Conceptualizing describing and contrasting school cultures: a comparative case study of school improvement processes

La Tefy Schoen

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CONCEPTUALIZING, DESCRIBING, AND CONTRASTING
SCHOOL CULTURES: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY
OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESSES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University
And Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling

by
La Tefy Schoen
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1984
M. Ed., Louisiana State University, 1991
May, 2005
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the children and parents who feel trapped in substandard schools and to the teachers, principals and policy makers who sincerely want to turn these schools around, but just aren’t sure how.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has truly been a labor of love. The desire to understand more about school culture and its impact on schools arose out of informal, personal observations as a teacher and a parent. The quest to define school culture began in earnest in 1997 and culminated with the completed draft of the theory chapter in 2002; it literally took five years of actively reviewing literature to develop the ideas presented in chapter 3 of this dissertation. Development of the methodology, piloting procedures, gaining access to the specific sample of matched schools, data collection, analyses, and writing took another 2 years.

This all transpired despite the untimely death of 3 family members, my mother-in-law, my beloved father and my brother, Mitch, the birth of 2 beautiful children, and a devastating house fire that destroyed most of my worldly possessions. Through it all, I have remained focused on the importance of this work, for it is my steadfast desire to find a way to make schools better places for children to learn and teachers to teach. In this way, I feel that I can best serve humanity.

The completion of this project has required the help and support of numerous people. First and foremost, I would like to thank my one-man technical support team and one true love, my husband, Tom Schoen. Secondly, I want to thank my friend and mentor Charles Teddlie, whose wealth of knowledge and sound judgment have been stabilizing bedrock for me. Thanks to Dr. Spencer Maxey for his advice and genuine support while Dr. Teddlie was on leave for a year. Thanks also to the other members of my dissertation committee, Terry Geske, Amy Westbrook, Eugene Kennedy and Nathan Call for their thoughtful input. Special thanks also to Susan Kochan, Carole Rankin, Fen Yu and Caroline Garrett for contributing their unique knowledge and talents to this project.

Finally, I want to express my great love for my mother, my brother, my sister and all four of my exceptional children. Without your help and patience, this would not have been possible. I feel extraordinarily blessed to have such a network of wonderful people in my life. Thank you all for believing in me and helping me reach my goals.

Love,
LaTefy
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ABSTRACT

What is school culture? How can it be measured, described and contrasted? Is school culture related to school improvement? This dissertation investigates school culture and its relationship to school improvement. The study is organized into three phases and employs a mixed methods approach to study the cultures of three pairs of matched schools over a 15 month period. Phase I consists of a multi-disciplinary literature review across the fields of psychology, sociology, business management, anthropology, and educational administration. This process resulted in the development of a new conceptualization of school culture based on merging complementary theories. As defined here school culture consists of four dimensions: I: Professional Orientation, II: Organizational Structure, III: Quality of the Learning Environment, and IV: Student-centered Focus. These dimensions are manifested on three levels: artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions.

Phase II utilizes the new more complex framework to describe the cultures of six schools. Resulting case studies yielded thick descriptions which detail the salient aspects of school culture. Similarities, unique attributes, and points of contrasts in schools were readily apparent in the case studies developed through the new framework. Variations in policy implementation and internal processes were also captured by the study. Possible causal links between processes and products were suggested, such as a link between principal leadership and professional orientation, or between professional orientation and quality of the learning environment, or distributed informal leadership and teacher turnover.

Phase III contrasts the cultures of three pairs of matched schools that differ in the amount of improvement they demonstrated over a two year period. In all three cross-case comparisons of matched schools, the school with the more effective culture was also the school that demonstrated the most growth in student achievement. The dimensional framework allowed for more precise point by point comparisons of culture than were previously available. The primary differences found between the cultures of improving versus non-improving matched schools were in Dimension I. Professional Orientation, followed by Dimension II. Organizational Structure.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to provide in depth information about planned organizational change in preK – 12 schools. The goal is to gain a greater understanding of why some schools are more successful at accomplishing planned change than are others. It is hoped that the knowledge and insights gained can ultimately be utilized to help transform unsuccessful school organizations into more effective ones.

Education has been described as a ‘multi-disciplinary field of practice’ (Schulman, 1987) whose tools of inquiry emanate from an array of diverse disciplines including the natural sciences, psychology, sociology, and anthropology (Chatterji, 2002); consequently, this study embraces a multi-disciplinary approach to describe and contrast school improvement processes.

A review of relevant research across several social science fields and disciplines led to the conclusion that a number of researchers in the fields of education, sociology, and management have begun to assert that there is a link between organizational culture and organizational effectiveness (Argyris & Schon, 1976; Schein, 1985, 1992; Fullan, 1993, 1998; Halsall, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Stoll & Fink, 1996, 2003).

The search for information on school culture and how to study it also spanned several bodies of literature and academic disciplines. Anthropological research has studied culture as belief systems and systems of meaning that determine behavior in social settings. Sociological studies have been done to describe how organizations such as businesses, industries, and schools function and change. Research on school effectiveness has identified school climate or ethos as an important determinant in student achievement in schools. Research in psychology has outlined environmental conditions that contribute to cognitive growth. This study integrates knowledge from these fields into a multidisciplinary approach for examining the relationship of school culture to ‘school improvement’.

To this end, a mixed model study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 2003) has been designed to describe and compare different ways in which school culture impacts student achievement. This study is organized into three distinct phases. Phase I of the study (see chapter 3) is qualitative only and involves developing a conceptualization of school culture and a corresponding framework for describing the culture of schools. In Phase I, a four dimensional
approach to studying school culture was designed for this study based on a multi-disciplinary literature review. Chapter 3 details how and why these dimensions were developed. The dimensions described include: 1) the professional orientation of the school, 2) the organizational structure of the school, 3) quality of the learning environment, and 4) the extent of the student-centered focus.

Phase II of this study involves identifying six schools and performing a mixed method case study to describe the organizational culture of each school. The framework developed in Phase I is used to guide descriptions of school culture in Phase II. Each of these four dimensions is studied both quantitatively and qualitatively in order to provide ‘thick descriptions’ (Geertz, 1973) of the organizational culture of each school.

Phase III of the study involves matching the schools described in Phase II and contrasting the cultures of matched schools that have experienced differential success in improving student achievement. The framework developed in Phase I, and used to perform case studies in Phase II, will then be used to compare school cultures. The results of the cross case comparisons will be used to draw inferences about ways in which school culture impacts achievement and the school improvement process. A similar mixed model approach was previously used by Stevens (2001) to study the impact of outside technical support to schools, in the form of a Distinguished Educator, on effective teaching (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

The measure of success in school improvement used in this study is the School Growth Label (SGL), published by the Louisiana Department of Education (2001). The SGL is a ranking of the degree of improvement each school has demonstrated in its baseline School Performance Score (SPS) in a period of two academic years. (SPS is an index score of four different indices of student performance at the school level; see definitions in chapter 1.) The sample for this dissertation research is selected purposefully according to matching criteria and the intent to examine extreme cases (Patton, 1990, 2001). A double blind procedure (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Babbie, 2001) is used to diminish possible effects of observer bias, in which the SGL is not disclosed to the primary researcher until after all data are collected.

II. STATEMENT OF PARADIGMATIC POSITION

Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998, p. 23) describe four major paradigms that are frequently used as frameworks for social and behavioral science research: Positivism, Postpositivism, Pragmatism, and Constructivism. They compare these paradigms on six dimensions, including:
the type of logic employed, epistemology, axiology, ontology, and beliefs regarding identification of cause-effect relationships. For all six dimensions, positivists and constructivists are diametrically opposed in their orientations and assumptions about the nature of reality, and tend to make “grand Either-Or” assertions. Pragmatists and Postpositivists tend to be more moderate and/or relative in their positions.

This study emanates from a pragmatic paradigm (Maxcy, 2003) that sees value in the contributions of both deductive and inductive forms of logic. Both objective and subjective points of view are appreciated. Consequently, the methods utilized in this study draw from both positivistic and constructivist camps. This duality can be seen in the juxtaposition of the use of theory as a starting point for inquiry (the application of social systems thinking), as well as the reliance on observing the “lived experiences” of participants to generate grounded theories. Ontologically, this study accepts the premise that there are some relatively stable and identifiable causal relationships, but due to the presence of multiple perceptions of reality it is unlikely that one single statement of “truth” or objective reality can capture the myriad of lived experiences present in the organizational life of schools. This invokes the metaphor of reality as a puzzle for which all the pieces will never ultimately be found or placed; however, the more bits of information that are identified, the more complete the picture becomes.

Pragmatists believe in the practical utility of knowledge to inform practice. John Dewey, the leading pragmatic thinker of the twentieth century endorsed an “attitude of science” and rational inquiry, but also argued that inquiry into human collective life requires much more than the formalized procedures of laboratory science (Maxcy, 1995, p. 5). The core issue at the heart of this project, describing and comparing conditions present in differentially improving schools, arises out of a concern for the practical issues principals and teachers face on a day-to-day basis, and a desire to provide a richer knowledge base upon which decisions about practice can be made.

III. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study fits into what has been referred to as the third wave of school improvement research in which “the desire [is] for school improvement to be context specific, with specific tailoring of interventions to the characteristics of the context, background, and ecology of individual schools” (Reynolds, Teddlie, Hopkins, & Stringfield, 2000, p.231). The study has potential importance in three areas: 1) it answers calls from educational researchers to further

3
investigate the relationship between school culture and school improvement (Hopkins, 1994, p. 85; Halsall, 1998, p. 29; Deal & Peterson, 1999, p.137), 2) it informs theory development in the area of school culture, and 3) it may contribute to a dialogue about specific design and methodological issues regarding the study of school culture, organizational culture in non-school settings, and similar social constructs in schools and other complex organizations.

The primary purpose of this dissertation study is to determine how different school cultures affect school improvement. Therefore, an important potential contribution of the study is the generation of a list of cultural characteristics associated with successful and unsuccessful school improvement processes. The study also indirectly addresses the larger question of how to strengthen school improvement processes. For those who believe that schools do, in fact, make a difference (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993), this issue of how to transform ineffective schools, into effective ones, is among the most pressing social questions of the twenty first century.

Phase I of the study specifically deals with theory development relating to school culture. It is hoped that the process of converging existing complementary research and theory in related fields into a unified concept will further the development of theory regarding school culture by clarifying the questions: 1)What is school culture? and 2) In what ways does it impact student achievement?

To this end, a framework for describing the elements of school culture is presented in the study, which was derived through theory triangulation from research in four social science disciplines (sociology, anthropology, psychology and education). This framework (see appendices A and B), which is described in great depth in chapter 3, is used as a means of comparing the cultures of different schools, and identifying differences in the organizational culture of the schools. It is anticipated that the observed differences in school culture may explain some of the differences schools experience with regard to success in improving student achievement over a two-year period.

The theoretical framework developed in Phase I has potential use for generating descriptions of school cultures along four basic dimensions. The use of a standardized framework for descriptions of culture facilitates cross case comparisons of school culture. This could prove important because it provides a basis for generalizations about cultural attributes associated with more and less successful school improvement processes.
Also, since the concept of school culture presented in this study is an adaptation of theories of organizational culture, tailored to the specifics of school settings, the study may also provide insight about the appropriateness and the utility of multi-disciplinary theories to describe phenomena particular to school settings.

The final area in which this study may contribute to is that of research methodology for studying school culture and similarly complex constructs. This study integrates multi-disciplinary research traditions from the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and education in an attempt to describe the multifaceted components of culture that are embedded in the day-to-day functioning of each school. Consequently, both quantitative and qualitative methods are employed to collect, analyze and interpret information, at each individual school with an emphasis on triangulation as a means for developing a more comprehensive understanding of how the organizational culture of schools operates to shape internal processes of schools. Triangulation of theory, methods, and data also serves to increase the validity, trustworthiness, and credibility of findings.

The expected result from this three phase research project is the emergence of a means to conceptualize, measure, and evaluate school cultures, and to utilize this framework to determine if there is an empirical basis for claims that school culture is an important determinant of the school improvement process. The findings regarding the differences, or lack there of, in school culture will inform researchers as to the appropriateness of viewing the construct of school culture as a causal agent in the school-change process.

A finding of substantial differences in the cultures at matched schools, differentially successful at achieving planned improvements, would lend credibility to: 1) the applicability of organizational theory to educational settings, 2) the use of multidisciplinary methods to study culture in schools, and 3) provide a basis for further investigation of school culture as an important mediating variable between policy inputs and outputs in terms of improved student achievement.

If no substantial differences are found in the organizational cultures of the schools, assuming that they were matched appropriately as to control the effects of other mitigating variables, then this, too, yields valuable information. It may indicate either that the current design is an ineffective way to study school culture in school settings, or that differences in the realization of stated school goals are not attributable to differences in school culture. This
information is important because it would inform researchers of the need to develop alternate ways to conceptualize and measure school culture, or that further research into school improvement should focus on variables other than the organizational culture of the school.

IV. HYPOTHESES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After over two decades of concerted efforts to reform schools, why have reform programs been successful in some contexts, but not in others? Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, & Fernandez (1994) state that while many reform proposals are practical and feasible; they fail to consider the culture and social makeup of the individual school. Astuto, et al. (1994) further assert that an internal culture exists in each school and consideration of that culture must be included in any improvement effort. The design of this study is aimed at exploring school culture and its relationship to school improvement. It is hoped that the case studies will yield information about how different cultures foster different improvement processes.

OVERALL RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The overall hypothesis to be tested by this research project is that the construct of school culture can explain differences in the degree of success schools experience in improving student achievement at the level of the school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS BY PHASE OF THE STUDY

A multi-phase approach will be used to investigate, describe and compare the cultures of differentially improving schools. Specific research questions (and hypotheses in Phase III) were generated for each phase of the study.

Phase I. Conceptualizing Culture

Phase I of the study involves conceptualizing school culture and developing a strategy for studying and comparing school cultures. Research Questions that guide this phase of the study include:

Primary Questions

1. What is school culture?
2. What are the dimensions of school culture? (Both terms are defined in this chapter and discussed in detail in chapter 3.)

Secondary Questions

1. What is the relationship between school culture and school climate?
2. How can school cultures be described such that:
Phase II. Describing School Cultures

Phase II is descriptive in nature and involves assessing the school culture along four dimensions developed in Phase I (see chapter 3 for details). There is no hypothesis for Phase II. Phase II involves a single research question that is answered for each of the four dimensions of school culture. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be used to address Phase II questions.

1. What basic assumptions are held by the faculty with regard to
   a. the Professional Orientation of faculty members?
   b. the Organizational Structure of the school?
   c. the Quality of the Learning Environment?
   d. a Student-centered Focus?

Phase III. Contrasting School Cultures

The final phase of the study involves comparing the cultures of matched schools along the identified dimensions. The goal is to formulate generalizations about the cultures of improving schools (i.e. high SGL schools), and schools less successful at improving student achievement (i.e. low SGL schools).

Phase III Hypothesis.

1. Schools that score higher in the dimensions of school culture also have a shown greater improvement in student achievement over a two year period.

Research Questions.

1. What differences exist in the cultures of schools with higher School Growth Labels (SGLs) schools and those with low SGLs with regard to
   a. the Professional Orientation of the school?
   b. the Organizational Structure of the school?
   c. the Quality of the Learning Environment
   d. a Student-centered Focus?

2. What major themes, beliefs, stories, myths, hero/heroines, traditions, rituals and other symbolic artifacts characterize high SGL schools? Do these differ substantially from those found in low SGL schools?
3. To what extent are the espoused values (statements of beliefs) and the basic assumptions (derived from observed practices) consistent with each other in high SGL Schools? In low SGL schools?

4. How do basic assumptions (derived from practices) about students, the nature of the learning process, and the role of teachers and administrators differ between high and low SGL schools?

V. DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Given that this study emanates from a multi-disciplinary approach it was deemed appropriate to include a glossary of terms used in this project. The purpose of this is to avoid confusion regarding terms that may be unfamiliar to readers or to clarify the usage of terms that may have multiple meanings throughout the various literatures. The definitions below are synthesized from a variety of sources including: Schein, 1985 & 1992; Owens & Steinhoff, 1988; Owens, 2001; Bolman & Deal, 1999; and the Louisiana Department of Education, 2001.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Basic assumptions are deeply held values and beliefs about the nature of things and the best ways of doing things. These assumptions are so much a part of the daily functions of the school that they are taken for granted by members of the school and are treated as reality rather than as perceptions or values. Basic assumptions are the essence of school culture; they guide behavior of group members by providing an informal mental map for group members, telling them how to think about things, feel and interpret events, and what to do and how to do it in various situations. Basic assumptions have been referred to as theories-in-use (Argyris & Schon, 1976) which can contribute to unity and group cohesiveness (Schein, 1992). Basic assumptions are usually taken-for-granted and rarely able to be identified or verbalized on a conscious level by group members. Commonly-held sets of basic assumptions are often shared by members of a group, and are known collectively as organizational culture. These deep level assumptions operate as a powerful, but covert controlling force in the organization (Schein, 1985, 1992).

BEHAVIORAL NORMS

These are patterns of behavior or actions, routines, or traditions that are performed on a regular basis by most participants in a cultural scene, such as a school. Behavioral norms are the mode, or most frequent way of doing things. Those who follow these norms are perceived to “fit-in” and those who resist them tend to stand out from the crowd.
COMMUNICATION

Communication in a school involves patterns of conveying information both through formal channels, such as letters, memos and announcements, as well as the reliance on informal communication networks, to persons both within and outside of the school. The types and direction of communication prevalent in the school are seen as a reflection of Organizational Structure in this study.

DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

This study is organized into four strands of inquiry, referred to as ‘dimensions of school culture’ which were developed in Phase I, based on a review of related literature (see chapter 3). It is hypothesized that these dimensions of school dimensions are salient to group members and can be used as a classification system for describing the internal components of the school organizational culture. One of the purposes of this study is to determine the value of focusing on these four variables as descriptors of school culture. The dimensions of culture presented in this study are:  

I: Professional Orientation,  
II: Organizational Structure,  
III: Quality of the Learning Environment,  
IV: Student-centered Focus.  

These dimensions are briefly defined in this section, however much of chapter 3 deals with the development and validation of this dimensional framework.

HEROES/HEROINES

These are persons held in high esteem by other members of the organization. The status of hero/heroine may be detected through observations of differential behavior in group interactions, informal positive comments made about an individual (especially by more than one person), or through stories told. Heroes and heroines can be found in any role (hierarchical level) and may be current or past members of the school.

HISTORY

The history of a school involves the way that the school has functioned in its role since its establishment. This includes significant influences and events affecting the evolution of internal processes. Familiarity with the history of the organization should provide some indication of its capacity to change and adapt.

LEADERSHIP

The term leadership is used in this study to refer to the balance of power in the school between differing hierarchical levels. Investigation of leadership at sample schools is aimed at
describing the established governance structure at the school, as well as the perceptions of the participants regarding the relative status of members, including the principal, the teachers, students, and parents. The study of leadership here is based on perceptions of participants, as well as observations of behavior. Descriptions of school leadership that emerge focus on the rules, roles, and responsibilities (Murphy, 1991) of members with an emphasis on explaining who does what and how.

LEVELS OF CULTURE

The concept of culture used in this study is borrowed from management literature, which describes the culture of an organization as being comprised of three levels (Schein, 1992). The first level, ‘artifacts’, includes those aspects of the environment that are easy to observe, but more difficult to interpret in terms of what they symbolize to members of the organization. Artifacts may include rituals, traditions, displays, signs, posters or even aspects of the architecture and décor that hold symbolic meaning for participants.

The second level of culture is the ‘espoused values’ held by organizational members. These are the things that participants say they believe in and work toward. In this study, school climate is treated as the second level of culture, since most definitions of school climate are based on perceptions of participants about what they believe or do in their school.

The ‘deepest’ level of culture, according to Schein (1985, 1988, 1992, and 1996) is the basic assumptions held by people about the nature of things and the best ways to do things. These basic assumptions shape the way people think about themselves and others at work and provide an implicit framework for interpreting how to perform their job.

MYTHS

Myths are frequently cited “facts” that may have no basis in reality. For example, students may maintain that the principal removes names from the honor role if he doesn’t like them. The perpetuation of these unfounded statements may indicate the presence of basic assumptions relating to the topic of the myth.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF SCHOOLS

The theory base used to study the culture of schools in this project emanates from organizational management literature and has been used to describe the cultures of various types of organizations (e.g., private sector for-profit organizations, etc.) Schools are seen as a specific type of complex organization. Therefore, the terms ‘organizational culture of schools’ and
‘school culture’ are used synonymously. The former term is selected over ‘school culture’ because a review of the literature detected no theory base specific to ‘school culture’, but theories of organizational culture were located (Schein, 1985; Owens & Steinhoff, 1988) which seemed relevant and applicable to school settings.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organizational structure is the second dimension of school culture. Formal and informal structures used by the school to accomplish day-to-day tasks are described under the heading ‘Organizational Structure.’ Principal leadership style and faculty/parental involvement in school governance, are prominent reflections of the structure of the school organization. Other important indicators are formal modes of communication, informal communicative networks, the manner in which the school implements externally mandated policies, the degree of reliance on stated formal school policy in informal decision-making, the cohesiveness of the faculty around a central mission, and the provision of multiple ways for members in various roles to become involved in school leadership, traditions, rituals, ceremonies, and practices are also structural elements of the school that comprise the culture.

PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION

Professional Orientation is the first of the four dimensions of school culture examined in the present study. It involves the amount of emphasis the school places on the continuous growth and development of faculty members as professionals. This dimension includes attitudes expressed about personal and collective professional growth, attitudes towards school change in general, and behavioral norms. Other indicators include the percent of faculty with advanced degrees, the percent of teachers pursuing national board certification, memberships in professional organizations, participation in staff development activities, personal reflection of instructional practices, the character (content, focus, duration, and level of participation) of collective staff development, collegial collaboration, and teacher efficacy.

QUALITY OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Quality of the Learning Environment refers to Dimension III of school culture, in this study. The quality of the learning environment is determined by assessing the degree to which students are continually engaged in substantive, cognitively challenging activities. This study defines high quality learning environments according to the Standards for Authentic Pedagogy.
(Newmann & Wehlage, 1993; Newmann, Wehlage, & Secada, 1995; and Newmann & Associates 1996). For greater detail refer to chapter 3.

RITUALS

The rituals of a school are the recurring routines, processes, or ceremonies that take place in the school with some degree of regularity. Rituals are hypothesized to be observable manifestations of the basic assumptions that form the school’s culture.

SCHOOL CLIMATE

The notion of school climate grew out of research on effective schools and is based upon the identification of a set of commonly observed internal characteristics of highly-effective schools. Descriptions of school climate, sometimes referred to as ethos, frequently include comments about the attitude or disposition of the administration, faculty or students. Typically, school climate is measured through participant self-perceptual and/or attitudinal survey data. These data are aggregated at the school level and used to describe school values, beliefs and processes; in fact the presence of a ‘positive’ climate has itself become a widely accepted characteristic of effective schools.

The terms ‘school climate’ and ‘school culture’ are frequently used synonymously in the educational literature, yet they also have differing definitions, depending on the researcher. In this study, school climate is seen to be very close conceptually to descriptions of the middle level of organizational culture (espoused beliefs), as described by MIT Sloan Fellows Professor of Management Emeritus, Edgar Schein. The similarity is due in part to the way school climate is typically measured - using the perceptions of the participants as to the nature of the organization (Owens, 2001). School climate studies tend to focus on quantifiable components of the environment such as survey data, structured observations, such as frequency counts of interruptions, or calculations of student time on task, etc.

