K-8),</p> <p><i>San Ildefonso Day School</i> (K-6),</p> <p><i>Santa Clara Day School</i> (K-6),</p> <p><i>Santa Fe Indian School</i> (7-12),</p> <p><i>Taos Day School</i> (K-8),</p> <p><i>Te Tsu Geh Oweenge Day School</i> (Tesuque) (K-6)</p> <p>Total- 7</p>



Region	Tribes Served	Schools
Southern Education Line Office- Albuquerque, NM	Southern Pueblos- (Jemez, Zia, Santa Ana, San Felipe, Cochiti, Kewa, Sandia, Isleta, Acoma, Laguna, Zuni), Mescalero Apache, Ramah Navajo	<p><i>Isleta Elementary School</i> (K-6),  <i>Jemez Day School</i> (K-6),  <i>Laguna Elementary School</i> (K-5),  <i>Laguna Middle School</i> (6-8),  <i>Mescalero Apache School</i> (K-12),  <i>Pine Hill Schools</i> (Ramah) (K-12),  <i>San Felipe Pueblo Elementary School</i> (K-7),  <i>Sky City Community School</i> (Acoma) (K-8),  <i>T'siya Day School</i> (Zia) (K-7)</p> <p>Total- 9</p>
Other Tribal/American Indian Serving Schools- Non-BIE	Various	<p><i>A:Shiwi Elementary School</i> (Zuni Pueblo) (Zuni Public School District) (K-6),  <b>Career Prep High School</b> (Navajo- Shiprock)  (Central Consolidated Schools) (9-12),  <i>Chee Dodge Elementary</i> (Navajo- Yah Ta Hey)  (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (K-5),  <i>Church Rock Elementary</i> (Navajo-Church Rock)  (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (K-5),  <i>Cochiti Elementary</i> (Cochiti Pueblo) (Bernalillo Public Schools) (K-8),  <i>Crownpoint Elementary School</i> (Navajo- Crownpoint) (Gallup-McKinley County Schools)  (K-5),  <b>Crownpoint High School</b> (Navajo- Crownpoint)  (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (9-12),  <b>Crownpoint Middle School</b> (Navajo- Crownpoint)  (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (6-8),  <i>Dowa Yalanne Elementary School</i> (Zuni Pueblo)  (Zuni Public School District) (K-6),</p>

Region	Tribes Served	Schools
		<p><b>Eva B. Stokely Elementary</b> (Navajo-Shiprock) (Central Consolidated Schools)(K-6),</p> <p><b>Laguna-Acoma Junior/Senior High School</b> (Laguna-Acoma Pueblos- Casa Blanca, NM) (Grants/Cibola County Schools) (7-12),</p> <p><b>La Vida Mission School</b> (Navajo-Farmington/Crownpoint) (K-8),</p> <p><b>Mesa Elementary</b> (Navajo- Shiprock) (Central Consolidated Schools) (K-6),</p> <p><b>Naschitti Elementary</b> (Navajo- Sheep Springs) (Central Consolidated Schools) (K-6)</p> <p><b>Native American Community Academy</b> (State Charter School) (Various tribes) (Albuquerque) (6-12)</p> <p><b>Navajo Elementary School</b> (Navajo- Navajo) (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (K-5),</p> <p><b>Navajo Middle School</b> (Navajo- Navajo) (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (6-8),</p> <p><b>Navajo Pine High School</b> (Navajo- Navajo) (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (9-12),</p> <p><b>Newcomb Elementary</b> (Navajo-Newcomb) (Central Consolidated Schools) (K-6),</p> <p><b>Newcomb High School</b> (Navajo-Newcomb) (Central Consolidated Schools) (9-12),</p> <p><b>Newcomb Middle School</b> (Navajo-Newcomb) (Central Consolidated Schools) (7-8),</p> <p><b>Nizhoni Elementary</b> (Navajo-Shiprock) (Central Consolidated Schools) (K-6),</p> <p><b>Ojo Amarillo Elementary</b> (Navajo-Fruitland)</p>