Conversely, most studies of culture tend to involve time intensive qualitative observations of behavior used with small samples. School climate is less time intensive to measure than school culture, and is consequently more appropriate for use in studies involving large samples. This study focuses on school culture rather than school climate, but acknowledges that there is a relationship between these constructs, and suggests that based on the work of Schein (1985, 1992) school climate, and school culture may actually be levels of the same construct. For more on the relationship between climate and culture see chapter 3.
SCHOOL CONTEXT

School context refers to the variables related to the specific setting of the school. This includes characteristics such as size, grade levels, student body characteristics (socio-economic status of students, and racial/ethnic make up), community characteristics (community type and size, and school district and state policies), the presence or absence of external support for change in the form of a state assigned Distinguished Educator (DE) (Stevens, 2002), and participation in a prescribed school improvement model. In Phase III of this study schools are matched along these context variables before comparing their cultures.

SCHOOL CULTURE

School culture describes the holistic activities and ‘ways of being and doing’ of those who work in or participate on a regular basis within a school. This is an organizational approach, which sees each individual school as having a unique and distinctive ethos or personality, comprised of the collective expressions of members of the school organization (see chapter 2).

The concept of school culture used in this study (see chapter 3), was developed specifically for this study based on an overview of related literature (see chapter 2), and it includes frameworks for looking at the depth (‘levels of culture’, Schein, 1985, 1988, 1992, & 1996), breadth (‘dimensions of culture’), and manifestations (‘symbolic elements of culture’ Owens & Steinhoff, 1988) of school culture. Concepts about the ‘levels of culture’ and the ‘symbolic elements of culture’ were brought in from organizational and management literature and applied to the context of preK-12 schools. When organizational and management research was integrated with findings from school effectiveness and school improvement research, a multi-level concept of school culture emerged; this is depicted in Figure 1.1. Evidence indicated that in addition to being a multi-level construct, that school culture may have multiple dimensions as well. Chapter 3 details how the four Dimensions of School Culture were developed, defines each dimension and compares the dimensions to previous theories and research in school effectiveness and school improvement.
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

School improvement is the dependent variable in this study. There are as many definitions of school improvement as there are aims of education. For the purposes of this study, school improvement is defined in terms of increased academic achievement of students in a school. The measure of improvement used here is the School Growth Label (SGL), assigned biannually by the state department of education as part of the state school accountability system (see chapter 2 for details about how these growth labels are determined).

SCHOOL GROWTH LABEL (SGL)

This term describes the categorical rankings used by the Louisiana Department of Education to classify the degree of improvement demonstrated by a school in a two year period of time. See chapter 2 for a description of the Louisiana School Accountability Program and a listing of each of these labels along with its definition.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE SCORE (SPS)

The school performance score (SPS) is an index of student achievement used by the Louisiana State School Accountability Program. The score is assigned to each school biannually based on four indices of student achievement: student scores on the state criterion referenced test, student scores on the norm referenced test selected by the state, student attendance, and student dropout rate. For more specific information on the components of the SPS see chapter ‘school accountability’.

Figure 1.1  Levels of School Culture
STORIES

Stories are oral narratives related spontaneously by members of the organization in informal settings. The types of stories told by various members of the organization give some insight into operative basic assumptions held by individuals or groups in the school. Stories are an informal means of socializing new members, and provide implicit messages about beliefs.

STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

This is the name of Dimension IV of school culture, as conceptualized in this study. Student-centered focus refers to the collective efforts of the school staff to focus on students as individual learners, with unique characteristics. Student-centered approaches to learning involve routine efforts of faculty to adapt the generic curricular content to fit the specific needs of the individual learners and to accommodate a wide range of learning styles, abilities and interests. Schools that maintain a student-centered focus: 1) actively monitor student progress, 2) provide frequent formal and informal feedback to students and parents, and 3) establish assistance programs to support student achievement. Student-centered schools also strive to involve the parents of students in a variety of ways and offer several programs to assist students and their families. A school culture with a high degree of Student-centered focus finds opportunities to place the spotlight on activities of the learner and regularly and ritualistically recognizes student accomplishment.

VI. SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

This study assumes culture is manifested through six overlapping symbolic elements, present to one extent or another in schools:

- Behavioral norms
- Traditions and rituals
- History
- Stories and myths
- Values and beliefs
- Heroes and heroines

These elements are indicators of the culture of the school and are the mechanisms by which the organization influences behavior in predictable and desirable ways (Owens, 2001).

TRADITIONS

Traditions involve school processes and ways of doing things that have evolved over an extended period of time. Traditions may be based on basic assumptions and may be expected
parts of organizational life for participants, regardless whether or not they match the espoused values of the school. Participants may think of traditions as a part of the core functioning of the school, and have trouble envisioning or accepting alternate ways of doing things, other than the established manner in which things have been done within the school over time.

VALUES

Values are goals and processes that are considered important by members of the school organization. This study recognizes two levels of values: espoused values and basic assumptions (Schein, 1992). Espoused values are the socially-desired positions formally stated in mission statements and official school documents, such as the school improvement plan. These espoused values may or may not be evident in the observed behavior of group members by an outsider.

VISION AND GOALS

The official school improvement plan is a formal statement of the school vision and its organizational goals. One of the intended outcomes of this project is to determine whether the contents of the formal school improvement plan (and its espoused values) are consistent with the observed attitudes and practices at the school. Schein (1985, 1988, 1992, & 1996) proposed that one possible reason for lack of success in organizational change efforts is incongruence between the stated vision and goals and the basic assumptions (informal attitudes and practices) that influence the culture of the organization.

VII. ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is built upon several assumptions, derived from the literatures in school culture and school improvement. Two of these are that: 1) School culture exists (and can therefore be measured or documented in some way), and 2) that each individual school has its own distinct culture. This study is designed to detect observable differences in the culture of the sample cases.

A third assumption made in this study is that schools are a specific type of complex organization and that organizational theory generated in other settings (i.e., Schein, 1985; Owens & Steinhoff, 1988; Owens, 2001) is applicable to schools.

Another assumption of this study is that the differences in the schools’ cultures can be documented and described using the four domains identified in Phase I of the study. Studying extreme cases with regard to increases in student achievement allows inferences to be drawn
about whether there is merit to claims that differences in school culture exist and are related to successful school improvement.

The design of this study also assumes goal consensus regarding the aims of education. The identification of the dependent variable as “increases in student achievement” implies that academic achievement of basic skills is the most important or primary desired outcome of schooling. This is not the case in an ideologically free and diverse society. The existence of a multiplicity of aims, purposes and goals of education makes it difficult, if not impossible to evaluate the effectiveness of schools, from all perspectives. The failure to conceptualize school effectiveness as multi-dimensional, rather than a uni-dimensional phenomenon, is a major criticism of this vein of research (Hoy & Ferguson, 1985).

In this study student scores on standardized tests are assumed to be sufficient measures of student achievement. There is, however, a growing minority of researchers who assert that exclusive reliance on standardized test scores is an inadequate gage of student learning (Newmann & Associates, 1996). Several scholars have become vocal critics of the exclusive reliance upon standardized testing as the solitary indicator of school effectiveness (e.g., Edmonds, 1982; Cuban, 1984; Sirotnik, 1985; Zirkel & Greenwood, 1987; Grady, Wayson, & Zirkel, 1989).

Many of these critics propose the use of more authentic measures of student learning (e.g., portfolios of student work over time). However, these less traditional, more personalized measures make it extremely difficult to make comparisons across units (e.g., students, classes, schools, districts, states, and countries) due to lack of uniformity. Therefore, to facilitate cross-school comparisons, this study equates student achievement, at the level of the school, to the School Performance Score, which is based primarily on the performance of its students on standardized tests.

**VII. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The intent of this study is not to establish a causal relationship between the variables of school culture and school improvement. Instead this research is designed to identify valid methods for describing and comparing school cultures. It is hoped that cross school comparisons of culture will lead to an understanding of how culture impacts school improvement processes, and whether there are meaningful differences in the cultures of matched schools. A finding of significant differences in organizational culture between the schools in this study would be a
foundation for future investigations into the nature of the relationship between school culture and school improvement.

It should be noted that the cases (i.e., the schools) selected for inclusion in this study represent extremes with respect to their successful school improvement; therefore, there are limitations with regard to the transferability of results from this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study should be repeated with a wider range of schools to verify the validity of the framework for describing school culture in a variety of settings. Other analyses (e.g., correlations) are needed to determine whether hypothesized relationships are valid.

The theoretical underpinnings for linking organizational culture to successful organizational change are based on observations in private sector businesses. The extent to which these findings are generalizable to public school settings is unknown. The mixed methods for measuring this construct were devised based on the combined literatures of school effectiveness (especially with regard for work on school climate) in education, and change in complex organizations, from sociology. There are many purists who would assert that a more traditional approach that is exclusively quantitative or exclusively qualitative in nature would be more appropriate. Hence, the pragmatic orientation of this work may elicit criticism from both the positivistic and constructivists camps.

This study looks at change in student scores over a two-year period. It has been asserted that it typically takes a period of 3–5 years for a school to display meaningful changes in core operations (Fullan, 1993, 2001). Longitudinal data on the success of change efforts would have been useful, but was not available due to the two-year cycle used in the Louisiana School Accountability Program.

Consequently, it is possible that the schools regarded as “not improving” in this study, (i.e., those with a lower growth label) may actually be improving, though at a slower pace than its matched counterpart. The desirability of rapid change in schools has also been the topic of some debate among educational scholars, as it may be viewed as conducive to superficial compliance rather than sustained meaningful change (Fullan, 1993). Although these concepts have yet to be explored fully in the literature, it would be beneficial to replicate this study in the future when more longitudinal change data are available.

This study does not address issues of curricular content or reform, despite the concurrence of many experts in that curriculum is important to student achievement. This
decision was made consciously based upon the researcher’s perception that it is common practice in most American schools for curricular decisions to be made at the state and district levels, and mandated to schools. The decision was made to focus exclusively on those factors and processes which are within the control of the individual school unit.

Finally, this study uses a measure of student achievement that is based on a school index score derived from student performance on nationally-norm referenced tests (NRTs) and criterion referenced tests (CRTs), attendance, and dropout rate (high school only). These data are aggregated at the school level by the Louisiana State Department of Education. There has been much criticism in the educational literature that such measures of student achievement fail to take into account a variety of indicators of student achievement such as grades, individual accomplishments not measured by standardized tests, portfolios of student work, community service, the ability to function cooperatively in a social group to solve complex real world types of problems, or measures of future academic success (Berlak et al., 1992; Newmann & Associates, 1996).

Likewise, the use of the phrase “school improvement” in this study refers strictly to increases in school performance scores over a two year period, and not to the wider range of areas in which schools could conceivably improve including: increased opportunities for professional growth of teachers, increased parental or community involvement, greater equity for all students, or other indications of increased quality of educational services at the school level.

IX. SUMMARY

This chapter has provided an introduction to the proposed study of school culture, including the purpose of the study, the importance of the study, definitions of key terms and concepts used in the study, and the limitations of the study. The intent has been to provide an overview of the issues pertinent to the treatment of the construct of school culture in this particular study. The following chapters will address the specific elements of this study in greater detail.

Chapter 2 contains a detailed survey of the literature relevant to this project, organized by subject. Chapter 3 contains a description of the construct of school culture as conceptualized in this study, details its development and compares it to other approaches to school culture and school climate. Chapter 4 describes the details of the research design, the instrumentation and the methods employed in this study. Chapter 5 presents Phase II quantitative and qualitative results
in the form of six separate case studies. Chapter 6 presents Phase III quantitative and qualitative results and compares the performance of matched schools on the identified dimensions. Chapter 7 interprets and discusses the major findings of the study. Appendices and a curriculum vita for the author are located at the back of the report.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEWS OF RELEVANT LITERATURES

I. INTRODUCTION

The literature presented in this chapter is organized in the following way:

I. Introduction
II. A Review of the Literature on Organizational Change
III. A Review of the Literature on School Effectiveness and School Improvement
IV. A Review of the Literature on School Reform: The Current Educational Climate
V. A Review of the Literature on Organizational Culture
VI. A Review of the Literature on Student Learning
VII. Chapter Summary

The construct of school culture presented in this study is built upon concepts derived from five distinct fields of inquiry: organizational change, school effectiveness and improvement, school reform, organizational culture, and student learning. Information and concepts central to the development of this project are reviewed in each of these areas. Since the variables explored in this project, school culture and school improvement, are broad and complex in nature, it was deemed necessary to assume a broad based approach to their interpretation and investigation. Consequently, a multi-disciplinary search for applicable information and knowledge bases was sought to inform this investigation.

II. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
GETZELS AND GUBA’S SOCIAL SYSTEMS MODEL OF CHANGE

Several attempts have been made to understand the nature of change in organizations. Getzels & Guba’s social systems model (1957) has been useful in understanding some of the dynamics of institutional behavior (Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Clarke, 1997). Getzels & Guba (1957) distinguished between nomothetic elements (organizational expectations to reach set goals) and ideographic elements (the drive of individuals in organizations to reach goals) of organizations (Stevens, 2001). Getzels & Guba’s (1957) organizational change model identified the individual as a factor in organizational change (Hoy & Miskel 1991). Current models of school change reflect this influence by focusing on both the individual and the collective organizational aspects of the change impetus, agency and process (Hord, 1992; Fullan, 1993).

INSTITUTIONALISM

In the 1970's social scientists concerned with organizational behavior began to notice a remarkable resemblance between organizations of the same type regardless of location (Scott,
Selznick (1957) wrote about institutionalization as a process that happens to an organization over time in which everyday activities and goals become infused with values (Scott, 1995). One function of institutionalization is that individuals in an organization develop a set of values and behaviors which foster the self-preservation of the organization. Perrow (1986) observes that Selznick’s (1957) representation of institutions is one not of organizations as rational entities created to accomplish expressed goals, but rather institutional forces provide a medium for expression and furtherance of a set of values within the organization.

INSTITUTIONAL ISOMORPHISM

The physical science metaphor of inertia (once an object is in motion it tends to continue in this path unless acted on by another entity) has been invoked to describe the persistence of institutional behavior (Scott, 1995). Institutional influences may be the cause of a well-documented phenomenon in education, namely the enduring sameness of schools expressed in statements such as "the more schools change, the more they remain the same" (Sizer, 1984). Each organization responds to institutional influences in diverse ways, some organizational cultures embrace the broad based institutional norms, while others reinforce organizational interpretations and adaptations of institutional norms.

Organizational theory, suggests that when there is no consensus within the organization that a change in practice is needed, no change tends to occur despite management efforts. This is particularly true when dealing with an organization that is part of a larger institution, rather than merely a private enterprise. Sociologists, DiMaggio & Powell (1983) emphasized that widely held belief systems and cultural frames underlie the extent to which organizations attempt to be “isomorphic in their structures and activity patterns” (Scott, 1995, p.45). The term, isomorphism, in this context refers to the extent to which individuals, and similar types of organizations mimic, or imitate others they perceive as successful.

The forces of institutionalism exert substantial influence over practices within schools. The more organizations deal with uncertainty, the more they seek to behave in conventional ways, to avoid standing out. Says Weik, (1979) organizations, like individuals, construct social identities in which scripts emerge that guide actions. Consequently, each organization finds a way to use existing rules and resources to justify past behaviors, and to guide current ones in such a way as to provide consistency across situations.
The result is that “within fields of organizations, those performing similar tasks confront strong pressures for structural isomorphism” (Scott, 1995). Institutional forces play a strong role in the shaping of organizational cultures by providing stability and acting as a buffer to outside forces, particularly when organizations feel threatened with criticism and uncertainty.  

**RESISTANCE TO ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGE IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

Indications from studies of professional organizations indicate that resistance to planned change is commonplace in many types of organizations, including those staffed by a professional workforce. In the past few decades there has been a push in many professional institutions for these organizations function in more “businesslike” ways (i.e., more market oriented competition). Frequently, the push for organizational change stems from an administrative desire for greater efficiency (i.e., increased quality without increased costs). However, transforming a professional organization to meet new demands is no simple matter (Jespersen, Nielsen, & Sognstrup, 2002), especially when new administrative demands violate time honored professional norms of practice.

Professionals may have an incentive to buy-in to the change if they perceive that it will serve their purposes as an individuals and practitioners (i.e., the new program will allow them to perform their work more effectively or will relieve them of unwanted responsibilities). In these cases restructuring is not resisted because it is viewed as a means to an end. Quite frequently, however, sufficient motivation exists for professional staff to resist management efforts to change the nature of their practice. This tends to occur when professional practitioners feel that mandated changes deny them the autonomy to make choices based on their own training and experience. Autonomy is often believed to be fundamental to professional practice, and the removal of the ability to make choices regarding the practice of their profession is, therefore, grounds for resisting administratively imposed policies.

There is evidence that the threat of loss of autonomy may also be the source of resistance to change in the context of educational organizations as well. Based on their research on school restructuring, Darling-Hammond & Wise (1985) concluded that teachers “who know the most about good teaching and who care the most deeply about their students are most apt to say they will leave the profession if teaching content and methods are further regulated.” Such beliefs about the nature of the work, and how it should be performed, constitute a large portion of an organization’s culture. When the professionals who are expected to enforce and maintain the
change actually endorse it, the administrative innovation stands a much better chance of success (Fullan, 2001).

Jespersen et al. (2002) propose that the influence of professionals on planned organizational change can be explained by the dynamics of four simultaneously interacting factors: 1) the existing constellation of institutions in the field, 2) the degree of competition between the new and the old ways, 3) the existing political-administrative structures and the degree of professional involvement in leadership, and 4) power relations between actors in the field. Thus, attempts at planned change in organizations involving professional practice may be well advised to consider some of these dynamic interactions and how they might impact the viability of the intended reforms.

OVERVIEW OF APPROACHES TO CHANGE IN PROMINENT CHANGE MODELS

Hord (1992) summarizes approaches to organizational change from the late sixties through the 1990s. Table 2.1 presents a comparison of three prominent change process models (Chin & Benne, 1969; House, 1981; Sashkin & Egermeier, 1992) with regard to the way they viewed innovation, the individual, and the relationship of the individual to the organization.

Table 2.1  Three Generations of Approaches to Change
Source: Hord (1992, chapter 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Empirical-rational</td>
<td>Technological</td>
<td>Fix the parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Power-coercive</td>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Fix the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and Individual</td>
<td>Normative-re-educative</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Fix the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Likert (1961) first described the concept of organization self-renewal, which postulates that effective change cannot be imposed upon a school; rather, it seeks to develop an internal capacity for continuous problem solving. Self-renewing schools possess three essential attributes (Owens, 2001); first among these is the presence of a culture that supports an open flow of communication, second is the presence of a systematic problem-solving process, and finally the willingness and ability to seek out and utilize external support when needed.
The work of Likert marks the birth of the field of organizational development, an approach aimed at improving the performance of organizations by increasing their capacity to learn and adapt to their environment. An early definition of organizational development (OD) describes it as “a coherent, systematically planned, sustained effort at system self-study and improvement, focusing explicitly on change in informal procedures, processes, norms, or structures, using behavioral science concepts. The goals of OD include both the quality of life of individuals as well as improving organizational functioning and performance” (Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1978).

The underlying premise of organizational development approaches is that low performing organizations have an inability to sense that they have problems- to detect that there is a disconnect with their environment, hence they exhibit a low ability to anticipate and to adapt successfully to changes in the external environment (Owens, 2001).

LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

The concept of ‘the learning organization’, as an organization that has developed mechanisms for self-study and adaptation of internal processes to cope with external changes, has gained in popularity over the last decades of the twentieth century (Senge, 2000; Owens, 2001). Senge and colleagues (1990, 1994, 1999, and 2000) have written extensively about characteristics of learning organizations; they state that school cultures that train people to obey authority and follow rules unquestioningly will have poorly prepared students for the evolving world in which they will live. The Senge et al. books (1990, 1994, 1999, and 2000) identify five key disciplines of organizational learning, which are not characterized as reforms or programs, but rather as on-going bodies of study and practice that are engaged in regularly by those with in the organization, both individually and collectively. Table 2.2 summarizes these Five Disciplines of Schools that Learn.

COMPLEXITY THEORY OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Fullan (1991, 1993, 1998, 2001) has written extensively about achieving planned change in school settings. He maintains that “productive educational change roams somewhere between overcontrol and chaos” (Fullan, 1993, p.19; Pascale, 1990). The process of achieving planned change in schools is characterized as being ‘uncontrollably complex’, but still malleable over time. In his discussions of school improvement, Fullan draws heavily on the writings of Senge (1990) and Stacey (1992) and emphasizes the idea that ‘change in dynamically complex circumstances is nonlinear and cannot be predicted’ ahead of time with precision. Similarly,
McLaughlin & Pfeifer (1988) allude to complexity theory when they state that significant change in any organization is problematic and difficult to manage.

Table 2.2  Five Disciplines of Schools that Learn
(adapted from Senge et al., 2000, p. 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Mastery</td>
<td>The practice of articulating a coherent image of your personal vision – the results you most want to create – alongside a realistic assessment of the current reality. This produces a tension that can expand your capacity to make better choices and achieve more of the results you have chosen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Vision</td>
<td>By focusing on a mutual purpose, individuals in schools can come together and develop shared images of their future. The creation of principals and guiding practices as a means of actualizing goals nourishes a sense of commitment to the group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Models</td>
<td>Reflection and inquiry skills help participants develop an awareness of their own attitudes and perceptions, as well of those of others around you. Of critical importance to a learning school is the ability to safely and productively discuss uncomfortable topics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Learning</td>
<td>Small groups engage in collective thinking and learn to mobilize their energies and actions to achieve common goals, such that the intelligence and ability of the group surpasses the sum of the individual members’ talents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Thinking</td>
<td>School members acquaint themselves with and orient their thinking to include the interdependencies and complexities of the system in which they function. Individuals learn to conceive of the ramifications of their actions on the organization as a whole, and to view the school as a complex system which is both stable and in constant change over time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Senge (1990) states that we need a new nonlinear way of thinking about change - a new paradigm that allows us to ‘get into the habit of experiencing and thinking about the educational change process as an overlapping series of complex phenomena’. Senge says that the real leverage for change involves: 1) seeing interrelationships in the organization rather than searching for linear cause-effect chains, and 2) seeing change as a process rather than a snapshot. Fullan (1993, p.21-22) discusses eight basic lessons implicit in this complexity paradigm of change, which he describes as interrelated and paradoxical to the traditional conceptualizations of school change:

- **Lesson 1:** You Can’t Mandate What Matters  
  (The more complex the change the less you can force it)
- **Lesson 2:** Change is a Journey Not a Blueprint  
  (Change is non-linear and loaded with uncertainty)
- **Lesson 3:** Problems are Our Friends  
  (Problems are inevitable and you can’t learn without them)
- **Lesson 4:** Vision and Strategic Planning Come Later  
  (Premature visions and planning blind)
- **Lesson 5:** Individualism and Collectivism Must Have Equal Power  
  (There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink)
- **Lesson 6:** Neither Centralization nor Decentralization Works

26
(Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary)

- Lesson 7: Connection With the Wider Environment is Critical for Success
  (The best organizations learn externally as well as internally)
- Lesson 8: Every Person is a Change Agent
  (Change is too important to leave to experts; personal mindset and mastery are the ultimate protection)

Fullan (1993) builds on the idea that unpredictable problems and complexities are a natural part of change. He asserts that school personnel need to develop the skill and capacity for successfully contending with the uncertainty which is inherent to change. In his 1993 book *Change Forces*, change is compared to going down a bumpy road in the dark to an unknown place, with an incomplete map. ‘Route and destination’ says Stacy (1992, p. 1) ‘must be discovered through the journey itself if you wish to travel to new lands.’ In the face of unpredictable change, (and all change is unpredictable according to Senge, 1990) ‘the key to success lies in the creative activity of making new maps’ (Stacy, 1992, p.1). It follows then, that an understanding of the change process is essential if schools are to dramatically change to meet the needs of an information-based economy.