Region	Tribes Served	Schools
		<p>(Central Consolidated Schools) (K-6),</p> <p><b>Ramah Elementary School</b> (Navajo- Ramah)</p> <p>(Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (K-5)</p> <p><b>Rehoboth Christian School</b> (Navajo-Gallup) (K-12),</p> <p><b>San Diego Riverside Charter School</b> (Jemez Pueblo) (K-8),</p> <p><b>Santo Domingo Elementary</b> (Kewa Pueblo)</p> <p>(Bernalillo Public Schools) (K-8),</p> <p><b>Shiprock High School</b> (Navajo- Shiprock)</p> <p>(Central Consolidated Schools) (9-12),</p> <p><b>Tohatchi Elementary School</b> (Navajo- Tohatchi)</p> <p>(Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (K-5),</p> <p><b>Tohatchi High School</b> (Navajo- Tohatchi) (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (9-12),</p> <p><b>Tohatchi Middle School</b> (Navajo- Tohatchi)</p> <p>(Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (6-8),</p> <p><b>Tse' Bit Ai' Middle School</b> (Navajo- Newcomb)</p> <p>(Central Consolidated Schools) (7-8),</p> <p><b>Tse' Yi' Gai High School</b> (Navajo- Pueblo Pintado) (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (9-12),</p> <p><b>Twin Buttes High School</b> (Zuni Pueblo) (Zuni Public School District) (9-12),</p> <p><b>Twin Lakes Elementary School</b> (Navajo- Twin Lakes) (Gallup-McKinley County Schools) (K-5),</p> <p><b>Walatowa Charter High School</b> (Jemez Pueblo)</p> <p>(State Charter) (9-12),</p> <p><b>Zuni High School</b> (Zuni Pueblo) (Zuni Public</p>

Region	Tribes Served	Schools
		School District) (K-6) <i>Zuni Middle School</i> (Zuni Pueblo) (Zuni Public School District) (7-8), Total- 37
American Indian Colleges	All Tribes	<i>Southwest Indian Polytechnic Institute</i> (SIPI) (Albuquerque), <i>Crownpoint Institute of Technology/ Navajo Technical College</i> (Crownpoint), <i>Institute of American Indian Arts</i> (IAIA) (Santa Fe), <i>Dine' College</i> (Crownpoint) <i>Dine' College</i> (Shiprock) Total- 5
<p><i>Note:</i> Adapted from Bureau of Indian Education, 2012; Bernalillo Public Schools, 2012; Central Consolidated Schools, 2012; Gallup-McKinley County Schools School District, 2012; Grants-Cibola County Schools, 2012; La Vida Mission School, 2012; Native American Community Academy, 2012; Rehoboth Christian School, 2012; San Diego Charter School, 2012; Walatowa Charter School, 2012; Zuni Public Schools, 2012.</p>		

## Appendix D

### Individual Interview Questions

Research Questions	Methods and specific interview questions that will address this research question or sub-question. (Blue- Possible clarifying questions if needed.)
<p><b>Introduction:</b> Get acquainted /Demographics</p>	<p><b>Individual (reform leader):</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is your name and title?</li> <li>2. Are you American Indian? If yes, which tribe?</li> <li>3. What is your role on this campus?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Research Question #1:</b> <b>How does the site reform leader describe school reform at the school?</b></p>	<p><b>Individual Interview:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What role(s) do you play in reform efforts at your school?</li> <li>2. Has this role changed over time? If so, How?</li> <li>3. How would you describe reform efforts at your school?</li> <li>4. How were/are reform efforts selected? How are they used?</li> <li>5. Tell me a story or give an example of an area of reform that has been especially successful. <i>What made this so successful and how does this matter to the school?</i></li> <li>6. Tell me a story or give me an example of an area of reform that has been unsuccessful. <i>What made this unsuccessful and how does this matter to the school?</i></li> </ol> <p><b>Participant Observations:</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I will pay attention during reform team meetings for indications of how reform is framed, organized, led, assessed, etc.</p> <p><b>Document Analysis:</b></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I will ask about and review reform documents (reports, plan etc.) for indications of how reform is framed, organized, led, assessed, etc.</p>