**A PROCESS APPROACH TO CHANGE**

Fullan (2001) postulates three essential phases that schools go through in the process of change: *Initiation, Implementation*, and *Institutionalization*. Progression through these phases yields a bifurcation of results; on an organizational level the school experiences an increased organizational capacity which results in improvements in the infrastructure and culture ultimately rendering the organization more effective. On an individual level, the teachers experience growth in professional knowledge and skills which translates to increases in student learning.

![Figure 2.1 Fullan’s Process Approach to Change](source: Fullan (2001, p. 54))

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Initiation involves the making the decision to pursue and adopt a change. Eight factors affect the initiation process (Fullan, 2001, p.54):

1. Awareness of quality innovations
2. Access to innovation
3. Advocacy from central administration
4. Teacher advocacy
5. External change agents
6. Community attitude (pressure/support/apathy)
7. Funding for the new policy
8. Organizational Orientation (bureaucratic/problem-solving)

According to Fullan (2001) there is only one dilemma in the initiation phase–whether to get buy-in from teachers or to proceed administratively. In most cases it is preferable to launch the program with a high degree of teacher buy-in, but this takes considerable time to build, hence, in the case of low-performing schools Fullan recommends that it may be better to simply go through traditional bureaucratic channels, than to wait around for teacher buy-in.

The Implementation stage involves “the process of putting into practice an idea, program, or set of activities and structures new to the people attempting or expected to change” (Fullan, 2001, p. 69). There are three categories of factors that determine whether an idea is actually put into practice:

1. Characteristics of the change (need, clarity, complexity, clarity)
2. Local roles (cultural change is unlikely without support from key players-community leaders, district administration, principal, teachers, and parents)
3. External factors (the influence of state and federal regulations and programs)

Successful implementation is contingent on a sound model or plan and support for the change at all levels (school, district, state, and federal).

The final phase of the change process as described by Fullan (2001) is Institutionalization, which involves the continuation or maintenance of the change over time. Institutionalization of change rests on two primary factors, the first of which is whether or not provisions and supports for the change get built or embedded in the operational structure of the school (e.g., policies and procedures are developed and enforced, budgetary adjustments are made to support continuation of the program, time is structured to allow for program maintenance). The second critical determinant of institutionalization is the generation of a cadre
of trained individuals that can provide on-going site-based technical support, especially for new comers to the school. Fullan concludes that institutionalization requires, strong leadership, cultural change, effective teachers, and continued support.

III. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH

The Early Years

In the mid 1960’s to early 1970’s, a number of sociologically oriented studies focused on trying to find out what effect schools had on students. These studies (Coleman et al., 1966; Jenks, 1972) considered primarily on economic variables and utilized an input output research design where input were things like school resources (per pupil expenditures) and the socioeconomic status of the student, and outputs were student scores on standardized tests. The conclusions of these reports were that student background characteristics accounted for much more of the variance in achievement than school characteristics did.

These reports sparked a great deal of interest in assessing whether schools actually made a difference in student achievement. Many researchers reexamined the Coleman Report and found methodological errors; Mayeske (1972) pointed to the difficulty of distinguishing school effects from home effects due to the multicolinearity of these variables (Cohn & Geske, 1990). Likewise, a number of sociological ‘status attainment’ studies (Hauser et al., 1971, 1976) focused on the variance in student achievement between schools and concluded that these differences were due to differences in mean socioeconomic status, not to the effectiveness of the schooling (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000).

Stage Two: Greater Methodological Sophistication

Critics of these early school effects studies (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979; Averch et al., 1971) pointed out that few of the studies had actually included any process variables within schools. The next stage of studies was aimed at dispelling the earlier conclusions that schools have little effect on student achievement. These studies tended to be conducted in low socioeconomic status areas and included school process variables at the school and often classroom level. Outputs were also expanded to include attitudinal and/or behavioral measures. Weber (1971) conducted four case studies at low socioeconomic status elementary schools which had high scores at the third grade level. This study stressed the importance of school characteristics such as strong leadership, high expectations, positive atmosphere, and careful
evaluation of student progress, in the achievement of these students from impoverished backgrounds (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000).

This second stage school effectiveness studies also brought greater methodological sophistication into the forefront by the focusing on several levels of input and output (i.e., the student, the class, and the school). These studies found that certain psycho-social human resource characteristics of schools and teachers had a positive relationship to student achievement (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). During this period, Brookover et al. (1978, 1979) designed surveys to measure student, teacher, and principal perceptions of school climate, and investigated the relationships of school level climate variables to school level student socioeconomic status, racial composition, and mean school achievement.

Stage Three: Use of School Effectiveness Research to Improve Low Performing Schools

The third stage of effective school research evolved as researchers began to take the effective school correlates and suggest that they could be used to improve less effective schools. In the 1980’s, Ron Edmonds urged that the growing knowledge of the characteristics of effective schools be used to create effective schools for the urban poor (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). This marks the birth of the school improvement research. These early attempts to improve schools were criticized for the obvious sampling bias, resulting from the push for greater equity in school quality. School improvement efforts in the 1980’s tended to ignore the context of the individual school. A ‘one size fits all’ approach was taken as researchers tried to superimpose characteristics found in effective schools upon schools in need of help, regardless of the specific internal or external conditions found at a school.

The most recent generation of school effectiveness studies have explored the differences in school effects that occur across different contexts. More studies are being conducted in high and mid socioeconomic status schools, middle school, high schools and rural schools. This introduction of context variables opened the door for multiple approaches to school change and improvement depending on the particular characteristics of the school (Chrispeels, 1992; Stoll & Fink, 1992). Since the mid 1980’s there has been a decline in the number of school effectiveness studies in the United States (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). One reason cited for this is that many school effectiveness researchers have now gravitated to the newer related areas of school restructuring and school improvement (Brookover et al., 1984).
Characteristics of Effective Schools

As a result of this body of research on effective schools (e.g., Edmonds, 1979; Brookover, 1984; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000) a number of attributes have been identified that are present to some degree in these schools which seem to contribute to academic achievement of students, even in low SES schools. Some of the most commonly cited characteristics of effective schools are:

- A positive school climate or ethos
- Strong leadership at the school site
- High expectations for student achievement
- Teacher collaboration
- Effective instruction
- Frequent monitoring of student learning
- Maximization of time for learning

Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) describe the field of school effectiveness study as moving toward[s] normal science. Kuhn's model of the growth of scientific knowledge (1962, 1970) predicts that substantial gains in new knowledge will occur when new questions are asked that spark a different paradigm or way of thinking about a field of study. All indications are that this new and emerging paradigm in school effectiveness involves finding ways to link knowledge gained about effective schools to improving the operations of less effective schools (Owens, 2001; Halsall, 1998; and Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Teddlie & Reynolds (2000, p.42) state that “school improvement efforts based on SER [School Effectiveness Research] can positively impact the achievement of students, especially those from lower SES environments.”

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH

Two Separate Research Communities

Teddlie & Reynolds (2000, pp. 21-24) state that a number of studies originating in Australia (e.g., Mellor & Chapman, 1984; Hyde & Werner, 1984; Silver & Moyle, 1985; Caldwell & Spinks, 1986) establish that there are ‘close links between school effectiveness and school improvement.’ This link is evident when considering that some sources estimate that over half of the school improvement programs in the late 1980s were based on knowledge generated through research on effective schools (e.g., General Accounting Office, 1989; Taylor, 1990). Likewise, Bashi & Sass (1990) found a systematic application of school effectiveness findings in school improvement programs in Israel.
Despite this apparent link, Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) note that there appear to be two separate research communities yielding two discrete bodies of knowledge about school improvement; the two groups include those who base their work on school effectiveness research (e.g., McCormack-Larkin, 1985; Stoll & Fink, 1989, 1992) and those who base their work on other knowledge bases and research traditions (e.g., Fullan, Hall, & Miles). In support of this schism, Teddlie & Reynolds point out that school improvement scholars like Fullan, Hall & Miles rarely cite as references authors commonly regarded as contributors to the school effectiveness paradigm.

A Paradigm Change in School Improvement

Barth (1990) describes two contrasting approaches to school improvement; the first, contends that schools cannot or will not improve themselves without guidance from sources outside the school. This approach assumes that school improvement emanates from policy makers deciding what school people should know and be able to do, and then devising ways to get them to do it (Freeman, 1997).

Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) describe this ‘top-down’ approach to school improvement as one that prevailed in the United States and the United Kingdom throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which was characterized by a technological view of school improvement that sought to identify innovations from external sources and introduce them to schools. These innovations tended to focus on the school’s formal organization, and the curriculum, and rarely addressed the role of the individual practitioner. This ‘here it is, now do it’ approach proved to be largely unsuccessful worldwide; the ensuing discourse in the educational communities attributed the failure of these innovations to take root in schools to a lack of teacher ownership’ (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000, p. 214).

The failure of the first school improvement model gave rise to a new paradigm of school improvement in the 1980s which is still reflected in much of the current school improvement literature. Barth (1990) describes the assumptions that characterize the new paradigm of school improvement, sometimes referred to as ‘the bottom–up approach’, some of these include:

- Schools have the capacity to change themselves, if the conditions are right.
- A major responsibility of those outside the school is to help provide the conditions necessary for those inside schools to improve themselves and their processes.
- What needs to be improved in schools is their culture, the quality of the interpersonal relationships, and the nature and quality of the learning experiences.
School improvement, within the new paradigm, can be defined as “an effort to determine and provide, from without and within, conditions under which the adults and youngsters who inhabit schools will promote and sustain learning among themselves” (Barth, 1990, p. 45; Freeman, 1997, p. 6). Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) observed that those working in this new paradigm of school improvement tend to focus more on the individual rather than the organizational level, and emphasize practitioner or ‘folk-lore’ knowledge over empirical findings. The shift in paradigm was also accompanied by a methodological shift toward greater use of qualitative and naturalistically oriented inquiry rather than quantitative measurements (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000).

Different Approaches to School Improvement Employed by Schools

In a ten year study of school effectiveness (i.e., the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study– LSES) Stringfield & Teddlie (1990) identified unexpected results, which they referred to as ‘naturally occurring school improvement.’ The term was coined to describe improvement that was generated internal to the school organization, that is, the idea and driving force behind the change or innovation was attributed to sources within the school, such as the principal, teachers, or community members, rather than being initiated bureaucratically through the school district administration, or the state department of education (Freeman, 1997).

In an attempt to understand the processes by which this unanticipated improvement had occurred, Stringfield & Teddlie (1990) developed a two factor model. The first factor involved a ‘technical’ approach in which superficial efforts were made to improve students’ standardized test scores without major improvements in the overall quality of the education received by all children, (Pechman, 1990). LSES results indicated that virtually every school in the study participated in this technical approach to school improvement by teaching students “test-taking skills” as a school improvement strategy.

Some schools however, went a step farther, and attempted self-initiated organizational change, with the aim of improving the entire educational environment rather than attacking the problem of low student achievement simplistically through superficial means such as teaching students to be ‘test-wise.’ These organizational change approaches involved attempts to improve the school in more meaningful ways such as, increasing student time on task, increasing curricular coordination, and pursuing instructional excellence. The LSES findings hold significant implications for this study in that they indicate that internal approaches to school
improvement vary from school to school, and some approaches are more comprehensive and meaningful than others.

IV. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON SCHOOL REFORM: THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL CLIMATE

CONTINUED DEMANDS FOR SCHOOL CHANGE

Public elementary and secondary schools are currently undergoing a great deal of criticism. In fact, many in the private sector have proclaimed that schools are a failure because, as a whole, the institution has not met its goal of consistently turning out well-informed capable young adults able to function in society with little or no assistance. Seymore Sarason, concludes, "The private sector critic is on target when he or she says that when an organization - any organization - is not achieving its purposes, one has to assume that the structure and the culture of that organization is part of the problem and not the solution" (Sarason, 1996). Of schools in particular, Sarason (1996) claims that they lack forums for self examination and for discerning how and why other types of organizations (e.g., religious, or private sector) found themselves forced to change in truly significant ways. Likewise, providing schools with a mirror to objectively examine both structure and culture may assist them in accomplishing the changes they aspire to.

COMPETITION AMONG SCHOOLS

As new forms of public schooling, and quasi-public schooling emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in the form of magnet schools, charter schools, school vouchers, and privatized schools, Americans became more aware that differences existed in school environments (Moe, 2001; Levin, 2001). With the advent of state and district accountability systems, schools were for the first time assigned grades, or performance ratings that were then widely publicized. The enactment of the federal legislation in the form of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 solidified the idea of competition among schools by requiring that states and local districts make provisions for students to transfer out of ‘failing schools’ (U. S. Department of Education, 2002a). While the research on competition among public schools in America is scant due to the newness of this condition in society, and the variance in the availability of public school choice across the country, Belfield & Levin (2002) reported a modest positive correlation between increased competition and higher educational quality.
CURRENT EDUCATIONAL REFORM MOVEMENTS

The school reform models of the 1990s forward, which focus more on developing learning climates, and organizational adaptivity, are being substituted for the more traditional emphasis on bureaucratic quick fixes such as curricular reform, or applying the ‘one best way’ to all schools and classes (McCarthy & Peterson, 1989). Lessons learned from the school reforms of the 1980s and the 1990s are that neither top-down bureaucratically mandated reforms, nor bottom-up decentralized approaches to school reform yielded the intended results in terms of substantial gains in the achievement of all students. Current thinking is that perhaps some combination of these two strategies will bring about the intended changes.

At the dawning of the twenty-first century we see a federal school reform agenda that is overwhelmingly focused on improving student performance on standardized measures of achievement, across all economic and ethnic lines. Currently popular movements include the development of standards for student achievement, the implementation of public school accountability for student achievement, the professionalization of teaching through enhanced staff development and the advent of the National Board Certification for teachers, and greater parental choice in public school alternatives (e.g. school vouchers, charter schools, and privatization).

STANDARDS-BASED REFORM AND SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

The standards-based reforms of the 1990s and the 2000s are an outgrowth of the 1980s national level push for more rigorous regulations and requirements for schools, resulting in the advent of competency testing requirements for high school graduation, and revised teacher certification requirements in many states. The goal of standards based reform is to “anchor key aspects of policy- curriculum, assessment, teacher education, and professional development – around policy level statements of what students should know and be able to do” (Fuhrman, 2001, p.1).

The exclusive reliance on standards based reform in the 1980s produced such unsatisfactory results in terms of gains in student achievement and inadequate change processes for schools that that educator led criticisms resulted in the proliferation of bottom –up approaches to school reform in the late 1980s and early 1990s, such as decentralization, and site-based management (Fuhrman, 2001; Murphy & Adams, 1998).
Current (mid 1990s to 2003) school reform initiatives involve a combination of both top-down (standards-based) and bottom-up (decentralization) approaches toward school improvement. The school accountability movement embodies this dual approach to reform. The ultimate goal of the movement is to insure all students, including the underprivileged, are held to the same rigorous academic standards, through holding the schools themselves directly responsible for student achievement (Sunderman, 2001).

Federal Legislation

In 1994, The Goals 2000; Educate America Act was passed and consisted of eight national goals for education:

1. School Readiness- all students will begin school ready to learn
2. School Completion- graduation rates will increase to 90% by 2000
3. Student Achievement-students in grades 4, 8, and 12 will demonstrate mastery in core content areas
4. Teacher Professional Development- all teachers will have access to professional development programs
5. Math and Science Achievement- by 2000 U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science achievement
6. Adult Literacy- by 2000 every adult American will be able to read and write
7. Safe Schools- all schools will have safe orderly, drug-free environments
8. Parental Participation- every school will promote parental involvement in student learning

These goals (United States Department of Education, 1994) provided the basis for two important legislative acts, the Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The IASA was essentially a reauthorization of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, with some new features. The IASA includes a standards-based approach to school reform (Sunderman, 2001). Title I of this act required districts to develop rigorous content standards and performance standards by the year 1997, and to implement yearly assessment standards by 2000. It also required yearly progress reports to be published for parents and policy makers; and the development of a system for holding schools and school systems accountable for student performance (e.g., achievement scores, dropout and retention rates, absences, etc.). Under this legislation states are required to identify and to provide assistance to low-performing schools (U. S. Department of Education, 2001a).

The passage of the IASA has had dramatic effects on local schools, it redefined the eligibility standards for Title I schools, by including schools in which 50% or more of the
students served come from low-income families. This resulted in an increase in the number of schools receiving federal Title I assistance (Sunderman, 2001). Secondly, by requiring that states receiving Title I funds (i.e., all 50) set the same standards, assessments, and accountability measures for Title I students as other students, the federal government effectively entered a new era of more active involvement in education, traditionally a function of state government.

The No Child Left Behind Act, which took effect in the fall of 2002, is also a reauthorization of the ESEA Act of 1965. This act involves four major components: school and district accountability, local control of schools, research-based school improvement initiatives and reforms, and parental choice (Roberts, 2002). The accountability portion expands on the mandates of the 1994 IASA by requiring schools to administer reading and mathematics achievement tests each year in grades 3-8 by the 2004-2005 school year, and to add science testing by 2007-2008. Primary administrative responsibility for these programs is delegated to the states.

Decentralization and Accountability

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 guarantees local control of schools despite the creation of increased federal and state regulation. This is done through the encouragement of schools to step-up professional development efforts and to implement ‘research-based’ programs which meet the needs of their students. Many school districts are coupling standards-based reforms with increased decentralization and site based decision making, so that school leaders are free to make choices about how to reach their goals so the school itself can then be held directly accountable for the results. This approach to school accountability is designed to motivate individual schools to accomplish internal self-improvement.

However, according to many theories of school improvement (Fullan, 1993; Murphy 1991; Darling-Hammond, 1990) success in raising student achievement still rests on the crux of changing school cultures to support increased teacher professionalism. Implications from early theoretical work linking school culture to school improvement, are that schools whose core culture does not support teacher professionalism simply will not have the capacity to maintain student gains over time if school cultures do not evolve such that the school work environment is conducive to continual self-evaluation and renewal, on an individual and a faculty level (Fullan, 1993).
State Level School Accountability

Each state is given the responsibility and freedom to develop detailed school accountability programs tailored to fit the dictates of the federal accountability legislation. Since the specifics of school accountability plans and policies are left to be developed and implemented at the state level, there is considerable variance across the states in the rigor of state content standards, student performance standards, and the types and difficulty of student achievement assessments (Chatterji, 2002). Many state accountability plans, require schools to show growth in terms of student performance on standardized tests or face sanctions. Conversely, in some states schools that improve from their baseline scores are being offered monetary rewards. Still other states, are providing massive assistance to struggling schools, in the form of diagnostic school effectiveness reports, and funding to achieving goals stated in school generated improvement plans (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1995). Regardless of the particulars of each plan, all accountability systems involve the establishment of state set standards for student achievement, content standards, a means of annually assessing the extent to which students at each school meet these standards, and the publishing of school level results for the public.

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY IN LOUISIANA

Content Standards and Benchmarks

In 1997, in response to federal IASA legislation, Louisiana began to develop content standards, performance standards, student assessments, and a system of accountability. Content standards were developed in three grade clusters, K-3, 4-8, and 9-12, and list skill areas in which students are expected to demonstrate competency in the content areas of Math, Reading and English, Science, Social Studies, the arts, and foreign language. To accompany each set of content standards is a set of benchmarks that specifically delineate exactly what each student should know and be able to do with regard to each content standard (Louisiana Department of Education, 2001).

Assessment and Student Accountability

State level student assessments and performance standards were set based upon the content standards and benchmarks for each subject area and grade. The state department of education opted to assess student achievement in public schools, in part, with the Iowa Test of Basic Skills, a nationally norm referenced test, in grades 3, 5, 7, and 9. Louisiana also developed
a series of criterion referenced tests, collectively referred to as the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) tests. These tests are designed to exactly correlate with the state’s published content standards and benchmarks, and are administered in grades 4, 8, and 10. The Leap tests are used to rate student attainment of content standards. For each content area students are placed in one of five performance categories: advanced, proficient, basic, approaching basic, or unsatisfactory. In 2000-2001 the state implemented a ‘high stakes’ component to the test by requiring that students performing at an unsatisfactory level in grades 4 and 8 be retained, and requiring that high school graduation be contingent on passing of all areas of the Graduation Exit Exam (GEE), given in 10th grade and repeated subsequently in 11th and 12th for those who do not meet state standards. Those students not passing all areas of the GEE by 12th grade receive a certificate of attendance rather than a high school diploma (Louisiana Department of Education, 2001).

**School Accountability**

The Louisiana School Accountability System (LSAS) uses a weighted composite index score called the School Performance Score (SPS) to rank schools in terms of student achievement. The SPS is designed to reflect three main indicators of student achievement: student attainment of state set content standards, student achievement relative to national norms, and student attendance/dropout rate. The LSAS prescribes that these indicators be weighted in the following fashion:

- Student scores on the LEAP test (criterion referenced) ......................... 60%
- Student scores on The Iowa test of Basic Skills (norm referenced)........... 30%
- Student attendance and dropout rate ................................................. 10%

These data are aggregated at the school level to yield a school performance score (SPS). SPSs from the 1998–99 school year were used to set baseline performance scores for each school. SPSs are clustered into six performance categories used to classify schools (see Table 2.4 Performance).

**All Schools Accountable for Improving Student Achievement**

Under this plan, all schools are expected to improve regardless of their baseline performance, or current performance category. Improvement is measured by recalculating SPSs in two-year cycles. Based upon its baseline SPS, each school is expected to improve its score at a rate commensurate with meeting the state’s 10-year goal of all schools attaining a level 4 ‘School
of Academic Achievement’. Thus, the target growth score of each school depends on its baseline SPS, with more rapid growth being expected of schools with lower baseline scores, in order to achieve the state 10 year performance minimums set for all schools.

Data from the first two-year cycle, SY 1999-2000 and SY 2000-2001, were used to assign growth labels to each school based on their improvement over baseline scores. The state of Louisiana generated ‘Growth Labels’ to categorize school improvement (see Table 2.3); These growth labels were used to indicate school improvement in this study.

**Table 2.3 Growth Labels for Louisiana Schools**
(Source: Louisiana Department of Education School Report Card, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth Labels</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exemplary Academic growth</td>
<td>Exceeds Growth target by 5 points or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognized Academic Growth</td>
<td>Meets/exceeds growth target by fewer than 5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal Academic Growth</td>
<td>Improves, but does not meet growth target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Growth</td>
<td>Shows a change in SPS of 0 to -5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School in Decline</td>
<td>Has an SPS decline of more than -5 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.4 Performance Categories**
(Source: Louisiana Department of Education School Report Card, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Performance Categories</th>
<th>SPS Point Ranges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School of Academic Excellence</td>
<td>150 or above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Academic Distinction</td>
<td>125.0 – 149.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School of Academic Achievement</td>
<td>100.0 - 124.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically Above State Average</td>
<td>79.9 – 99.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically Below State Average</td>
<td>30.1 – 79.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academically Unacceptable</td>
<td>30.0 or below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**District Accountability**

School districts in Louisiana are required to provide support services to low-performing schools. This support may assume a variety of forms such as technical assistance in developing and implementing school improvement plans, providing professional development, providing instructional support services or personnel, assistance with teacher recruitment, or enhanced programs and resources (Stevens, 2000).

**EXTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY VERSUS INTERNAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Internal Accountability**

Newmann & Rigdon (1997) identify four parts that should be present in a system of accountability:

1. Information about the organization’s performance
2. Standards for judging the quality or degree of success
3. Significant consequences for the success or failure of the organization in meeting set standards
4. An entity that judges the extent to which standards have been met, and distributes rewards and/or sanctions.

Most external accountability systems meet these standards, however in an analysis of the data collected in a study of twenty four restructuring schools (i.e., Newmann & Wehlage, 1995), Newmann & Rigdon (1997) found that these components sometimes exist internal to the school organization itself. The discovery of these ‘homegrown accountability systems’ led them to differentiate between internal and external school accountability. External accountability refers to systems developed and implemented from sources outside of the school itself, whereas internal accountability refers to either formal or informal mechanisms and processes developed by school faculty to: collect and analyze information about student performance, disseminate this information, set internal standards or goals, derive strategies for meeting these goals, evaluate progress of the school in meeting goals, and internally reward and/or provide sanctions for faculty and students based on performance.

Newmann & Rigdon (1997) found that schools with strong internal accountability were also characterized as having a high degree of faculty cohesion, often resulting in strong peer pressure to meet goals. Additionally, they noted that “in some schools strong internal accountability was accompanied by compatible external accountability, but in others internal accountability existed without, or even in opposition to, external accountability requirements.”

Internal Accountability and Organizational Capacity

Much of the school reform discourse since the 1990s (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 1993; David, 1994; Corcoran & Goertz, 1995) has focused on the concept of building organizational capacity, though without unanimity on a specific definition (Newmann & Rigdon, 1997). Proposed ingredients of a school’s organizational capacity include:

- Teachers’ professional knowledge and skills
- Effective leadership
- Availability of technical and financial resources
- School autonomy to act according to the demands of the local context
- Human, technical, and social resources are organized into an effective collective enterprise

The presence of high levels of these factors in the school would indicate that the school has an increased organizational capacity to deliver high quality instruction, which in-turn, should
produce high quality student achievement (Newmann & Rigdon, 1997). Newmann & Rigdon (1997) also posit that internal accountability is both a building block of organizational capacity, as well as a product of the organizational capacity. In their words, “a school’s commitment to monitor its progress and offer its own set of rewards and sanctions can lead to higher consensus and skill development among the staff. Or, strong clear consensus on a school’s mission can lead to building an internal system of monitoring with rewards and sanctions at the school” (p. 47).

External Accountability and School Capacity

Newmann & Rigdon (1997) observed that many of the schools they studied seemed to lack the capacity to meet higher standards. They stress that in order to be effective, efforts to increase external accountability must be tightly coupled with efforts to enhance organizational capacity. They call for external agencies to provide assistance to schools in ways that will build the organizational capacity of schools. The three main areas of external support that they identify as being important to helping schools reach higher standards are in the provision of technical resources (such as curriculum and assessment materials, laboratory, library, and computer equipment and facilities), in professional development, and in providing schools with both standards for performance, balanced with enough autonomy that schools can craft programs to respond to their unique social context.

V. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

An initial overview of the literature on school improvement, as well as that of organizational change, revealed that the term “culture” cropped up repeatedly when researching for information about improving student achievement in school organizations. Halsall summarizes it this way: “One of the most consistent messages from the school improvement literature is that school culture has a powerful impact on any change effort (Halsall Ed., 1998, p. 29). This determination led to the identification of school culture as the independent variable for this study. Given that many educational researchers have commented that this phenomenon termed school culture can seriously impede or substantially assist reform and improvement efforts (Fullan, 1993; Lieberman 1990; Little, 1982; Meza, 1997; Deal & Kennedy 1983) it follows that understanding school culture is a vital part of school improvement (Stoll & Fink, 1996).
DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE

An overview of the literature on school culture and organizational culture reveals that there is no single universally agreed upon ‘one best definition of school culture’ (Deal & Peterson, 1999), nor does there currently exist a widely accepted theoretical framework showing how culture fits into the larger picture of school improvement. Instead, there are numerous definitions of the construct, and attempts by some to link their concept of school culture to related constructs. School culture is elusive and difficult to define (Halsall, 1998) because it is not directly observable (Stoll & Fink, 1996). Table 2.5 lists several of the more commonly accepted definitions.

Schein (1985) states that the essence of organizational culture is “the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of the organization. These assumptions operate in an unconscious, taken-for-granted fashion to define the organization’s view of itself and interpretation of its environment” (Schein, 1985, 1988, 1996; Argyris & Schon, 1976). In simplistic terms, school culture can be viewed as the implicit set of beliefs that determines ‘the way we do things around here’ (Deal & Kennedy 1983), and the means by which a school establishes self-identity. Most researchers addressing the issue of school culture have focused on the level of the individual school, rather than on broader organizational levels such as the district and state, or the microcosm of the classroom (Deal & Peterson, 1999). This may be due to the relationship that exists between leadership and culture, which Schein (1992) describes as ‘conceptually intertwined’; it follows then that since each school has its own leader it also has its own culture.

Culture as both Static and Dynamic

Research related to the culture of social systems indicates that culture has both static and dynamic characteristics (Rossman, Corbett, & Firestone, 1988). While on the one hand, culture creates a unique character and ethos for the organization through fostering a deep sense of commitment in organization members and actively socializing new members into its view of reality, it is none-the-less subject to change as organization members interact with new ideas and methods. Therefore, any consideration of an organization’s culture must take into account its history in terms of stability over time (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Owens, 2001), as well as its dynamic and changing nature (Sarason, 1971, 1996; Fullan 1993, 1999).
Table 2.5  Popular Definitions of Organizational or School Culture

- Culture is the informal code of “how we do things around here” (Bower, 1966)
- School culture is a social element of climate, which includes belief systems, values, general cognitive structures, and meaning within the social system as characterized by the pattern of relationships of persons and groups within the system (Tanguri, 1968)
- Culture is the ‘web of significance’ in which we are all suspended (Geertz, 1973)
- A set of tacit understandings or ‘theories-in use’ shared by organizational members that determines the manner in which an individual responds to routine situations and accounts for patterns of behavior within an organization (Argyris & Schon, 1976)
- Culture consists of the shared beliefs and values that closely knit a community together (Deal & Kennedy, 1982)
- Organizational culture involves the enactment of “A pattern of basic assumptions--invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems…that has worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore,[is] to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel…” (Schein, 1985, p.9).
- It is the lens through which participants view themselves and the world (Hargreaves, 1994).
- Observers of school culture are often “unaware of the degree of kinship to those within the school”….. “When we say that cultures differ from each other, we mean among other things, that there is a distinct structure or pattern that, so to speak, governs roles and interrelationships within that setting….It may be that it is precisely because one cannot see structure in the same way that one sees an individual that we have trouble grasping or acting in terms of its existence.” (Sarason, 1996, pp. 26-27 emphasis in the original)
- “The culture of an enterprise plays the dominant role in exemplary performance. Highly respected organizations have evolved a shared system of informal folkways and traditions that infuse work with meaning, passion, and purpose.” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p.1; emphasis in the original)
- School culture is comprised of “Unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don’t, and how teachers feel about their work and their students”(Deal & Peterson, 1999, pp.2-3)
- Organizational culture can be thought of as the unwritten set of directives that inform organizational members how to behave in certain situations (Schein, 2001)
- “Organizational culture is the body of solutions that has worked consistently for a group and that is therefore taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think about, and feel in relation to those problems. Over time, organizational culture takes on meaning so deep that it defines the assumptions, values, beliefs, and even the perceptions of participants in the organization. Though culture tends to drop from the conscious thoughts of the participants over time, it continues to powerfully create meaning for them in their work and becomes ‘the rules of the game.’” (Owens, 2001, p.174).

**Culture as a Stabilizing Force**

A strong culture helps an organization maintain its identity and focus and is associated with organizational effectiveness (Ouchi, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Kotter & Heskett,
Schools are not impervious to the forces of organizational culture. The stabilizing effects of school culture have been documented by several researchers (Cuban, 1990; Fullan, 1993) and are reflected in statements such as ‘the more schools change, the more they stay the same’ (Sarason, 1971). Similarly, Theodore Sizer (1984) contends that the average high school classroom of today functions remarkably similar to those of a hundred years ago.

A cohesive culture allows an organization to maintain itself internally, achieve its goals, and adapt to its environment, all three essential activities to good organizational health (Argyris, 1964, p. 123; Owens, 2001, p.197). Healthy organizations not only survive their environment, but they continually develop their coping activities over the long haul, such that while a snapshot of operations at a particular point in time may reveal inadequacies, the organization is none-the-less growing and developing coping strategies to guarantee its continued survival (Miles, 1965, p. 17).

The capacity to cope with its environment in an effective way distinguishes a healthy organization from an unhealthy one. Unhealthy organizations show continual declines in their capacity to cope and eventually tend to become dysfunctional (Owens, 2001, p.127). Owens (2001) identifies a number of general indicators of organizational health based upon the work of Miles (1965):

a. goal focus  
b. communication adequacy  
c. optimal power equalization  
d. human resources utilization  
e. cohesiveness  
f. morale  
g. innovativeness  
h. autonomy  
i. adaption  
j. problem-solving adequacy

The internal organizational culture provides a stabilizing force for the school through which it perpetuates values that are deeply held by its members (Hoy & Miskel, 1991) and mandates alone are insufficient to change the stability of the belief systems, and patterns of actions that comprise the school culture. It is the school culture, rather than outwardly imposed policy, that ultimately defines norms of behavior within a school. Typically, policy compliance at the school is superficial and surface level at best (Deal & Kennedy, 1983). Similarly, Newmann & Associates (1996) demonstrated that changing the structure of schools was not
enough to bring about desired reforms, unless new structures are introduced that support the development and maintenance of a professional culture. Thus, culture is a stabilizing force within schools that can contribute to or impede organizational health and effectiveness.

Culture and Organizational Effectiveness

All organizations, including schools, develop unique identities involving core beliefs that affect day-to-day practices. While schools are unique in some respects, many of the basic assumptions of organizational theory that apply to private sector organizations are also applicable to schools. This belief is highlighted by repeated calls from private sector spokespersons to search for ways to make schools function more like businesses. As a result, there is growing public support for reforms that involve placing schools into competitive markets such as charter schools, school vouchers, and break-the-mold schools (Sarason, 1996). Deal & Peterson (1999) maintain the success of school improvement lies in emulating private sector organizations who have changed themselves by taking an honest look at the existing values and traditions and have consequently rebuilt their core culture around beliefs and practices more central to the mission of the organization.

The prevailing culture of the organization exerts a powerful controlling influence upon employees, affecting almost everything - from who gets promoted to what decisions are made, to how employees dress and think about their jobs. Consequently, many social scientists have noted that organizational culture has a major effect on the success of the organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). This is confirmed by an examination of biographies, speeches, and documents from giants in American business and industry which abound with examples of how visionary leaders saw their role as creating an environment (or culture) within their companies in which employees felt secure and dedicated, and consequently, were motivated to put in the effort necessary to make the business a success. Individuals such as Thomas Watson of IBM, Will Durant of General Motors, and William Kellogg of Kellogg’s all worked obsessively to create strong cultures and beliefs within their organizations, which they felt paid off in terms of company performance (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

STUDYING SCHOOL CULTURE

The abstract intangible nature of school culture makes it difficult to study (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). There is no simple way to uncover what assumptions and values underlie what people do. Surface level indicators of deeply held beliefs and values may include: behavioral
regularities or norms, rituals, language usage, organizational philosophy, variations in policy implementation, informal rules for getting along with colleagues, procedures, opinions, traditions, symbols, distinguishing characteristics, ceremonies, and stories (Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Schein 1985; Stoll & Fink 1996).

Since culture itself is not directly observable, a preliminary step in the study of culture is the determination of appropriate indicators and the selection of means of documenting and analyzing these indicators. Approaches to the study of school / organizational culture and climate tend to fall into two basic camps: those who use anthropological methods and techniques, such as ethnography and qualitative observations and interviews to gather data, (e.g., Sarason, 1971, 1990; Ouchi, 1981; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Sizer, 1984; Owens & Steinhoff, 1988; Schein, 1992; Bolman & Deal, 1997; Deal & Peterson, 1999) and those who utilize primarily quantitative methods of investigation, such as psychometrics in the form of attitudinal surveys, surveys and interviews for gathering perceptions of the participants, and archived records (e.g., attendance, achievement scores, graduation/retention rates, number of suspensions and expulsions, teacher turnover) which serve as indicators of climate or ethos (e.g., Halpin & Croft, 1963; Brookover, 1978; Moos; 1979; Rutter et al., 1979; Epstein & Connors, 1994; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbeck, 1999).

There are problems associated with both approaches to the study of culture. For anthropologically inclined researchers, observations can be problematic because they depend on speculation and interpretation of the meaning behind the events observed. Owens & Steinhoff (1988) refer observable elements of culture as ‘visible but not decipherable.’ In an attempt to capture the essence of school culture including hidden elements which are not readily observable, many researchers rely on survey data which reveals common beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of school personnel (Ellett & Cavanagh, 1997; Owens & Steinhoff, 1988).

Another effective research tool for exploring school culture is individual or group interviews. Interviews can be helpful because participants can be asked to explain why they behave the way they do, providing insight into the factors that maintain observed norms of behavior. However, both surveys and interviews result in the collection of perceptual data; exclusive reliance on perceptual data can be misleading because there is often a mismatch between the way an individual perceives himself and the way he actually behaves, this frequently occurs when espoused values of the individual are incompatible with the ‘theories in action’
learned on the job. In such cases, respondents may not select the literally accurate response because this is not how they want to think of themselves. In other instances they may not recall or report events accurately because of either faulty memory or fear of negative repercussions (Fowler, 1998, p.354).

Argyris & Schon (1976) recommend observation of behavior to ascertain the ‘theories in use’ which actually govern behavior in organizations. However, Sarason (1971, 1990) points out several difficulties associated with observing in schools to study culture. One important aspect of school life that is difficult for an outsider to see is the complex patterns of personal and professional relationships that exist in a setting. Another factor to be considered is that observers are not neutral and what researchers note during observations is influenced by their on background, experience, purpose, and values.

Recent studies of school effectiveness (e.g., Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Reynolds, Creemers, Stringfield, Teddlie, & Schaffer, Eds., 2002) have begun to utilize a mixture of both ethnographic and psychometric methods, yielding both qualitative and quantitative data. This approach offers appeal for the study of school culture since it allows for the short comings of both research traditions to be off-set by the other.

Once information has been collected the problem then becomes one of finding a means of describing and analyzing of data relevant to school culture. There are several diverse means of conceptualizing types of school culture. The reason for this is that, to date, there exists no widely agreed upon theoretical framework for school culture upon which constructs can be built.

ANALYSES OF SCHOOL CULTURE

The term culture is used frequently in a variety of fields of study including anthropology, sociology, psychology, as well as education. Scholars in each of these areas define the term in slightly different ways (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988). For the anthropologist, culture is a ‘process that is ongoing, elusive, and always being modified’ (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988). From a sociological perspective culture can be described as ‘a conceptual structure in which symbols represent meanings and serve as tangible emblems of ideals, attitudes and beliefs’ (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988). A psychological metaphor is used in the statement ‘culture is to the organization what personality is to the individual - a hidden yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilization (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988). Corbett et al. think of culture as ‘the way things are’ (Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987).
Several typologies have been created that describe and label different idealized types of school culture. Stoll & Fink (1996) describe these representations or classification systems as incomplete, but useful tools to help educators analyze school life. In fact, much of the literature on school culture is directed toward identifying implications for productive school change and improvement (Hoy & Miskel, 1991).

Describing School Culture in Terms of School Effectiveness

Terrance Deal (1986) draws heavily from the effective schools research in his treatment of school culture (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). He proposes that schools which can be classified as effective share a common set of cultural attributes:

- Shared values and consensus on ‘how we get things done around here’
- The principal as a hero who embodies core values
- Distinctive rituals that embody widely shared beliefs
- Employees as situational heroes and heroines
- Rituals of acculturation and cultural renewal
- Significant rituals which celebrate and transform core values
- Balance between innovation and tradition, and between autonomy and control
- Widespread participation in cultural rituals

In a later work, Deal & Peterson (1999) present the analogy of schools as tribes, which express their unique and complex culture through: 1) vision and value, 2) ritual and ceremony, 3) history and stories, and 4) architecture and artifacts.

Deal & Peterson (1999) stress that school leaders shape culture in a variety of ways, ultimately resulting in a positive or a ‘toxic’ culture. A skillful symbolic leader is seen as a cultural reinforcer who can transform a toxic school culture into a positive one over time, through the judicious, passionate and artful execution of day to day administrative activities. Successful or positive school cultures involve some expression of the following attributes:

- A mission focused on student and teacher learning
- A rich sense of history and purpose
- Core values of collegiality, performance, and improvement that engender quality, achievement, and learning for everyone
- Positive beliefs and assumptions about the potential of students and staff to learn and grow
- A strong professional community that uses knowledge experience and research to improve practice
- An informal network that fosters positive communication flow
- Shared leadership that balances continuity and improvement
h. Rituals and ceremonies that reinforce core cultural values
i. Stories that celebrate successes and recognize heroines and heroes
j. A physical environment that symbolizes joy and pride
k. A widely shared sense of respect and caring

These ‘attributes of positive cultures’ (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 116) bear a strong resemblance to commonly held characteristics of effective schools.

Stoll & Fink (1996) take a somewhat different approach in their conceptualization of school culture. They grouped schools into descriptive categories based on observed dimensions of culture; much like a psychologist might classify individuals by personality type.

Table 2.6 Stoll & Fink’s (1996, p.86) Five Basic Classifications of School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moving Schools</td>
<td>Are very effective. The people in them actively work together to respond to their changing context, and to keep developing. They know where they are going and possess the will, structure, and skill to get there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruising Schools</td>
<td>Have many qualities of an effective school. They are generally perceived as effective by teachers, administrators, and the surrounding community. They are usually located in higher SES areas where pupils achieve despite the quality of teaching. Students score well on standardized measures when compared with the population at large, though not necessarily well against other students of similar economic backgrounds. ‘These are good schools if it were 1965’, but they are not seeking to prepare students for a changing information age society and are doing students and society a disservice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strolling Schools</td>
<td>Are neither particularly effective or ineffective. Efforts are made towards improvements, but at an inadequate pace. They have ill-defined and sometimes conflicting aims. These are average schools that seem to be meandering into the future. Strolling schools often require stimulation from an outside source.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling Schools</td>
<td>Are ineffective and they know it. They have the will to improve, but lack the direction or the skill. They will try anything (and often already have). These schools benefit the most from outside consultants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinking Schools</td>
<td>Are ineffective schools, often found in lower SES areas. The staff is, either out of apathy or ignorance, making no effort toward change. The curriculum at these schools is undemanding and the teachers explain away failure by blaming it on the home-life of the students. Such a school culture is incapable of repair. The school should be closed to allow this harmful culture to die out. Later another school with a new name, new faulty, etc. can be reopened on the same location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hargreaves (1995) offers a different, but similar perspective on school culture. He classified types of school cultures as traditional, welfarist, hothouse, or anomic, based on the degree of social control and the amount of social cohesion exhibited in the school.

The work of Deal, Stoll et al., & Hargreaves relies heavily upon the body of literature on effective schools. In fact, embedded into the very definitions they use to define culture is the concept of school effectiveness. However, most school effectiveness studies include empirical
data regarding school climate, (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000) a concept which bears many resemblances with the construct of school organizational culture. The relationship between school climate and school culture is unclear in the literature and will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

Culture as Layers of Embeddedness

Other researchers (Schein, 1985, 1992; Corbett et al., 1987; Firestone et al., 1988; Owens & Steinhoff, 1988) have attempted more direct inquiry into the nature of school culture. Schein (1985) developed a model which describes three layers of culture found in all schools. The layers are listed in order of their elusiveness to empirical study. At the top or surface level are those things that are easily observable but difficult to interpret, such as artifacts, technology, art, and visible or audible behavior. The intermediate layer deals with values. These are testable because individuals are moderately aware of the values they hold. The most abstract layer, according to Schein, is basic assumptions because these are taken-for-granted to the extent that they are rarely acknowledged on a conscious level (see Figure 3.6).

Owens & Steinhoff (1988) used Schein’s conceptual framework in designing their 1988 study of school culture. They developed the Organizational Culture Assessment Inventory (OCAI), a survey intended to bring internalized notions to the level of conscious thought. Throughout this instrument participants are asked directly to identify elements of school culture. Owens & Steinhoff (1988) concentrated on six elements through which ‘the symbolism of organizational culture is preserved, expressed, or conveyed’. These are the:

- history of the organization
- symbolic myths and stories about the organization
- espoused values and beliefs of the organization
- expectations for behavior in the organization
- rites and rituals which have symbolic value
- heroes and heroines that symbolize the organization

Figure 2.2 presents a graphic representation of these Overlapping Symbolic Elements of Culture. In 1988, Owens and Steinhoff stated that the commonly shared aspects of these elements constitute organizational culture. Their approach to studying organizational culture involved collecting individual members’ perceptions of these six elements and analyzing them collectively to get an idea of the core culture.
Similarly, Firestone & Wilson (1985) suggested that the important cultural themes of a school can be derived by studying its symbol systems. This is done by observation, documentation, and analysis of the school’s stories, icons, and rituals (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). ‘Stories’ are narratives that are told and retold about the school which are based on truth, but may be embellished with fiction. ‘Icons’ are described as physical artifacts or visual representations of what is important to the school such as; logos, mottoes, trophies, mascots, and displays. ‘Rituals’ are routine ceremonies or events which are repeated such as faculty meetings, social gatherings, assemblies, athletic events, and presentations. These rituals provide a window though which an outsider might glimpse at some of the values held by the school.

Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman (1987) use a religious metaphor to analyze norms of behavior. Some behaviors, they maintain, are accepted ways of doing things, but are amenable to change with improved knowledge. These surface level beliefs and patterns of action are referred to as profane.

There is however, within every school, a set of behavioral expectations which are based on beliefs and values held as sacred to the participants (Corbett et al., 1987). These are similar to Schein’s (1985, 1992) ‘basic assumptions’ (Stoll & Fink, 1996) and Argyris & Schon’s (1976) ‘theories-in-use.’ These deeply held beliefs or “sacred tenants” form the foundation for staff
professional identities and lend meaning to organizational activity. The absence of these immutable and ingrained patterns of behavior would create disorientation and diminish professional identity. Certainly these norms may not be held by every member of the school, but the more widely they are held, the more powerful the control they have over behavior (Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987).