<p><b>Sub-question 1a:</b> How does the leader describe reform in the primary 3 to 4 focus areas such as: curriculum/instruction, teacher effectiveness/professional development, stakeholder engagement, organization/structure, assessment/accountability, student/family support, leadership/governance, and resources for sustainability?</p>	<p><b>What specific areas are targets for your reform efforts:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.a. Curriculum/Instruction?</li> <li>b. Teacher Effectiveness/Professional Development?</li> <li>c. Stakeholder Engagement?</li> <li>d. Organization/Structure?</li> <li>e. Assessment/Accountability?</li> <li>f. Student Family Support?</li> <li>g. Leadership/Governance?</li> <li>h. Resources for Sustainability?</li> </ol> <p>2. What are examples?</p>
<p><b>Process/General 1b:</b></p> <p>Clarifying questions...</p>	<p><b>Individual Interviews:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How would you describe the process you are using for reform efforts?</li> <li>2. How do you go about leading these reform efforts?</li> <li>3. How often do you meet with your leadership reform team?</li> <li>4. How often do you meet with other staff regarding site reform?</li> <li>5. Do you have a written plan for reform efforts?</li> <li>6. What components are included in this reform plan?</li> <li>7. Is there any supporting documentation?</li> <li>8. How are inconsistencies between <i>Native Star</i> and other site efforts addressed?</li> <li>9. What has been effective in this process? What has not been effective? How do you know?</li> </ol>
<p><b>Research Question #2:</b></p> <p>What are the leader’s perceptions of how Native culture is incorporated in reform efforts?</p>	<p><b>Individual Interview #2:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How is Native culture integrated into your school?</li> <li>2. How is Native culture addressed in reform efforts?</li> <li>3. Would you share some examples of this?</li> <li>4. When change initiatives are developed, is Native culture included as part of the change?</li> <li>5. In what ways? Can you tell a story of some ways?</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. How is Native culture addressed by your Native Star efforts?</li> <li>7. Would you be willing to share a story or offer an example of this?</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Participant Observations:</b></p> <p>I will pay attention for any discussion in meetings about Native culture in relation to reform.</p>
	<p><b>Document Analysis:</b></p> <p>I will analyze any reform documents for incorporation of Native cultural values, issues, needs, frameworks, knowledge, etc.</p>
<p><b>Research Question #3 :</b></p> <p>What role has the <i>Native Star</i> instrument played in reform efforts?</p>	<p><b>Individual Interview #3:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What if any role does the <i>Native Star</i> instrument play in your overall reform efforts?</li> <li>2. How has it been helpful to reform?</li> <li>3. How has it been unhelpful or a barrier to reform?</li> <li>4. What role do you have with the <i>Native Star</i> survey?</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Participant Observations:</b></p> <p>I will pay attention for any discussion in meetings about the instrument.</p>
	<p><b>Document Analysis:</b></p> <p>I will see if the leader will share any <i>Native Star</i> documents related to use of reform efforts.</p>

<p><b>Sub-question 3a:</b></p> <p>How does the leader describe the use of the <i>Native Star</i> instrument in relation to reform efforts at their school?</p>	<p><b>Individual Interview #3:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How has the instrument been implemented?</li> <li>2. Who are the respondents? How are they chosen?</li> <li>3. How many different types of stakeholders are included in responding to <i>Native Star</i>?</li> <li>4. How is the data from <i>Native Star</i> used? In reform efforts? In other ways?</li> <li>5. Is it effective in reform efforts? How do you know?</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Participant Observations:</b></p> <p>I will pay attention for any discussion in meetings about the instrument.</p>
	<p><b>Document Analysis:</b></p> <p>I will see if leaders will share any documents related to use of the instrument in reform efforts.</p>
<p><b>In Closing...</b></p>	<p><b>Individual interview:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are there any other thoughts about your school's reform efforts, the influence of Native culture on reform efforts, or on <i>Native Star</i> that you would like to address?</li> <li>2. Would you mind if I follow up by e-mail or phone if I need an additional example or clarification?</li> </ol>