Corbett et al. (1987) maintain that the status of a behavioral norm as being sacred or profane is of primary consideration when dealing with the prospect of school change. They suggest that degree of receptivity and/or resistance, with which a proposed change is met, depends on the fit between the school’s culture and the proposed change. Sarason (1971, 1996) observed that ‘The change is greeted with suspicion and reluctance when expectations for behavior embedded in a new practice do not coincide with existing conceptions of the way school life is or should be’ (Sarason, 1971).

In a later work, Rossman and colleagues (1988) explore the notion that school cultures change over time. ‘They identify three cultural change processes that represent a continuum according to the degree of explicit conscious focus on cultural change’ (Stoll & Fink, 1996).

1. Evolutionary change is implicit, unconscious and unplanned. Over time new norms, beliefs and values are introduced as others steadily fade.
2. Additive change may or may not be explicit, as norms, beliefs, and values become suddenly modified when new initiatives are introduced.
3. Transformative change is explicit and conscious with the deliberate intention of changing norms, values, and beliefs.

It is possible that transformative change may result from the actions of a new administrator, or a negative evaluation, but it is much more likely to occur when a conscious decision has been made to work on cultural norms as a part of a school improvement effort. However, Rossman et al. (1988) caution that frequently school improvement efforts focus only on a change of behavior, technology or structure and do not affect the cultural core of the school. Unless there is a deeper change in thinking such “improvement” will lead to the preservation of fads, and the faculty will view change as superficial and marginal to the real purpose of teaching (Fullan, 1993).

SCHOOL CULTURE AND CAPACITY FOR CHANGE

At a time when the demands society is placing on schooling are shifting (Stringfield et al., 1996) change is unavoidable. In fact, we are in such an era of fast pace change that multiple
policies and programs are often implemented simultaneously (Fullan, 1993); therefore, schools must become skilled in managing the process of change if they are to effectively prepare students to function successfully in the twenty-first century (Schleclty, 1991).

The legacy of the bureaucratic model upon which our educational system is built: top level management leads by setting policy, which employees follow, is evident when one analyzes the first wave of the current educational reform movement (1983-86). Countless laws and policy mandates were issued during this period, yet American schools continued to be under constant criticism because there was no widespread public perception that any meaningful change had taken place in the schools themselves. This bureaucratic influence on the culture of schools is still prominent as evidenced by the recent adoption of the federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation of 2001 (United States Department of Education, 2002a).

However, the lessons of the first wave of school reform have taught us that “simply mandating policy is insufficient for insuring educational changes of value, particularly at the school level” (McLaughlin, 1990). What really matters when trying to accomplish complex change are internal characteristics of the school and its members, particularly the presence of professional knowledge and skills, creative thinking, committed action (McLaughlin, 1990), and an understanding of the intricacies and processes of change (Fullan, 1993). School cultures that exhibit these internal characteristics and use them to achieve bureaucratically mandated standards will theoretically possess the organizational capacity to actually achieve prescribed goals.

Organizational Culture as an Obstacle to Planned Change

Culture, by its very nature, preserves an organization’s uniqueness and insulates it from outside forces; thus culture acts as a stabilizing force which renders organizations resilient to change. Therefore, when major changes in an organization’s operations are sought, the culture of the organization can be an obstacle to change and improvement, unless a direct and sustained effort is made to alter the prevailing culture to make it more amenable to the desired changes in operations (Firestone & Corbett, 1988, Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sarason, 1971, 1990, 1996; Schein, 1985, 1998, 1992, 1996) .

Fullan (1993) asserts that schools are perpetually inundated with a barrage of mandates and adopted innovations with which they must comply. School people often respond to these programs and “innovations” which are thrown at them in an ad hoc fragmented fashion by
hastily and superficially embracing the latest trend (site-based management, cooperative
learning, whole language, peer coaching, mentoring etc.). Fullan further observes that regardless
of the potential worth of particular innovations, there will be little impact on practice without a
deeper change in thinking and skills. Pascale (1990) comments that ‘not surprisingly, ideas
acquired with ease are discarded with ease’.

Change Agents

Fullan (1993) focuses primarily on components internal to the school as being the
primary determinants of whether real change in practices and results actually occurs. In
particular, he describes the role of classroom teacher as being pivotal in producing a learning
society. This is due to the unique position of being in touch with both the microcosm of the
learning process, and the macrocosm of societal needs and expectations. “Teachers,” says
Fullan, “are privileged and burdened with the responsibility of becoming better inner and outer
learners who will connect to wider and wider circles of society.” Others also focus on the
internal characteristics of the school and its capacity to initiate and maintain, but see the school
leader or principal as the primary change agent in schools (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Schein, 1992;
Leithwood et al., 1999).

The standards based reform and external school accountability movements assume that
change in schooling practices is initiated by the higher levels of the school’s hierarchical
structure, namely the federal government, the state, and the school districts. There is mounting
evidence that external standards, accountability and support, as well as internal organizational
capacity are necessary elements for initiating and maintaining changes in the processes and
products of schooling. This cultural perspective of the change process views change in the way
schools function (and thereby their results) as the product of the dynamic interactions of multiple
change agents both external and internal to the school.

Cultural Change as a Process

Despite the fact that numerous researchers have embraced the notion that change is an
ongoing process (Fullan & Steiglebauer, 1991; Hall & Hord, 1984; Hord, Rulherford, Huling-
Austin, & Hall, 1987), Clarke (1997) maintains that the process of change still remains poorly
defined, and there currently exists no comprehensive theory of change (Clarke, 1997; Goodman
& Kurke, 1982).
While, achieving planned organizational changes in schools may be met with considerable resistance (Sarason, 1971; Rossman et al., 1988) due to the influences of school culture on organizational members, it is none-the less widely accepted that it is possible to alter a school’s cultural patterns over time (e.g., Goodlad, 1975; Lieberman, 1990, 1995; McKibben & Associates, 1981; Fullan, 1999). Lieberman (1990) described influences from the school’s social system that impact the implementation of innovation; these include: the school and district’s history, the nature and scope of the linkage, and the availability of resources. Other influences on change processes include the organization’s utilization of knowledge, the effects of past experiences, the approaches taken toward change and the use of outsiders (Stevens, 2001).

Many current conceptualizations of change in schools view change as an ongoing process that healthy organizations routinely engage in, rather than an end or goal (e.g., Fullan, 1999, Hord, 1992; Senge et al., 2000). Hord (1992) reviewed the literature on organizational change and outlined six principals that facilitate an organization’s capacity to achieve planned changes:

1. Change is seen as a process, not an event;
2. Change is accomplished by individuals first, then institutions;
3. Change is personal and individuals change at different rates;
4. Change entails growth in the way people feel about new programs and their skills in implementing the program;
5. Change facilitators can provide interventions to support individuals in their attempts to implement innovations;
6. A systems approach to change can help facilitators work out the bugs, through identifying unanticipated effects of changes on various aspects of the organization, and allowing for appropriate adjustments.

Senge and colleagues (2000, p. 5) attribute the success of the learning organization approach to the ‘marriage of individual and organizational goals’. The culture of the organization is central in shaping the behavior of individuals in the organization. Owens (2001, p. 153) asserts that “no concept in the realm of organizational behavior relies more heavily on social systems concepts than does organizational culture.” Owens (2001, p. 154) summarizes the importance of organizational culture to organizational change by saying that “by the beginning of the twenty-first century, organization theorists as well as practicing leaders were overwhelmingly in agreement that organizational culture is highly powerful in determining the course of change in an organization. Not a few believe that culture is often the most powerful determinant.”
Reculturing Schools

Fullan’s (1993) treatment of ‘reculturing’ as a school improvement strategy places equal emphasis on individualism and collectivism. Too much emphasis on collective strategies such as teamwork or consensus building can result in ‘group think.’ This is the uncritical acceptance and/or suppression of opposition to decisions (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). Another threat to the meaningful exchange of ideas is balkanization; in which one group or subculture becomes so strong and cohesive that it results in unresponsiveness or hostility toward input from others, thereby inhibiting school wide initiatives (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). This can often be avoided or counteracted by maintaining a strong focus on personal growth and reflection. Schon (1983) recommends that teachers keep a reflective journal or log for the purpose of enhancing professional development through critical self evaluation of day to day practices.

While the description of various types of school cultures remains elusive, their existence has been documented by countless researchers, and many elements of the resulting school climates have been correlated with increased effectiveness of schools and greater impact on student learning (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Ellett, 1992). However, the direct study of school culture, and the reculturing processes is troublesome in that operationalizing a definition of culture is difficult. It is often studied indirectly as work practices or norms of behavior, which more aptly fits the definition of climate.

The related literature in school effectiveness and learning environments has yielded rich information on characteristics of productive school and classroom climates. Undoubtedly these climates are the product of internal beliefs and values. Further investigations of the relationship between school climate and school culture are needed.

The concept of reculturing holds much promise as a tool for improving schools. However, there are few empirical studies to substantiate its impact. Better instruments and methods are needed for analyzing the construct of culture; and documenting changes in school culture and their impact on practice (Wonycott-Kytle & Bogotch, 1997).

The more that is known about the means of reculturing; the greater the assistance that can be provided to schools and educators who dare to venture down the dark bumpy road of school change. The only certainties at present are that change is complicated with uncertainty and complexity (Fullan, 1993).
PROFESSIONAL CULTURE AND SCHOOL STRUCTURE

The most compelling reason for developing a culture of professional practice in schools is that it will result in increased knowledge, ultimately leading to a higher quality education for students. Consider the impact of the following principles of professional practice (Darling-Hammond, 1990) on school operations:

1. Knowledge is the basis for permission to practice and for decisions that are made with respect to the unique needs of clients.
2. The practitioner pledges his first concern to the welfare of clients.
3. The profession assumes collective responsibility for the definition, transmission, and enforcement of professional standards of practice and ethics.

Many school organizational structures are not conducive to the development of these standards of practice for teachers (Newman & Wehlage, 1995). The prevailing bureaucratic organization of schools defines the role of teacher in much narrower terms. In most schools, the primary and often exclusive function of teachers is to execute pre-designed, often labeled ‘teacher-proof’ curricula and programs. Thus, the teaching career has evolved such that teachers’ work lives revolve strictly around instructing students every possible moment (Lieberman, 1990). Traditionally, American schools have placed very little emphasis on the growth of knowledge throughout teachers’ careers. Nor have teachers traditionally been given input into policies regarding pedagogical or curricular issues pertinent to their practice, much less the authority to make fundamental changes and be held accountable for them.

The concept of the professionalization of teaching has far reaching implications for school organization and leadership. It requires a complete shift in the way we conceive of running schools. The professionalism of teachers directly conflicts with the prevailing bureaucratic model of school leadership, with its hierarchical authority structure. A restructuring of schools to support teaching professionals, would necessitate that teachers assume responsibility for school leadership. Consequently, the roles of other major players in the educational arena would have to change as well (Murphy, 1991; Cox, 1983).

What specific changes might we expect to see in school operations, as a result of teacher professionalism? Teachers would split their time between the act of teaching and other professional activities, such as peer observations and collaboration (Little, 1982, 1990), learning new instructional strategies, conferencing with students and parents, and participation in school governance.
Professionalism and school leadership structures are integrally linked. A professional culture assumes a high degree of autonomy over decision making. Teachers, as professionals, are responsible for developing and/or implementing instructional strategies to meet the specific needs of students, as well as assuming responsibility for monitoring progress towards goals. These aspects of professional practice impact both the classroom level and the school level. In highly professional school contexts, the role of principal often shifts from chief on-site decision maker, to facilitator and coordinator of teacher practice (Kirby et al., 1992). The principal is instrumental as a liaison between the school and the school district, and is in charge of communicating school goals and needs to district administrators.

Internal Resistance to Change

There are a number of factors at the level of the school which might inhibit teachers from assuming more professional roles. These result from having been previously socialized into the norms and values of schools as bureaucracies and include: teacher perceptions of their role, fear of lack of support from superiors, anxiety related to anticipated workload (stemming from the idea that the added responsibilities associated with professional service will be added on top of their already hectic schedules), lack of time in current work schedules for professional development or participation in school governance, and teachers’ sense of efficacy relevant to their ability to function successfully in this new capacity and make a difference in the lives of their students. These apprehensions are a natural reaction to change. Disorientation and resistance will be present in any major organizational change effort (Fullan, 1993), but these fears can be placated if the pace of change is gradual with ample opportunities for building personal and organizational capacity in staff members.

Professional Development Builds Capacity for Change

Fullan (1993, 1999) sees teachers, and the professional growth activities they are involved in, as the primary change agents within schools. This implies that professional development can shape teachers’ core assumptions, and consequently be instrumental in altering the culture of the school. However, Mack (in Senge et al., 2000) warns that traditional school faculty meeting formats (drive-by staff-development) rarely accomplish this. Frequent, meaningful interactive, reflective (Argyris & Schon, 1976), personally relevant, student achievement centered, and on-going professional growth activities are fundamental to changes in school culture that ultimately impact the achievement of students (Newmann & Associates,
 Teachers must have ample opportunities, both independently and collectively, to explore what they believe about teaching and learning (Fullan, 1993). They need to build personal and shared visions for their school, and examine current practices in light of these visions. They need to be engaged in discovering techniques, pedagogies, programs, and approaches which fit their vision and the needs of their students. They need time to collaborate with peers about ideas, methods materials, and experiences. Teachers need time to observe others, to experiment, to be observed, and to receive feedback from colleagues. These non-threatening experiences will allow for a collaborative culture which fosters experimentation and critical reflection to develop.

 Collaborative Cultures and Student Achievement

 Little (1990) found that teachers routinely engaged in collaboration with colleagues over instruction, have greater confidence in their ability to impact student learning than do teachers who work in isolation from peer interaction. Bandura (1977) refers to levels of confidence and competence, as efficacy and links high levels of efficacy with willed behavioral change. Ashton & Webb (1986) state that teachers’ sense of efficacy has a positive impact on student achievement. Loup (1994) measured efficacy at a school level and found links to school effectiveness. It follows then that school cultures that support routine teacher engagement in collaborative planning for instruction, will have a much greater capacity to improve student learning and sustain gains over time.

 Cultural Change and Time

 Time impacts change efforts on a day to day basis. Schein (1992) reminds us that time imposes social order in organizations. The way time is structured implies organizational priorities (Schein, 1992; Stoll & Fink, 1996). The question of how to maximize time to best improve student learning surfaced in the 1980’s following the release of A Nation at Risk (1983) which among other things expressed concern for how time was being used in schools (Canady & Rettig, 1995a; Mc Coy, 1999). In 1986 The Coalition of Essential Schools (Sizer, 1986) declared that secondary schools needed to dramatically improve the way time was used and the quality of the relationships among those in schools. By the mid to late 1980s serious consideration was being given to plans for drastically reallocating the use of time in schools.
In 1991 Schlecty commented that “schools are time-bound and time-conscious” (p. 72) and this seemed to constrain many school restructuring efforts. Later that year Congress established a commission that was expressly charged with studying the relationship between time and learning; the subsequent report, Prisoners of Time (1994) clearly articulated that although society and other social institutions had changed and evolved considerably over the past 150 years, the American school schedule had not. It charged that rather than adapt to the present context and needs, the scheduling of student and teacher time in schools had become excessively rigid and inflexible and that learning was routinely subordinated to time constraints. The National Commission on Time and Learning concluded, “Our schools and the people involved with them—students, teachers, administrators, parents and staff—are prisoners of time, captives of the school clock and calendar” (Prisoners of Time, 1994, p.5). The National Education Commission also called for a de-emphasis of seat-time such as, Carnegie Units, as a measure of achievement. Instead it recommended the development of performance standards for students. Educators began to point to time management issues as key elements to viable school reform. In a national study of high school restructuring, Cawelti (1995) identified seven primary restructuring elements; these include use of: performance standards, authentic assessment, an interdisciplinary curriculum, school-based shared decision-making teams, community outreaches, instructional technology, and block-scheduling. By 1995, time restructuring in schools came to be seen as a “major catalyst for change” in American schools (Canady & Rettig, 1995a).

However, the following year Irshmer (1996) found that this norm of rigidly adhering to traditional schedules was an enduring and difficult component of the educational institution to change, citing that as late as 1996 most high school students “are still locked into the same archaic schedule that their great-grandparents experienced.” Despite slow changes, in the decade following the release of the scathing report, Prisoners of Time, (1994) many educators and researchers have come to think that a number of options are available to reduce the negative effects of time constraints on students and teachers if school leaders and policy makers are willing to consider creative alternatives to managing time (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Canady & Rettig, 1995a). Indications are that many school leaders are open to some form of time restructuring; Canady & Rettig (1995a) estimated that by 1995 50% of American high schools had implemented or planned to implement some form of alternative or block scheduling.
Altering the use of time in schools impacts everything that happens in schools (Winn, Minlove & Zsiray, 1997); it inevitably sends messages about priorities and shapes the organizational culture (Schein, 1992). Time restructuring can take on many forms and have many purposes. The dictates of a particular restructuring initiative depend on the ends to which it is to serve. Several key questions emerge around the issue of time and school reform. Is student time or teacher time the key issue? Is it more important to focus on quantity of time or quality of time? The proliferation of proposals to restructure time in preK-12 schools has to do with the ways that different communities answer these questions. Several prominent time restructuring initiatives will be briefly discussed in the following sections.

In describing school reform efforts in the post *A Nation at Risk* (1983) Era, Fullan (1991) spoke of an intensification phase followed by a restructuring phase. Intensification efforts concentrated primarily on restoring quality to education through such mechanisms as curricular reforms, higher teacher standards, career ladders, merit pay, and raising academic achievement requirements for students. Also in this wave, were attempts to improve student achievement through increasing the amount of instructional time for students. Reports of wasted time in schools by early school effectiveness studies sparked an interest in increasing the amount of “time on-task” for students (Stallings, 1980& 1986). However, focusing on time on-task was criticized by those who stressed that the important issue regarding student time in class was the quality of learning experiences. They argued that simply increasing the amount of time students spend on-task was pointless if the tasks assigned were not challenging or meaningful for students (Newmann & associates, 1996). From this perspective school time needed to be restructured to provide teachers with enough time to plan and execute high quality instruction.

Restructuring to increase teacher professional growth. The rationale behind changing the way that teachers spend their time at school is that increasing the available time for professional development and collaborative planning will result in more effective learning experiences for students (Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2003). The idea is that when given more time to plan teachers will devote greater attention to lesson structure, instructional goals, and the needs of students; however, simply providing additional time for teacher planning does not always result in more meaningful classroom learning experiences for students (Little, 1990). Stoll, Fink, and Earl (2003 p.186) point out that this is because deep and meaningful learning takes a considerable
investment of time. They list six different activities associated with effective professional development that all involve teacher time; these include:

- Time to plan
- Time for learning new techniques
- Time for observing peers
- Time for reflecting and researching one’s own practice
- Time for reviewing data and deciding next steps
- Time for working reflectively and creatively as a whole school to insure each pupil’s learning is as enriching as it can possibly be

Various plans have emerged for restructuring the way teachers spend their time. Some have suggested looking to other countries (e.g., Japan, China, and West Germany) where teachers spend roughly half of their time instructing large groups, and the other half in joint curriculum planning, tutoring individuals or groups, and consultations with students, parents, or colleagues (Shimahara, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1990). Hargreaves & Goodson (1996) have suggested partial privatization, through contracting out all non-professional duties now performed by teachers such as playground and cafeteria supervision, thereby freeing teachers to focus more exclusively on matters of instruction. Cambone (1994) asserts that in order for schools to even begin to develop a culture of professionalism, time must be restructured so that teachers’ schedules allow them to participate in professional activities, without continually missing class. In order to accomplish this many school districts and states have increased the number of professional development days for teachers (non-attendance days for students) to provide of more adequate time for teacher preparation and collaboration.

Little (2001) also points out that efforts to speed reform may backfire when teachers and school leaders feel pressure to begin to execute that which they have not been given adequate time to really learn and understand at a deep level. She states that “Reform environments tend to be volatile, fast paced and public, while learning may require sustained concentration, gradual development, and opportunities for relatively private (“safe”) disclosures of struggles and uncertainties.”

Block Scheduling for High Schools. For high schools restructuring time “begins with the schedule” (Edwards, 1995 p. 25). In a traditional high school schedule students change classes six or seven times a day. Each class period typically lasts 40-60 minutes a day, five days a week, for ten months resulting in one Carnegie Unit of credit. The National Commission on Time and Learning (Prisoners of Time, 1994) considered America’s failure to deviate from this arbitrary
and standardized use of time in its schools a hindrance to meaningful reform, stating that
“Decades of school improvement efforts have foundered on a fundamental design flaw, the
assumption that learning can be doled out by the clock and defined by the calendar” (p.13). The
commission recommended increased use of block scheduling in high schools because it allows
for longer class periods and encourages greater methodological variation in classes. Block
scheduling has also been praised as a way to reduce daily time fragmentation, improve
interpersonal interactions, and reduce the overall stress among teachers and students in high
schools (Carroll, 1990).

Alternate day plans. While numerous variations of block scheduling exist (Mc Coy,
1999) two basic forms have gained increasing popularity in the 1990s: the alternate day or A-B
plan and the semester or 4X4 plan. The alternate day schedule typically consists of eight courses
carried at a time, with four classes meeting each day for a duration of 80 to 90 minutes each.
Classes usually meet every other day. Alternate day scheduling offers advantages for students
and teachers in that it increases “quality instructional time” by offering longer blocks of time in
classes and less time spent in transition between classes (Canady & Rettig, 1995a p.37). Carroll
(1994) linked alternate day scheduling with improved school atmosphere due to fewer discipline
referrals and suspensions, lower dropout rates, and improved student/teacher relationships. King,
Warren, Moore, Bryans, & Pirie (1978) also found that schools that implemented alternate day
block scheduling demonstrated improved student and teacher attitudes.

Critics of alternate day scheduling are concerned that the lack of consistency from day to
day can be frustrating to students and parents trying to keep up with what day classes meet and
when assignments are due. It is feared that an alternate day schedule may adversely impact at-
risk students, special education students, those with attention deficit disorders, student athletes,
and others that miss class frequently. Some critics also believe that the alternate day plan is an
inherently faulty design because it is disruptive to the continuity of instruction (Canady &

The 4X4 semester plan. The most popular form of block scheduling is the 4x4 semester
design (Kramer, 1997a). This plan allows students to take fewer classes and teachers to teach
fewer classes at one time (Carroll, 1990). Typically, students take only four courses at a time and
attend each class for an 80 to 90 minute block of time each day for a 90 day semester. Like the
alternate day plan, the 4X4 schedule results in less time being lost to transitional activities such
as moving from class to class and role call (Cawelti, 1994). Extended class periods are recognized as being more conducive to varied instructional methods (Carroll, 1990; Cawelti, 1994; Prisoners of Time, 1994). Proponents also point out that this method of time restructuring has several added advantages for both students and teachers. For students, it allows them to concentrate their efforts on four areas of the curriculum at a time rather than eight. This reduces stress, and makes it easier to recover from absences (as compared to an alternate day schedule). Since courses are taught every semester rather than every year, students who must retake a course, can do so in a timelier manner (Kramer, 1996). The quality of student/teacher interactions is also believed to be enhanced by the 4X4 schedule (Queen et.al., 1997) because it allows for longer and more frequent contact between students and teachers. Less class changing equates to less isolation for teachers and students and encourages a better and more personalized school climate (Fallon, 1995; Kruse & Kruse, 1995; Irmsher, 1996).

Critics of 4X4 scheduling assert that only spending a semester in a course may compromise the breadth of coverage. However, Pisapia & Westfall (1997c) among others (Sizer, 1986) assert that depth of coverage may be more important to comprehension and cognitive development than breadth. Others fear that lack of exposure to a content area for an extended period of time may have a negative impact on retention, but Canady & Rettig (1995a) found anecdotal evidence that teachers in 4X4 plans discern very little difference in retention between students who recently completed a course and those who completed it at an earlier point in time.

Teachers in a 4X4 plan typically teach three 80 to 90 minute classes a day and spend the fourth period in planning and/or consultation. This means increased planning time over a traditional schedule, and fewer preparations to be made since three classes are taught instead of six or seven at a time. This can result in greater attention to planning of high quality learning experiences for students. Teachers also teach about half the number of students at once than their counterparts in traditional or alternate day schedules, which may be conducive to greater individualization for students. It also means that teachers have fewer grading responsibilities. McCoy (1999) found that unlike teachers in traditional schools, teachers in 4X4 schools perceived that they were able to identify student strengths and weaknesses within the first month of school, to address student differences, and to complete the work they wanted to do with students within regular class periods.
There are also economic advantages associated with 4X4 scheduling in the form of lower textbook costs. Fewer students enrolled in a course at a time can also save the school money on textbooks since only half as many books are required at once and textbooks can be reused the next semester. This also makes it less burdensome for the district or school to replace outdated books, because fewer books have to be purchased than if a traditional or alternate day schedule were used. Thus, in a study of traditional scheduling versus 4X4 block scheduling in high schools, McCoy (1999) concluded that block scheduling better provides the time needed to support the elements of instruction.

Restructuring time in elementary schools. The issue of increasing teacher time for instructional planning has received a great deal of attention in the last decade of the twentieth century. Recent approaches to school reform at the elementary level have stressed the need to rethink how existing time and human resources might be restructured to increase the time available to teachers to work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning. The reorganization of teacher time has been recognized as a key component of several national level school restructuring programs (e.g., Success for All, Accelerated Schools). One popular technique for building in more collaborative planning into the work lives of teachers has been the strategic use of ancillary staff to provide teachers with similar teaching assignments or those working on team projects joint planning periods during the school day. By scheduling simultaneous ancillary instruction for select classes, specified sets of teachers are provided a regular period of time in which they plan for instruction. This practice facilitates greater teamwork and collaboration than has been the norm in most traditional elementary schools.

Although, this method has worked well as a springboard for establishing more collaborative cultures in many elementary schools, it can be problematic for schools with limited resources. Poorer schools and districts frequently have fewer enrichment programs, ancillary staff and aides, making it difficult to provide simultaneous planning time for teams of teachers. Others (Little, 1990 & 2001; Hargreaves & Fink, 2000, Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2003) caution that simply providing the time for collaboration does not necessarily result in high quality professional interactions that truly impact student learning, however, early indications from practitioners are that the strategic use of ancillary staff to provide time for teacher collaboration can be a significant component in the ultimate success of elementary school restructuring initiatives, especially when used in conjunction with high quality, focused professional
development (National Staff Development Council and National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1995).

EXTERNAL CONTEXT AND SCHOOL CULTURE

The external context of schools can support or inhibit school efforts to develop a more professional internal culture. More bureaucratic and authoritarian approaches to leadership do not support professional decision making at the site. According to this logic, less controlling school district and state policies, would support school improvement, because the school would have greater opportunities to design their own policies and practices to fit the specific needs of their students. This rationale, that increases school autonomy supports greater professionalism, is frequently cited by supporters of charter schools, but this proposition has not been verified by research. Based on theories of school improvement being closely associated with school cultures that stress teacher professionalism, implications for state and district policies are that they should function in more of an assistance mode than a regulatory agency, in order to support school change efforts. Policies that provide funding and time for increased professional development opportunities for teachers are likely to yield returns in improved student achievement.

Restructuring within schools is impacted by external inputs to schools, as well as internal characteristics of the school. A number of external forces impact what goes on inside schools. The external context of schools does make a difference, as variations in political, economic, academic, and cultural expectations and functions place considerable constraints upon schools. Early research on school effects found that external factors, especially family income, had more of an impact on student achievement than did factors internal to schools (Coleman, 1966). However, these findings were later challenged by school effects researchers.

SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE ON ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

School culture can be thought of as a particular school's reaction to both internal and external demands acting upon its functions. It embodies the school's identity. Each school's culture is a unique expression of who they are and what they value (both explicitly and implicitly). Schoen (1998) offered a graphic representation of forces acting upon (external) and comprised within (internal) a school’s organizational culture. The variation in forces combined with the diverse reactions to them by different schools, necessitates that each individual school has its own culture, separate and unique from even neighboring schools with whom they have much in common.
School culture is elusive and difficult to define because it is not directly observable (Stoll & Fink, 1996). Surface level indicators of deeply held beliefs and values may include: behavioral regularities or norms, rituals, language usage, organizational philosophy, variations in policy implementation, informal rules for getting along with colleagues, procedures, opinions, traditions, symbols, distinguishing characteristics, ceremonies, and stories (Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Schein, 1985, 1992; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Culture is the means by which a school establishes self-identity. It is the lens through which participants view themselves and the world (Hargreaves, 1994).

Most researchers (e.g., Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan, 1993, 1998, 1999; Hargreaves, 1991; Lieberman, 1991; Murphy, 1991; Murphy & Hallinger, 1993) believe that school culture can be changed over a period of time, though there is no agreement on the exact processes. Common threads in the literature are that cultural change is necessary for meaningful school improvement and that this involves some form of on-going professional development of teachers, and alterations in the school structures with the end result being a greater focus on student learning (Halsall, 1998, p.33).

VI. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON STUDENT LEARNING

DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

The scientific discipline most closely associated with research and theory relevant to human development is developmental psychology, which focuses on how people grow, adapt and change. Developmental psychology has contributed much to our understanding of human physical, socio-emotional, personality, cognitive, language, and moral development over the past century (Slavin, 2000). This section will focus primarily on theories and principles pertinent to the cognitive development of children in social contexts (i.e., schools).

Theories of human development differ in terms of whether the growth and change is considered to be gradual and continuous from infancy to adulthood, or whether it proceeds through a series of preset common stages. Many of the theories that have been most influential in the field of education have been discontinuous or ‘stage’ theories of human development, which assert that all children progress through invariant stages of development in a predictable sequence. Such theorists believe that children develop qualitatively different understandings, abilities, and beliefs at each stage of the progression (Epstein, 1990).
Cognitive Development

**Piaget.** Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist born in 1896. He is perhaps the best known child psychologist among American teachers (Flavell, 1996). Piaget believed knowledge comes from action; his theory of cognitive development (Piaget, 1952b; Piaget & Garcia, 1986) has been extremely influential over the past century. Piaget believed that all children are born with an innate tendency to interact with their environment and to make sense of their experiences (Slavin, 2000). In Piaget’s view, knowledge comes from action (Wadsworth, 1996) and intellectual or cognitive abilities develop gradually over time as the child moves through a series of stages in which mental processes become increasingly complex and sophisticated. He described four distinct stages, each characterized by the emergence of new abilities and ways of processing information.

**Table 2.7**  
**Piaget’s Stages of Cognitive Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>AGE (Approximate)</th>
<th>Major Accomplishments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preoperational</td>
<td>2-7 years</td>
<td>Symbolic representation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Concrete Operational | 7-10 years | Logical thinking improves  
|                   |                   | Less egocentric  
|                   |                   | Ability to use reversible operations                       |
| Formal Operational | 11 years to adulthood | Purely abstract thinking is possible  
|                   |                   | Systematic experimentation used to solve problems         |

Cognitive development, according to Piaget, occurs as children generate schemes, or mental patterns that guide their behavior. Changes in thinking are produced as children assimilate new objects and experiences into their preexisting schemes, or accommodate their scheme to fit interactions with a new object or concept.

Piagetian theory has influenced educational environments, curriculum, materials and methods in several ways (Berk, 1997, p. 244):

- It has shifted the focus onto the *process of thinking* rather than the product of the effort.
- It has drawn attention to the importance of active involvement in learning, and self-initiation of inquiry, and away from the traditional didactic approach to teaching.
- It has fostered the emergence of ‘developmentally appropriate’ practices in the education of young children, rather than expecting them to behave and learn like adults.
- It has led to the acceptance of individual differences in the developmental process.

**Vygotsky and social constructivism.** Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who wrote about cognitive development in the early 1900’s, though his work was not widely read in the United States until the 1970s (Slavin, 2000). Vygotsky (1978) was the first to emphasize the
role of the social context and culture on the development of cognition. He believed that the ‘sign systems’ that surround a child contribute to the development of cognitive abilities; sign systems refer to symbols used by a culture to communicate and solve problems (e.g., systems of speaking, writing and counting). Vygotsky defined learning as the acquisition of signs through interaction and observation of others. Cognitive development occurs through a process known as ‘self-regulation’, in which the child internalizes the signs and becomes able to use them to think and solve problems independent of others (Slavin, 2000).

The first step in the development of self-regulation and independent thinking is learning that something has meaning. The next step in developing internal thought and self-regulation is practice using signs in various ways and contexts, with and without assistance, until the systems are mastered. The final step involves the use of these signs to actually solve problems without the help of others.

In describing the processes of learning, Vygotsky observed that children incorporate the speech of others into their communications, and then use that speech in various ways to help themselves solve problems. In the process of making the speech they’ve heard their own, young children often talk to themselves. This self-talk or private speech is later internalized, but remains an important learning and self-regulation tool. Children who make extensive use of self-talk learn complex tasks more effectively than those who don’t (Bivens & Berk, 1990).

The work of Vygotsky led to the recognition of two principles widely recognized today as being important in the learning process. These are the concepts of scaffolding and the zone of proximal development; both ideas emphasize the importance of social learning and interactions with others.

Scaffolding refers to the help or assistance provided by more competent peers or adults which provides children the opportunity to develop greater understanding and competence. Typically scaffolding involves providing a novice with a great deal of support in the early phases of learning and then gradually phasing out the support and requiring the child to take increasing responsibility, until the task can be completed alone.

Another important premise attributed to Vygotsky is the introduction of the concept of the zone of proximal development. Vygotsky believed that children progress most when working on tasks slightly too difficult for them to complete alone, but easy enough that they can do with
the assistance of others. He also believed that higher mental functioning occurs in collaboration among individuals before it exists within the individual (Slavin, 2000).

Vygotskyian theory holds several important implications for classroom instruction (Slavin, 2000):

1. Teachers should organize classroom activities to not only include independent activities that students can complete on their own, but should include more difficult learning experiences in which students work collaboratively to solve mutual complex problems.
2. Classroom learning activities should involve students in working together in cooperative groups composed of children from a variety of different levels.
3. The teacher should provide scaffolding by providing more assistance early on and requiring learners to take more and more initiative and responsibility for the task as the lesson progresses, so that the role of the student as a learner supercedes that of the teacher. The role of the teacher becomes one of facilitator of learning, rather than one of communicator of knowledge to a passive recipient.

Dewey’s version of pragmatic social constructivism. John Dewey, a contemporary of both Piaget and Vygotsky, was best known as a pragmatic social philosopher who among other things wrote extensively on learning and education throughout his life (1882-1852). Dewey was quite prolific and tended to write on topics of interest in an integrated manner, rather than dealing with each topic in isolation (Garrison, 1998). Hickman & Alexander (1998) group the works of Dewey into discourses on five main topics: 1) inquiry, 2) ethics, 3) the individual and the community, 4) democracy, and 5) education. Dewey’s notion of learning, and the best ways to enhance it in schools, has been influential in educational practice, and bears much similarity to other theories of constructivism presented in this chapter.

Garrison (1998) refers to the philosophies and theories of Dewey about inquiry, learning and education as ‘pragmatic social constructivism’. However, while he acknowledges that the views of Dewey and close lifelong personal friend George Herbert Mead compliment the positions of the cognitive constructivists, he warns that neo-constructivist philosophies of education must be careful not to limit themselves to cognition to the exclusion of the physical and the affective domains, as this was never Dewey’s intent; for Dewey the three were inseparable. The works of Dewey remind educators to include the body, its actions, and its passions more predominantly in the curriculum (Garrison, 1998, p. 43). “Pragmatic social constructivism urges educators to consider the entire context, the environmental ethos of schools
and community within which the student as a creative individual must function in organic interconnection” (Garrison, 1998, p. 60).

Some of the aspects of Dewey’s pragmatic approach to constructivism are summarized below, based on analyses of several of Dewey’s works by Jim Garrison (in L. Hickman Ed., 1998; M. Larochelle, N. Bednarez, and J. Garrison Eds., 1998) and John Shook (2000). The topics in Table 2.8 were frequently addressed by Dewey or hold a prominent place in Dewey’s philosophies and theories regarding the construction of knowledge. The statements beside each topic are not direct quotes from Dewey, but are paraphrasings by Garrison (in L. Hickman Ed., 1998, pp. 63-81; also in Larochelle, Bednarz, & Garrison Eds., 1998, pp. 43-60 ) and Shook (2000, p. 123 and pp. 176-210) summarizing Dewey’s ideas.

**Bloom’s Taxonomy.** In 1956, Benjamin Bloom and associates published a taxonomy or classification system of educational objectives that has been very influential in subsequent educational research and practice (Slavin, 2000). The taxonomy classifies instructional objectives used by teachers into six types and ranks them in order of the complexity of the cognitive processes required by learners to successfully execute the task. This taxonomy has been widely used in teacher education and professional development programs as an example of the range levels of skills learners should be able to execute. Below is a summary of Bloom’s Taxonomy.

1. **Knowledge** - The most basic level of learning which involves simply recalling factual information.
2. **Comprehension** - Assignments that require that students show an understanding of information and the ability to use it.
3. **Application** - Using principles or abstractions to solve novel or real-life problems.
4. **Analysis** - Breaking complex information down into simpler parts to understand how the parts relate or are organized.
5. **Synthesis** - The using knowledge or skills to create something that did not exist before.

The skills in Bloom’s Taxonomy are listed in a progression from least to most complex. The skills at the top have sometimes been referred to as ‘Lower Order Thinking’ (LOT) and the more complex skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as ‘Higher Order Thinking’ (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993).
| **The Value of Education** | Educational value is not intrinsic to subject matter. The value in any given subject matter depends on its contribution to the growth of the learner. If the subject matter doesn’t connect to the students’ present state of knowledge, needs, and interests it has no pedagogical value for the individual on that occasion. |
| **The Act of Teaching** | Teaching involves the coordination of the teacher, the student, and the subject matter. We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment…we design environments. |
| **The Role of the Teacher** | The teacher must strive to connect the subject matter with the student’s present needs and abilities. The educator’s task is thus to arrange the subject matter so as to make it most accessible to each student. There must be an effort to organize subject matter so as to coordinate it with each student’s needs, interests, and abilities. |
| **The Importance of the Learning Environment** | Education does not necessarily involve teachers. Sometimes it simply involves the design of better learning environments. |
| **The Need for Direct Involvement of Students in Inquiry** | Mere presentation of the results of the inquiry of others, in the form of facts to be learned is often a barrier to learning because it does not connect the student’s present needs, interests and abilities to the knowledge; it is thus meaningless to him. |
| **The Construction of Meaning** | Natural inquiry is the process by which humans observe their environment and construct meaning. Observations that do not fit with current constructions of reality create within the individual a state of disequilibrium, which results in the deconstruction of ideas and the reconstruction of understanding of the state of affairs, followed by the restoration of equilibrium. |
| **The Role of Experience in the Construction of Meaning** | Experience is what occurs when we carry out transactions with our environment. The value of an experience to the construction of meaning lies in the perception of the individual of continuities [or connections]of experience Meanings emerge when through reciprocal coordination of behavior we render something common between two or more centers of action. |
| **The Circular Relationship of Activity, Idea, and Emotion** | Activity is essential to experience. Activity denotes the essence of the mind and the essence of the individual organism in its environment. The mode of behavior [activity] is the primary thing. It represents the stimulus and the idea and the emotional excitation, the response. Similarly, the idea and the emotion produce a response which makes up the mode of behavior. |
| **The Process of Mental Activity and its Product** | The tendency is to shun isolated elements and to force connections wherever possible; this is the fundamental law of mental activity. The discovery of laws, the classification of facts, the formation of a unified mental world, are all out growths of the mind’s hunger for the fullest experience possible at the least cost. The organic growth of experience is the final end of mental activity. |
| **The Role of Communication in Education** | Communication is a form of art which has immense educational importance. Language is thoroughly social; Meanings do not come into being without language, and language implies two selves involved in a conjoint or shared undertaking. |
| **Educational Methods** | Educators must learn that there is no one best method of education. There is no one best way to grow. Teaching is a transactional, artistically transformative creative activity of assisting students in the making of meaning. |

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Authentic Pedagogy

Recent calls for educational reform have focused on the intellectual quality of the tasks students are involved in schools and ask “to what extent do activities assigned to students require them to use their minds well?” (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993; Newmann, Wehlage, & Secada, 1995; Newmann & Associates, 1996). Newmann and associates developed three criteria for judging the meaningfulness or importance of the learning that occurs in schools; these are referred to as ‘Criteria for Authentic Achievement’ because Newmann et al. observed that these are the types of skills that are demonstrated by successful people in real life situations. The Criteria for Authentic Achievement include: the construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond school.

Newmann et al. (1995) also developed a system of standards for evaluating the learning activities and assessments found in schools in terms of the criteria for authentic achievement. Their approach to judging the worth of learning tasks and assessments is premised on the goal of cultivating higher order thinking (i.e., the top levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy) in students, and engagement in activities that have practical merit in the real world. The standards are broken down into two sets, standards for instruction and standards for assessment, which are presented below.

**Standards for Authentic Pedagogy**

### Construction of Knowledge

#### Instruction:
**Standard 1: Higher Order Thinking**
Instruction involves students in manipulating information and ideas by synthesizing, generalizing, explaining, hypothesizing, or arriving at conclusions that produce new meaning and understandings for them.

#### Assessment:
**Standard 1: Organization of Information**
The task asks students to organize, synthesize, interpret, explain, or evaluate complex information.

**Standard 2: Consideration of Alternatives**
The task asks students to show understanding and/or use ideas, theories, or perspectives considered central to a discipline.

### Disciplined Inquiry

#### Instruction:
**Standard 2: Deep Knowledge**
Instruction addresses the central ideas of a topic with enough thoroughness to explore connections and relationships and to produce relatively complex understandings.

**Standard 3: Substantive Conversation**
Students engage in extended conversational exchanges with the teacher or their peers about subject matter in a way that builds on an improved and shared understanding of ideas or topics.

#### Assessment:
**Standard 3: Disciplinary Content**
The task asks students to show understanding and/or use ideas, theories or perspectives considered important in a discipline.
Standard 4: Disciplinary Process
The task asks students to use methods of inquiry, research, or communication characteristic of a discipline.

Standard 6: Elaborated Written Communication
The task asks students to elaborate on their understanding, explanations, or conclusions through extended writing.

Value Beyond School
Instruction: Standard 4: Connections to the World Beyond the Classroom
Students make connections between substantive knowledge and either public problems or personal experiences.

Assessment: Standard 6: Problem Connected to the World Beyond School
The task asks students to address a concept, problem, or issue that is similar to one that they have encountered or may encounter in life beyond the classroom.

Standard 7: Audience Beyond School
The task asks students to communicate their knowledge, present a product, performance, or take some action for an audience beyond the teacher, classroom, and school.

Adapted from Newmann and Associates (1996, pp. 29 and 33)

Newmann’s concept of Authentic Pedagogy is built upon the premise of active involvement of the learner and upon active inquiry (Dewey, 1895, 1896, 1922, 1925; Vygotsky, 1978; Piaget, 1952b; Piaget & Garcia, 1986). The Standards for Authentic Pedagogy, above, embody constructivist principles of cognitive development. For example, note that his authentic instruction standard 2, substantive conversation, goes hand-in-hand with Vygotsky’s (1978) notion that ‘higher mental functioning usually exists in conversation among individuals before it exists within the individual’ (as described in Slavin, 2000).

Constructivism

The view of cognitive development as a process, in which children actively build systems of meanings and understandings of reality through their own interactions and experiences with their environment, is an orientation to cognitive development referred to as cognitive constructivism. Psychologist Robert Slavin (2000) believes that currently “a constructivist revolution is taking place in educational psychology” in which the predominant view of cognitive development is centered around constructivist theories, such as those of Piaget, Vygotsky and others, that assert that learners must individually discover and transform complex information if they are to make it their own. The development of the Learner-Centered Psychological Principles (American Psychological Association, 1997) which were intended to serve as a framework to guide school reform, support this notion. It is now widely accepted by
psychologists that it is through the processes of active experimentation, assimilation and accommodation that learners construct and refine knowledge about the world around them.

Classroom practices based on constructive learning theories deviate considerably from a traditional didactic approaches to education. These classrooms are often referred to as ‘learner-centered’ because of their emphasis on the active involvement of the student in their own learning. As Slavin puts it, “in a student-centered classroom, the teacher becomes ‘the guide on the side’ instead of the ‘sage on the stage’, helping students to discover their own meaning instead of lecturing and controlling all classroom activities” (Slavin, 2000, p. 256). The American Psychological Association (APA) recommends the use of learner centered instructional strategies to address issues of low student achievement in schools (APA, 1997).

Constructivist ideology can be seen in the classroom practices such as ‘discovery learning’ (Bruner, 1966), an approach that seeks to involve students in the generation of principles based on their experiences. Jerome Bruner, an advocate of discovery learning, says that “We teach a subject not to produce little libraries on that subject, but rather to get a student to think…for himself, …to take part in the process of knowledge-getting. Knowing is a process not a product” (1966, p. 72). Proponents of discovery learning believe it arouses curiosity and motivates students to continue working until answers are discovered, and that it builds problem solving skills by engaging students in critical thinking and analysis of information (Slavin, 2000).

For constructivists, the aim of education is not the passing along of bodies of knowledge, but it is in “teaching students to use their minds well” (Sizer, 1999). Therefore, a constructively oriented classroom strives to help students become better regulators of their own learning. Self-regulated learners have an awareness of the strategies they use to learn and an understanding of when and how to use them (Bandura, 1999). Hence, constructivist teachers often engage students in explaining the processes they used to complete their work, in order to strengthen meta-cognitive skills, or awareness of the mental processes use in acquiring specific types of knowledge.

**SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE ON STUDENT LEARNING**

Newer approaches to learning in schools are based on constructivist principles such as those of Piaget or Vygotsky. Cognitive constructivism assumes that the aim of education is to provide students with experiences that teach them to use their minds well, and consequently
greater value is placed on the processes of learning than on the products of learning. Constructivist teachers serve as facilitators of learning, whose primary responsibilities lie in the planning of meaningful experiences, the scaffolding of learning, the promotion of learner self-regulation and assessing learning and providing learners with feedback.

The impact of these widely accepted principles on classes are that students are more likely to be encouraged to talk and interact as a part of the learning process. Learning by doing (Dewey, 1895, 1896, 1922, 1925) and discovery learning (Bruner, 1966) are considered more legitimate and meaningful to students and more likely to result in higher order thinking in students than are traditional forms of direct instruction which allow learners to assume a passive role, such as lectures. Constructivist approaches to education are frequently referred to as learner or child-centered environments since the activities of the students take center stage rather than the actions of the teacher.

VII. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter 2 presented an overview of the theories, research and literature relevant to the development of this research project. The literature reviewed was organized into information on five topics: organizational change, school effectiveness, organizational culture, school reform, and student learning. Developments in these areas led to the formulation of a theory of school culture, which is presented in chapter 3 and used in the design of the research presented in this dissertation.
CHAPTER THREE
PHASE I: CONCEPTUALIZING SCHOOL CULTURE

I. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to make explicit the framework used to study school culture in this project. The rationale for developing a new concept of school culture is presented, followed by a brief description of the process used to synthesize existing theory and data into the present concept of school culture. The new conceptualization is then described, and finally the proposed framework is compared to other theories and research that involve school culture or related constructs.

II. RATIONALE

The conceptualization of school culture presented in this study was developed specifically for this study, by the researcher, based upon a review and synthesis of the literatures in school effectiveness, school improvement, organizational change, and student learning. The development of a new model of school culture was not an original objective of the current research project, but arose out of attempts to reconcile the differing bodies of literature dealing with the concept of school culture, and to operationalize the existing knowledge into an organized way of studying the culture of schools involved in school improvement programs.

An initial overview of the literatures relevant to school culture (see chapter 2), revealed that many educational scholars believe that school culture can seriously impede or substantially assist school improvement efforts (Fullan, 1993; Lieberman, 1990; Little, 1982; Meza, 1997; Deal & Kennedy, 1983). In fact, Halsall (1998, p. 29) concludes that “One of the most consistent messages from the school improvement literature is that school culture has a powerful impact on any change effort.” Hence, it follows that an understanding of the construct of school culture is a vital part of school improvement (Stoll & Fink, 1996). The work described in the following pages represents an effort to link complementary findings across the disciplines and research orientations into something approaching a unified theory of school culture.

III. THE PROCESS: IDENTIFYING SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE CONSTRUCT

STEP 1: REVIEW THE LITERATURE

An informal analysis of the literature related to school culture, school climate, and organizational culture was conducted which included 64 articles, 22 chapters, 45 books, and 3
doctoral dissertations. Initial observations revealed a great deal of conceptual ambiguity with regard to the treatment of school culture across the social science disciplines.

Similarities and differences in the treatment of the construct across the literatures were noted. I attempted to arrive at a conceptual definition of the construct that incorporated all relevant knowledge bases. This process ultimately resulted in the unique definition of the theoretical construct of school culture which is presented in this study. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the process that led to the generation of this concept.

Figure 3.1  The Process of Conceptualizing School Culture
STEP 2: THE GENERATION OF A RESEARCH QUESTION

One of the first conclusions that emerged from the analysis was that the nomenclature (or terminology) used across the literatures differed, with (a) school effectiveness researchers preferring the term *school climate*; (b) sociologists and anthropologists preferring the term *organizational culture*; (c) and educational researchers (in general) using either/or both *school culture* and *school climate*. Despite this, the concepts described by these terms sounded remarkably similar across the literatures. This observation led to the question: *Do the terms ‘organizational culture’, ‘school culture’, and ‘school climate’ all refer to the same construct, or are these concepts substantively different?*

Another difference noted among the literatures associated with the three terms (organizational culture, school culture and school climate) was that the methods used to research these concepts differed. Research on school climate tends to involve quantitative analyses based on survey data, while school and organizational culture is more frequently researched qualitatively (Owens, 2001).

STEP 3: A CRITERION FOR ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

I expected that the different research methods and operational definitions used by various researchers would yield somewhat different results, but I also assumed that if the same construct was being studied, then the findings should be complementary, or fit together in some logical fashion. Therefore, the next question that emerged in determining whether or not these literatures are describing the same construct was: *Do the findings contradict or complement each other?*

Rejection Standard

Kuhn (1977) lists consistency as a major consideration in choosing between established theories and new theories (Bernstein, 1983). Therefore, it seemed reasonable to examine the extent to which the ideas presented in the literatures were consistent with each other. An overview of the literatures indicated that a few of the works on culture seemed out of synchronization with the rest (see Figure 3A, 1); therefore, these works were set aside as not being conceptually consistent. Since these works were in the minority, I proceeded to compare those works that did seem to resemble each other in their treatment of culture, climate, or aspects of school operations that fit definitions presented in Table 2.5.
**Inclusion Standard**

Kuhn (1976) also pointed out that while theories may be incommensurable (i.e. share no common language, or method of point-by-point comparison), this does not mean they cannot be compared. In sorting through and comparing the literatures, I concluded that several of the theories generated and conclusions drawn about school culture, organizational culture and school climate seemed to be consistent with each other (e.g., Schein, 1985; Argyris & Schon, 1976; Hargreaves, 1994; Deal & Peterson, 1999) (See Figure 3.1 step 3B, 1), lending credibility to the hypothesis that the various bodies of research describe different aspects of the same construct, and they all fit together in a complementary fashion. This hypothesis was qualitatively tested in an informal way by attempting to tie together conceptually consistent bodies of work to ascertain the extent to which the theories fit together logically to create a more complete construct.

**MERGING THE KNOWLEDGE BASES: DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE**

**Why Attempt To Identify Dimensions Of Culture? ( Figure 3.1, Step3B, 2)**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of existing typologies of school culture generated by previous research. These typologies (e.g., Deal, 1986; Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987; Hargreaves, 1995; Stoll & Fink, 1996; Deal & Peterson, 1999) provide helpful ways to think of and understand school culture holistically; however, they do not break the whole of culture down into component parts. Since school culture is such a broad construct encompassing so many aspects of school functions, an understanding of its dimensions would be helpful because it would allow for more in depth exploration and analyses that would better inform researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

For example, while classifying a school’s culture, as say, ‘toxic’ (Deal & Peterson, 1999), or ‘strolling’ (Stoll & Fink, 1996), may be helpful in understanding phenomena particular to a school, perhaps a dimensional structure could allow for more detailed feedback regarding what specific elements of the culture are problematic. Thus, understanding the school culture in terms of its dimensions may enable researchers to provide more specific and actionable information, providing improvement-minded practitioners greater guidance as to which aspects of culture need to be altered in order to improve the school.

A lack of uniformity in descriptions of school culture was also observed in existing research. (e.g., compare in, Corbet, Firestone, & Rossman’s, 1987 work to that of Deal & Peterson, 1999, or Sarason, 1971). This inconsistency makes it extremely difficult, if not
impossible, to compare and contrast school cultures, and does not allow for sound
generalizations to be developed or tested about how culture impacts the school improvement
process. However, the existence of a framework detailing the dimensions of culture could prove
important in advancing school improvement research, because it provides a guide for data
collection and analysis, and facilitates cross case comparisons of school cultures.

How Was the Dimensional Structure Derived?

While breaking the construct of school culture down into dimensions was not an a priori
goal, a specific organizational pattern emerged as a result of repeated attempts to review the
literature and to conceptualize exactly what aspects of schools are components of the
organizational culture. The question became: What IS school culture? Essentially, finding the
answer to this question involved a lengthy process of reading and re-reading the literature, and
keeping an informal running list of topics discussed as parts of culture in various places; as the
list grew similar terms and concepts were grouped together in an attempt to understand what
school culture means across the disciplines. This process is an informal variant of the Constant
Comparative Method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which involves unitizing and categorizing non-
numeric information.

This informal survey of the literature was aimed at identifying the most important and
salient themes in the bodies of literature described in chapter 2; the process of conceptualizing
school culture continued over a period of approximately two years. As themes and indicators of
culture were identified in new pieces or branches of literature, they were added to the list, which
was continually undergoing a process of editing out redundant items and combining like
indicators.

The list of possible indicators of culture was periodically re-clustered until eventually
four relatively stable groups or dimensions emerged that, when considered holistically, seemed
to embody the major aspects of school culture or school climate. These groups of components
are what came to be referred to as “the dimensions of culture”. They are described in the next
section of this chapter.

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

After settling upon four dimensions that seemed to embody most of the aspects described
in the literatures, I began to articulate why these particular items were grouped together into
dimensions, and to define, name, and refine the dimensions. I concluded that the four Dimensions of School Culture include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Professional Orientation</th>
<th>II. Organizational Structure</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the activities and attitudes that characterize the degree of professionalism present in the faculty</td>
<td>the style of leadership, communication &amp; processes that characterize the way the school conducts its business</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>III. Quality of the Learning Environment</th>
<th>IV. Student-Centered Focus</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the intellectual merit of the activities in which students are typically engaged</td>
<td>the collective efforts &amp; programs offered to support student achievement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.2  Brief Descriptions of the Dimensions of School Culture

Some of the primary influences that resulted in these four Dimensions of School Culture were Fullan (1993,1998), Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), and Newmann & Associates (1995, 1996), regarding school improvement, and Levine & Lezotte (1990), and Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) regarding school effectiveness.

Finally, the holistic nature of the dimensions was explored by examining the relationship of the dimensions to each other. This process led to the establishment of the 4X4 grid in displaying the dimensions, so that the interrelationships of the dimensions to each other could be easily seen and explained, as well as providing an overview of how the dimensions collectively represent the whole of school culture. Figure 3.3 displays this grid of dimensions.
This display of the dimensional structure works well because it shows how the concept incorporates both the individual (ideographic) and organizational (nomothetic) aspects of the culture. Dimensions I and III deal more with the experience of individual teachers and students, while Dimensions II and IV, on the right of the graphic, focus more on the functions of the school as an organization. Furthermore, Dimensions I and II, displayed on the top of the grid, involve the experiences of the faculty while Dimensions III and IV pertain more to the experiences of the students and parents. Finally, this display of the dimensions shows the interrelationships of the dimensions, in that Dimension I should have a direct bearing on Dimension III; likewise, Dimension II should impact Dimension IV. These relationships will be explored in Phases II and III of the study.

**QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY THE FOCUS OF EACH DIMENSION**

As a tool in helping to clarify the focus of each dimension, and to further sort which types of indicators belong in each dimension, a ‘central question’ was generated for each dimension. These questions are listed by dimension below. See Figure 3.4 for a graphic display of the central questions of the dimensions.
Dimension I. Professional Orientation  
To what extent do teachers routinely and enthusiastically engage in professional growth activities on a personal level, a small group level, and a collective level?

Dimension II. Organizational Structure  
To what extent do formal and informal school organizational structures reinforce the maintenance of desired changes?

Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Environment  
To what extent are all students actively engaged on a high cognitive level in learning experiences that have value beyond school?

Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus  
To what extent do the school policies, programs and traditions help insure the success of every student on an individual level?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension I</th>
<th>Dimension II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Orientation</td>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do teachers routinely enthusiastically engage in professional growth activities on a personal level, a small group level, and on a collective level?</td>
<td>To what extent do formal and informal school organizational structures reinforce the maintenance of desired changes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension III</th>
<th>Dimension IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of the Learning Environment</td>
<td>Student-centered Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent are students routinely and actively engaged on a high cognitive level in learning experiences that have value beyond school?</td>
<td>To what extent do school policies, programs, procedures, &amp; traditions help insure the success of students on an individual level?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.4 The Central Questions for the Four Dimensions of School Culture
CLUSTERING INDICATORS FOR EACH DIMENSION

These questions guided the refinement of a list of indicators that might be used to operationalize and measure each dimension of culture. The set of indicators for each dimension should collectively be used to answer the central question of that dimension. Table 3.1 displays an early list of indicators.

Table 3.1  The Initial Conceptualization of the Dimensions of School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Professional Orientation</th>
<th>II. Organizational Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal goals / plan for improvement</td>
<td>Leadership style / structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff attitude toward professional growth</td>
<td>School Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation to change</td>
<td>Internal Accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of collegiality</td>
<td>Implementation of external policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher efficacy</td>
<td>Shared sense of mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher commitment / dedication</td>
<td>Vehicles for involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Quality of the Learning Environment</th>
<th>IV. Student-Centered Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher order thinking</td>
<td>Individualization based on student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student assessment practices</td>
<td>Support services for students and families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active involvement of students</td>
<td>Student motivation / academic futility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple modes of learning activities</td>
<td>Student disciplinary practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary approach</td>
<td>Parent involvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the conceptualization process proceeded, a more comprehensive list of possible indicators for each dimension of culture was subsequently generated based upon factors included in pertinent research. This listing was intended to serve as a guide for understanding (a) whether these four dimensions adequately capture the range of topics dealt with in pertinent research, (b) exactly what aspects of school functions fall under which dimension, and (c) how this structure might be operationalized to actually be used to study school culture. It is important to note that some components appeared to fit into more than one dimension; this is because the dimensions are conceptualized as being overlapping, rather than mutually exclusive.
### Table 3.2  Expanded List of Indicators of School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Professional Orientation</th>
<th>II. Organizational Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Formal goals / plan for improvement</td>
<td>• Principal leadership style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional support available for teachers</td>
<td>• Informal leadership &amp; communication structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff attitude/teacher efficacy regarding professional growth, &amp; change</td>
<td>• School policies, procedures, rules, routines, traditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The extent of professional inquiry &amp; problem solving</td>
<td>• Internal accountability norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Degree of collegiality &amp; teamwork in instructional planning</td>
<td>• Implementation of external policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focused on-going professional development for teachers</td>
<td>• Shared sense of mission, faculty cohesion,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mentoring of new teachers</td>
<td>• Vehicles for involvement of multiple stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Individual teachers involved routinely in reflective practice, &amp; personalized professional growth</td>
<td>• Formal support structures for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Formal structure for problem solving &amp; conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Quality of the Learning Environment</th>
<th>IV. Student-Centered Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All students routinely involved in higher order thinking</td>
<td>• Mechanism exists for identifying student needs, &amp; providing interventions on an individual basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student assessment practices reflect school goals, teacher objectives and student needs</td>
<td>• School sponsored support services are provided for students &amp; families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning activities require active involvement of students and have value beyond school</td>
<td>• Student motivation / academic futility addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multiple modes of learning activities and assessments are used</td>
<td>• Schoolwide approach to student discipline emphasizes personal responsibility &amp; achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student involvement &amp; learning is effectively monitored</td>
<td>• Active involvement of parents is sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interdisciplinary approach to curriculum, with occasional teaming of teachers/classes</td>
<td>• Formal recognition of student achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Curriculum meets state standards &amp; provides for student exploration of personal interests</td>
<td>• Emphasis on standards based instruction is balanced with a mutual focus on individualization and well-being of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students work in non-static groups on co-operative projects</td>
<td>• Scheduling reinforces the development of personal relationships between students, &amp; among students &amp; teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers maintain a report with parents &amp; communicate frequently</td>
<td>• School communiqués keep parents &amp; community informed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IV. DESCRIBING THE PROPOSED DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

DIMENSION I: PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION

Professional Orientation involves any aspect of the professional life of the teachers. It specifically refers to activities or indications that faculty members are both individually and collectively involved in professional growth and development centered on student learning. Professional Orientation incorporates what has been referred to as “professional learning community” (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Fullan, 1998), “norms of collegiality” (Little, 1982), teacher professionalization (Little, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1990), “collaborative cultures” (Leiberman, 1990), “organizational learning” (Argyris & Schon, 1976) and “learning organizations” (Senge et al., 2000).

The name Professional Orientation was selected over other possible choices, such as “professional learning community”, because the term orientation connotates the inclusion of more psychological and attitudinal constructs as well. Such intangibles as the teachers’ expectations for students (Brookover et al., 1978; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993), sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) beliefs about academic futility (Brookover et al., 1978), motivation (Bandura, 1977) and commitment have been studied and identified as characteristics of effective schools. Teddlie & Reynolds state the need for the inclusion of these types of factors in future research on effectiveness processes:

Most studies have used formal organizational factors but few of these, and few in total have used the ‘culture’ of schooling in terms of teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, goals etc. (emphasis on ‘culture’ is in original text) (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000, p. 153).

DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Dimension II of culture is designed to take into account organizational level factors which impact the way things are done at each particular school. This includes the type of leadership that exists at the school (Harris et al., 2003; Leithwood et al., 1999; Senge et al., 2000), who is involved in leadership activities, the development of vision and/or mission statements, the formulation of goals or action plans, the degree of consensus and commitment regarding organizational goals, school policies, and the importance placed upon externally imposed mandates and accountability, the degree of formality among organizational members (Halpin & Croft, 1963), the type of communication patterns and relationships that exist within the school, and the means of communication with others outside the school.
Fullan (1998) and others (Leithwood et al., 1999; Schein, 1992) have indicated that these formal organizational level elements of leadership, governance, structure, roles, relationships, and responsibilities (Murphy, 1991) can either block or facilitate a school’s capacity to sustain meaningful change. Hence, the organizational structure is an important component in the school culture, because these elements impact the manner in which business is done at the school.

**DIMENSION III: QUALITY OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

A factor in determining the extent to which a student achieves academically is the quality of the learning experiences in which the student is involved (Slavin, 2000; Brophy & Good, 1986). Dimension III is designed to assess the extent to which students are involved routinely in meaningful cognitively challenging experiences. The intent here is not to determine whether students are engaged on task in their classes, but rather to get a feel for the intellectual rigor (Newmann & Wehlage, 1996) that exists across the classes at the school, and to gauge the types of learning and assessment activities that are typically used in the school.

Support for this concept of what constitutes a quality learning environment comes from a number of sources including Howard Gardner’s 1991 description of the purpose of schooling as being that of providing students with an ‘education for understanding’. By this he means that schooling experiences should help students to grasp concepts, skills, and principles and apply them to understanding new problems and situations in ways that result in the acquisition of new skills or knowledge about the world (Gardner, 1991 p. 18; Fullan, 1993 p. 43).

Similarly, Sizer proposed that the main goal of schooling is to help each student ‘learn to use one’s mind well’ (Sizer, 1992, p. 60). Like Gardner, Sizer’s Coalition of Essential Schools stresses the use of knowledge for problem-solving in realistic situations (Fullan, 1993). Sarason (1990 p. 163) suggests that criteria for judging school quality should include how well the school fosters the desire to: (a) continue to learn about self, others, and the world, (b) live in the world of ideas and possibilities, and (c) see life as an endless intellectual and personal quest for knowledge and meaning. Newmann & Wehlage’s (1995; 1996) framework for using Standards of Authentic Pedagogy to judge the intellectual quality of the learning environment (i.e. the format used to measure the Quality of the Learning Environment in Phase II of this project) is built in large part on these concepts.
DIMENSION IV: STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

This dimension is designed to assess the extent to which the needs of individual students are met by the school. Literature on effective schools (e.g. Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000) indicates that parents in these schools are actively involved in a number of ways. This dimension of the school culture examines the type and extent of parental involvement, the student support services (e.g., special assistance with class work, after school tutorials, parent education programs, etc.) offered by the school, and the extent to which the school policies, practices, and programs support the differentiation of instructional strategies based on students’ unique interests and abilities, rather than assuming a ‘one size fits all’ approach to instruction (Gregory & Chapman, 2002). These types of considerations impact students’ sense of self-efficacy and motivation (Bandura, 1977) and can impact the achievement of individual students (Epstein, 1994; 1995).

V. THE PRODUCT: A NEW CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SCHOOL CULTURE

Through the process of collecting and analyzing the relevant research and theory base across several disciplines, a new model of school culture emerged that incorporates information from school effectiveness research, school improvement, organizational change, and cognitive constructivism. The model presented in the remainder of this chapter conceptualizes school culture as being comprised of four different dimensions: Professional Orientation, Organizational Structure, Quality of the Learning Environment, and Student-centered Focus. Each of these four dimensions is seen to exist at three different levels: artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions (Schein, 1985, 1992).

Figure 3.5 provides a graphic display of the four Dimensions of School Culture and the three levels at which they are hypothesized to exist. The interlocking puzzle pieces symbolize that the dimensions are conceived of as being overlapping and complementary in nature, and that only together do they provide a complete representation of the culture that exists at the school. The levels are displayed progressively in respect to how directly observable each one is: level 1 artifacts, on the surface; level 2, espoused beliefs, in the center; and level 3, basic assumptions, buried beneath the other two. This is in keeping with Schein’s (1985) theory of the levels of organizational culture.
Figure 3.5  A New Multi-level Multi-dimensional Concept of School Culture
VI. VALIDATING THE DIMENSIONAL STRUCTURE OF CULTURE

In order to intellectually validate these dimensions, they were compared to existing theory with established utility in the various literatures that were reviewed. Theoretically, culture is a distinguishing factor between effective and ineffective schools; therefore, if these dimensions actually embody the essence of school culture, then when used as tools for describing and comparing (as is the intent in Phases II and III of this study), they should have predictive validity for determining the effectiveness of school improvement efforts. The remainder of this chapter is, therefore, devoted to comparing the dimensional structure described in the preceding sections with established frameworks in the related literatures. The proposed four dimensions of school culture are specifically examined in respect to:

- Getzels & Guba’s Organizational Theory (1957)
- Fullan’s Inside Story of School Improvement (1998)
- Murphy’s Descriptions of Restructuring (1991, 1992)
- Levine & Lezotte’s Characteristics of Effective Schools (1990)
- Stoll & Fink’s Categories of Effective Schools (1996)
- Teddlie & Reynolds’ Processes of Effective Schools (2000)
- Hopkins & West’s IQEA Propositions (1994)
- Schein’s Levels of Organizational Culture (1985, 1992)

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY AND THE DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

Getzels & Guba (1957) set forth the concept that organizations serve both nomothetic (organizational) purposes and ideographic (individual) purposes. Fullan (1993) and Senge (2000) among others have built on this idea that change processes are most successful when they address the needs of the organization as well as those of the individuals in the organization. The membership of schools can be divided into two main groups of constituents: students and teachers, both types of participants have collective and individual needs. Table 3.3 illustrates how the design of the Dimensions of School Culture takes into account the individual and organizational aspects of both teachers and students.
Table 3.3  Organizational Theory and The Dimensions of School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Ideographic (individual level)</th>
<th>Nomothetic (school level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Faculty Needs</td>
<td>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>Dimension II. Organizational Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Student Needs</td>
<td>Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Environment</td>
<td>Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESTRUCTURING AND RECULTURING AND THE DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

Fullan (1998, p.5) asserts that sustained school improvement occurs only when both reculturing and restructuring occur at the level of the school. Figure 3.6 illustrates that the top two dimensions of school culture, Professional Orientation and Organizational Structure, roughly correspond to Fullan’s 1998 description of ‘Restructuring’ as an essential school improvement process. Similarly, the bottom two dimensions of school culture, Quality of the Learning Environment, and Student-centered Focus roughly correspond to Fullan’s (1998) concept of ‘Reculturing’.

Figure 3.6  The Inside Story of School Improvement with the Dimensions of School Culture
Adapted from “The Inside Story of School Improvement” (Fullan, 1998)
Fullan (1998) defines restructuring as “changes in the structure, roles and related formal elements of the organization” (p. 5). He concludes that the literature on restructuring supports the generalizations that restructuring is (a) relatively easier to do than reculturing, (i.e., it can be legislated), and (b) it makes no difference by itself to improvement in teaching and learning. He asserts that the reason school structure is important is because it can either block or facilitate reculturing, which he defines as the development of professional learning communities, by changing the degree to which teachers routinely focus attention on assessment and pedagogy and make corresponding adjustments to internal practices.

Likewise, Murphy (1991, 1992) defines the core technologies of schools as teaching and learning and refers to matters of school governance as structural and says that the purpose in restructuring is to support changes in core technologies, which enhance student achievement. The Dimensions of School Culture presented here are designed to take into account organizational level indicators (Professional Orientation and Organizational Structure) which Murphy would refer to as structural, as well as core technologies that deal with specifically with the learning experiences of students (Quality of the Learning Environment and Student-centered Focus).

The dimensions are designed so that both organizational level factors (Professional Orientation, Organizational Structure) as well as individual level factors (student learning experiences, and supports for individual students based on need) are taken into account for both faculty (Fullan, 1993) and students (Epstein, 1995). Fullan (1998) also acknowledges that there is some degree of overlap between school structure and school culture, so that naturally, the restructuring process and the reculturing process also have some overlap (depicted as overlapping circles in Figure 3.6); in fact, he argues that it is best if they are interwoven.

SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH AND THE DIMENSIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE

The decision to focus on the four Dimensions of School Culture described above, as well as the identification of what elements are the most important indicators of each dimension was also strongly influenced by the effective schools characteristics which have been established over the last two decades. Levine & Lezotte (1990) provide a detailed set of the characteristics of effective schools based on a synthesis of literature conducted in the United States. Table 3.4 lists the characteristics of effective schools as described by Levine & Lezotte (1990); the corresponding Dimension(s) of School Culture is listed to the right of each characteristic.
Table 3.4 Characteristics of Effective Schools and The Dimensions of Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Effective Schools (Levine &amp; Lezotte, 1990, p. 10)</th>
<th><strong>The Dimensions of School Culture</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Outstanding Leadership</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. superior instructional leadership</td>
<td><strong>I, II</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. support for teachers</td>
<td>II, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. high expenditure of time and energy on school improvement</td>
<td>I, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. vigorous teacher selection</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. maverick orientation &amp; buffering</td>
<td>II, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. frequent personal monitoring of school</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. availability &amp; utilization of instructional support personnel</td>
<td>II, I, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Effective Instructional Arrangements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. effective teaching</td>
<td>I, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. successful grouping &amp; organization</td>
<td>I, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. classroom adaptation</td>
<td>III, IV, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. active/enriched learning</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. emphasis on Higher Order Thinking (HOT) for assessment</td>
<td>I, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. coordination in curriculum &amp; instruction</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. availability of instructional materials</td>
<td>I, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. stealing time for reading, language arts &amp; math</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Focus on Student Acquisition of Central Learning Skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. maximum availability and use of time for learning</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. emphasis on mastery of central learning skills</td>
<td>I, III, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Productive School Climate &amp; Culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. orderly environment</td>
<td>IV, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. faculty commitment to shared &amp; articulated mission focused on achievement</td>
<td>I, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. faculty cohesion &amp; collegiality</td>
<td>II, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. schoolwide emphasis on recognizing positive performance</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. problem solving orientation</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. faculty input into decision making</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. High operationalized expectations &amp; requirements for students</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I, III</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Appropriate Monitoring of Student Progress</strong></td>
<td>IV, I, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7. Practice Oriented Staff Development at the School Site</strong></td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Salient Parental Involvement</strong></td>
<td>II, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Student sense of efficacy/futility</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Multicultural instruction &amp; sensitivity</td>
<td>IV, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Personal development of students</td>
<td>IV, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Rigorous &amp; equitable student promotion policies</td>
<td>IV, II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* See names and definitions of the four dimensions of school culture in previous section of this chapter
** When two or more dimensions are listed they appear in order of relevance to the corresponding characteristic
CATEGORIES OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

Stoll & Fink (1996) present a graphic representation of the characteristics of effective schools which outlines twelve attributes, grouped into three broader categories: *A Common Mission*, *an Emphasis on Learning*, and *A Climate Conducive to Learning*. They acknowledge the influence of the research of Mortimore & colleagues (1988) and Sackney (1986) in the generation of this model (See Figure 3.7).

![Characteristics of effective schools](image)

Figure 3.7  Stoll & Fink’s Characteristics of Effective Schools
Source: Stoll and Fink (1996, p. 15)

Stoll & Fink’s (1996) technique of grouping of attributes into categories (seen in Figure 3.7), is similar to the approach used in Phase I of the current project which led to the development of the dimensional structure for school culture. When compared to Stoll and Fink’s broad categories of characteristics, the Dimensions of School Culture include similar features. Table 3.5 shows how Stoll & Fink’s (1996) categories correspond to the Dimensions of School Culture.
Table 3.5  Stoll & Fink’s Categories of ES Characteristics and The Dimensions of Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of Effective Schools (Stoll and Fink, 1996)</th>
<th>The Dimensions of School Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Common Mission</td>
<td>II. Organizational Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on Learning</td>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. Quality of the Learning Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Climate Conducive to Learning</td>
<td>IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III. Quality of the Learning Environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PROCESSES

Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) describe the processes utilized by effective schools and group them into nine functions. Their work is based on a synthesis of literature in the United States and the United Kingdom. The Processes of Effective Schools are presented in table form, with the corresponding dimension of school culture to the right of each component. Table 3.6 illustrates that the design of the proposed Dimensions of School Culture takes these school processes into account.

AUTHENTIC PEDAGOGY AND THE DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

Newmann & Wehlage (1995) and Louis & Kruse (1995) found that some schools do disproportionately well in affecting student achievement. Schools that are more successful at improving student performance tend to form site-based professional learning communities comprised of faculty, administrators, and sometimes outside consultants. The professional learning communities at the improving schools were described as being continually involved in (a) focusing on student work and assessment and (b) changing pedagogy to improve student learning.

Newmann et al. (1995, 1996) referred to the desired changes in instruction and assessment as ‘authentic pedagogy’, and stated that the existence and continuance of authentic pedagogy is dependent on the presence of elements built into the organizational structure of the school. Hence, to improve pedagogy, many schools must also change the structural patterns of the school. Similar school improvement processes are described by Stoll, Fink, & Earl (2003), DuFour & Eaker (1998), Lieberman (1990), and Little (1982, 1992).
Table 3.6  Processes of Effective Schools and Corresponding Dimensions of School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processes of Effective Schools</th>
<th>The Dimensions of School Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Teddlie &amp; Reynolds, 2000, p.143)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Effective Leadership</td>
<td>II, I, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. being firm and purposeful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. involving others in the process</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. exhibiting instructional leadership</td>
<td>I, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. frequent personal monitoring</td>
<td>I, III, IV, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. selecting and replacing staff</td>
<td>II, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Effective Teaching</td>
<td>III, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. maximizing class time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. successful grouping &amp; organizing</td>
<td>I, III, IV, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. exhibiting best teaching practices</td>
<td>I, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. adapting practice to particulars of the classroom</td>
<td>III, IV, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing &amp; Maintaining a Pervasive Focus on Learning</td>
<td>IV, III, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. focusing on academics</td>
<td>I, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. creating an orderly environment</td>
<td>IV, III, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. emphasizing positive reinforcement</td>
<td>IV, III, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Producing a Positive School Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. creating a shared vision</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. creating an orderly environment</td>
<td>IV, III, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. emphasizing positive reinforcement</td>
<td>IV, III, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Creating High &amp; Appropriate Expectations for All</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. for students</td>
<td>I, III, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. for staff</td>
<td>II, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Emphasizing Student Responsibilities &amp; Rights</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. responsibilities</td>
<td>III, IV, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. rights</td>
<td>IV, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Monitoring Progress at all Levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. school level</td>
<td>II, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. classroom level</td>
<td>I, III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. student level</td>
<td>III, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Developing Staff Skills at the School Site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. site based</td>
<td>I, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. integrated with ongoing professional development</td>
<td>I, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Involving Parents in Appropriate &amp; Productive Ways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. buffering negative influences</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. encouraging productive interactions with parents</td>
<td>IV, II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*When two or more dimensions are listed they are in order of relevance to the corresponding ES Process*
Newmann & Associates (1995, 1996) described two main processes of school improvement; these are 1) reculturing, to promote professional learning communities, which are perceived to have a direct impact on improving pedagogy, and 2) restructuring the school to build the capacity to sustain changes in pedagogy.

Newman et al. also acknowledge interdependence of internal school components, such as structure and the improvement of pedagogy. Evidence of interactive nature of the components of culture can be seen in the following quote about the relationship of consensus on school goals (a structural element at the level of the school) to student learning (a core technology at the level of the classroom):

When students and teachers send clear and consistent messages to one another about the objectives and methods of learning, learning is more likely, because student and faculty effort can be directed more effectively toward intellectual ends. When school goals are vague, or when consensus is low, teachers may feel comfortable with the autonomy they have to pursue their unique interests. …But individual autonomy can reduce teacher efficacy when teachers can’t count on colleagues to reinforce their objectives. In contrast, clear shared goals maximize teacher success through collective reinforcement.

(Newmann & Wehlage, 1995, p. 31)

Newmann & Wehlage (1995, p.2) further describe ‘the context for successful restructuring’ as containing circles of support with student learning in the center (See Figure 3.9).
Three of the Dimensions of School Culture presented in this project (I: Professional Orientation, II: Organizational Structure, and IV: Student-centered Focus) fall into Newmann et al.’s (1995) circle entitled ‘School Organizational Capacity’, and the remaining Dimension III (Quality of the Learning Environment) fits into what Newmann and associates refer to as ‘Authentic Pedagogy’.

The Dimensions of School Culture were designed to incorporate the three main components observed by Newmann & Wehlage (1995) in more successful schools: (a) a professional learning community which focuses on (b) assessment, used to inform changes in (c) pedagogy. Professional Orientation (Dimension I), is explicitly designed to describe the extent to which a school has formed a professional learning community, which is also referred to as a ‘collaborative culture’ (Lieberman, 1990, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998) or ‘norms of collegiality’ (Little, 1982, 1990) in the literature. The Quality of the Learning Environment (Dimension III), directly corresponds with Newmann & Associates’ (1995, 1996) ‘Authentic Pedagogy’ (classroom instruction and assessment techniques). The use of assessment results to ‘improve pedagogy’ is considered a function of instructional planning and is taken into account as a part of the Professional Orientation (Dimension I) and also Student-centered Focus.
(Dimension IV- the provision of special programs or individualized support services to meet identified student needs and enhance academic achievement).

Newmann’s work does not deal specifically with the components of “Organizational Structure” except to reiterate what others (Fullan, 1993, 1998) have pointed out--that changes in core technologies (pedagogy) not accompanied by structural changes tend to be less meaningful and/or short-lived. Each indicator included under Organizational Structure (Dimension II) was included because evidence indicated that its existence or form could impact (either support or inhibit) a culture of professionalism (Darling-Hammond, 1990) among the school faculty.

LINKING SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Stoll & Fink (1996) state that there is evidence that practitioners are beginning to make links between school effectiveness research and school improvement and that it is time for researchers studying the two areas to do the same in order ‘to develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the research and its implications for practice’. Teddlie & Reynolds (2000, pp. 216-217) describe the emergence of a “new wave” of thinking about how to improve school quality, brought on by a number of “projects in action” which exhibit the following set of general characteristics:

- Pupil outcomes in academics are regarded as the key success criteria.
- Outcomes are being assessed in terms of ‘hard’ or quantitative data, to build commitment to the programs by adding legitimacy in the eyes of participants and critics alike.
- Bodies of knowledge from school effectiveness, school improvement and school development are all being used as resources for program development.
- A problem solving approach is being used in which a “whatever works” orientation to strategy supersedes commitments to philosophical or ideological positions.
- New programs are focusing attention on the levels of the student and the class, as well as data at the school level.

The emergence of these ‘new wave’ programs by practitioners adds legitimacy to the notion that it may not only be productive, but expedient as well, to combine and collapse knowledge bases acquired in different fields into a fresh new look at school improvement. One such program highlighted in *The International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research* (Teddlie & Reynolds, 1990) is the Improving the Quality of Education for All (IQEA) project, designed as a change strategy to help implement centralized policy and to create conditions within schools which can sustain the teaching-learning process.
The IQEA program of capacity building was a great success and led to the documenting of factors which contributed to a ‘moving schools’ ethos (Rozenholtz, 1989). The result was the development of a series of propositions about the way a school deals with problems or circumstances and the establishes of a school culture that can meaningfully empower all teachers (Hopkins & West, 1994). Table 3.7 details these propositions and lists beside each one the domain or domains in the proposed concept of school culture that deals specifically with the presence or absence of these conditions.

Table 3.7  IQEA Propositions and the Dimensions of School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IQEA Propositions</th>
<th>*Dimensions of School Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Hopkins and West, 1994)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Schools will not improve unless teachers, individually and collectively, develop. Whist teachers can often develop their practice on an individual basis, if the whole school is to develop then there need to be many staff development opportunities for teachers to learn together.</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Successful schools seem to have ways of working that encourage feelings of involvement from a number of stakeholder groups, especially students.</td>
<td>II, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Schools that are successful at development establish a clear vision for themselves and regard leadership as a function to which many staff contribute, rather than a set of responsibilities vested in a single individual.</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The coordination of activities is an important way of keeping people involved, particularly when changes of policy are being introduced. Communication within the school is an important aspect of coordination of coordination, as are the informal interactions that arise between teachers.</td>
<td>I, II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Those schools which recognize that inquiry and reflection are important processes in school improvement find it easier to gain clarity and establish shared meanings around identified development priorities, and are better placed to monitor the extent to which policies actually deliver the intended outcomes for pupils.</td>
<td>I, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Through the process of planning for development the school is able to link its educational aspirations to identifiable priorities, sequence those priorities over time and maintain a focus on classroom practice.</td>
<td>I, III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* I = Professional Orientation, II = Organizational Structure, III = Quality of the Learning Environment, IV = Student Centered Focus

Hopkins et al. (1994) adapted a “Framework for School Improvement” to express the relationship, as they saw it, between school and classroom conditions in the process of school development. Figure 3.10 represents Hopkins & Ainscow’s (1993) conceptualization, with the Roman numerals outside each box denoting the corresponding dimensions of school culture. Of
central interest here, is that the relationships between Hopkins & Ainscow’s conditions remain consistent even when the conditions are replaced with the corresponding dimensions of school culture, indicating that the proposed theoretical structure of the dimensions of school culture could be a valid way to assess and explain the relationship between classroom and school level variables particular to each school.

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**Figure 3.10**  
The Relationship Between School and Classroom Conditions  
With The Relationship Between The Dimensions of Culture  
(Source: Hopkins & Ainscow, 1993)

---

**THE LEVELS OF CULTURE**

Schein’s (1985, 1992, 1999, 2001) work on organizational culture and organizational change, particularly his description of the levels of culture (artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions), was especially important in conceptualizing the current model of school culture. This provided the key framework for piecing together the school effectiveness findings on the importance of the psychosocial construct of school climate (Brookover et al., 1979; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993, pp. 237-42) and the more anthropological
approaches to studying school culture found in the works of researchers like Deal (1986), Deal & Kennedy (1983), and Deal & Peterson (1999).

The fact that Schein’s levels of culture (see Figure 3.11) were developed in non-educational settings is not considered problematic, because it is consistent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Corbett, Firestone, & Rossman, 1987; Firestone & Wilson, 1985; Firestone & Corbett, 1988) studying organizational culture in educational settings. Firestone and associates used a religious metaphor and described the culture of the school in terms of classifying beliefs and actions as ‘sacred’ or ‘profane’ based upon the intensity with which faculty clung to them and exhibited a resistance or reluctance to change.

![Diagram of Levels of Culture]

**Figure 3.11  Uncovering the Levels of Culture**
Source: Schein (1992, p. 17)

Table 3.8 demonstrates how Schein’s levels of culture (Figure 3.11) are conceptually tied to the previous literature on school climate, and how they relate to the research methods used to study culture or climate among the various research traditions. Schein’s top level of culture (artifacts) involves symbolic representations of the culture which can be easily observed, but must be interpreted in terms of what meaning they hold for school members. This level has been researched on a limited scale in organizations and schools (e.g., Deal & Peterson, 1999), using anthropological methods such as observation and interview.

Schein’s second level (espoused beliefs) involves participant perceptions, and it has been researched extensively in the school effectiveness tradition by using psychometric methods to survey participants’ beliefs and attitudes. These data are typically aggregated at the level of the school and are used to describe the psychosocial construct of ‘school climate’.
Table 3.8 Schein’s Levels of Organizational Culture and Associated Research Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schein’s Levels of Organizational Culture</th>
<th>Conceptually Similar Constructs</th>
<th>Social Science Discipline Associated with this type of Inquiry</th>
<th>Appropriate Research Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artifacts</td>
<td>Symbolic Representations</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Observation, Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Espoused Beliefs</td>
<td>Organizational Climate</td>
<td>Psychology; Social Psychology, Sociology</td>
<td>Surveys, Structured Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Assumptions</td>
<td>Organizational Culture</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Observations, Loosely or non-structured Interviews</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The base level of Schein’s theory of organizational culture (basic assumptions) are a complex set of shared, but tacit understandings about the nature of things and the best ways to handle various types of situations and problems that occur in the organization. Schein says that these are typically so taken for granted that the organization members may not even be conscious of them, much less be able to articulate them on a survey or in an interview. Hence, the study of this level of culture necessitates the use of more anthropological methods such as long term ethnographic observations and interviews. Figure 3.12 displays the levels of school culture, as conceptualized by this study.

Figure 3.12 Integration of Schein’s Levels of Organizational Culture into the Current Research on Schools
VII. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND SCHOOL CULTURE
CONCEPTUAL COMPLEXITY AND CONFUSION BETWEEN THE CONSTRUCTS

Initial efforts at organizing a literature review to document the current knowledge base regarding school culture led to considerable confusion in understanding the distinction between the constructs of school culture and school climate. Other researchers have encountered similar problems; for example, Loup (1994) discusses the learning environment of schools by addressing the concepts of school culture and school climate. For the construct of school culture she stated that “Definitions of culture have historically been fraught with conceptual complexity and confusion” (Loup, 1994, p.63). Likewise, she begins her literature review of school climate by commenting that “Research on organizational climate, particularly in schools, has emerged from studies of culture or ethos of organizations and has been characterized by different conceptions of what constitutes climate” (Loup, 1994 p.66). These statements reveal the lack of clarity between these constructs in the literature.

Completing a review of the literature on school culture and school climate is further complicated by the fact that the terms are often used interchangeably, as if they were synonyms, indicating that in many researchers’ minds, the constructs are obviously related, but the distinction between the two is not clear. Depending on the definitions used, much of what is referred to as school culture appears to deal more appropriately with school climate, and vice versa. For example, Tanguri & Litwin’s (1968) treatment of culture in schools defines culture as a social element of climate, which seems in direct conflict with Schein’s definition of culture (see above section on culture as layers of embeddedness) in which espoused beliefs (climate) is a level of culture. These statements are evidence that there is a need to move toward a more unified theory which explains the relationship between school climate and school culture.

TOWARD A NEW VIEW OF SCHOOL CULTURE AND SCHOOL CLIMATE

The conceptualization of school culture presented in this project attempts to reconcile the research in these areas, and to synthesize the findings into a more comprehensive depiction of what characteristics make one school culture uniquely distinct from other similar school contexts. A review of the literature on school climate and school culture led to the following four generalizations:

- The term *climate* is used more consistently by those engaging in quantitative investigations (e.g., school effectiveness researchers), while the term *culture* is used
more frequently by those who utilize more qualitative methods (anthropologically oriented educational researchers).

- There seems to be a considerable overlap in the types of variables typically examined by school effectiveness researchers studying school climate (Brookover et al., 1979; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993) and more anthropologically oriented educational researchers studying school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Sarason, 1971, 1990).

- There is considerable overlap in the definitions of ‘school climate’ and ‘school culture’ among different researchers, even within the same tradition.

- The terms ‘school climate’ and ‘school culture’ are frequently used interchangeably in much of the published educational literature (e.g., Levine & Lezotte, 1990, pp. 9-10), as if they were synonyms.

These generalizations indicate the possibility that the theoretical constructs of school climate and school culture may not actually be two separate and distinct constructs at all, but rather different levels of the same construct that have been documented and explored differently within the various research orientations. Hence, the current project conceptualizes school climate and school culture as differing levels of the same construct (see Figure 3.9), which will henceforth be referred to collectively as school culture. This conceptualization is based primarily on the writings of Schein (1985, 1992, 1996) about the levels at which organizational culture manifests itself.

This concept of culture having layers or levels is also supported by the work of Argyris & Schon (1976) in which they assert that the difficulties people have in implementing new behaviors in the workplace come from existing theories people already have, referred to as ‘theories-in-use’, that determine practice. They continue that people are often unaware of these attitudes and how they affect their behavior. According to the work of Argyris & Schon (1976), ‘theories-in-use’ may or may not be compatible with the ‘espoused theories’ that people are aware of and use to describe and justify behavior (pp. 6-7).

Indeed, school climate is defined by school effectiveness researchers, Brookover & Erickson (1975) in the following way:

The school social climate encompasses a composite of variables as defined and perceived by the members of this group. These factors may be broadly conceived as the norms of the social system and expectations held for various members as perceived by the members of the group and communicated to members of the group (as quoted in Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000, p. 82).

This definition makes it clear that the determination of school climate is based upon participant perceptions (Owens, 2001, p.150) which equates to espoused beliefs, in Schein’s
conceptualization of organizational culture, because perceptions require awareness and an ability to make this knowledge explicit. Implicit in the following passage is the notion that school culture is comprised of multiple layers:

Beneath the conscious awareness of everyday life in schools, there is a stream of thought and activity. This underground flow of feelings and folkways wends its way within schools, dragging, people, programs, and ideas toward often-unstated purposes: This invisible, taken-for-granted flow of beliefs and assumptions gives meaning to what people say and do. It shapes how they interpret hundreds of daily transactions. This deeper structure of life in organizations is reflected and transmitted through symbolic language and expressive action. Culture consists of the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior over time (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 3, and 1990, p. 7).

These researchers used primarily ethnographic methods to gather their information on schools, which they refer to as the study of culture. Based on these observations it seems possible that the selection of the term for the construct is more tied to differences in research orientations, with those relying on psychosocial methods such as surveys preferring the term climate, and those using anthropological or ethnographic methods, such as long term observation and key informants, preferring the term culture.

VIII. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has described the conceptualization of school culture that was developed as Phase I of this dissertation project. The first part of the chapter explains the rationale for developing a new concept of school culture based on the integration of research and theory across several disciplines. The second part of the chapter details the multi-step process used to generate the new conceptualization. This includes a description of the four Dimensions of School Culture which emerged from a synthesis of the literatures reviewed, using an informal variant of the Constant Comparative Method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Then the new framework is compared to ten established theories and frameworks by other researchers, for the purpose of intellectual validation of the new conceptualization of school culture. The final section of the chapter presents some generalizations which were formulated regarding the relationship between school culture and school climate. It is concluded that the two may actually be differing levels of the same construct. This chapter is followed by chapter 4, which outlines the research design and methods to be employed in Phases II and III of this dissertation project.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESEARCH METHODS FOR PHASES II AND III

1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter 4 describes the methodology used in Phases II and III of the study. Phase I involved conceptualizing school culture and developing a theoretical framework to be used in the study of school culture. Phase I was described in detail in chapter 3. Phase II of this study uses the framework developed in Phase I to describe the cultures of sample schools. Phase III of the study compares and contrasts the cultures of the pairs of matched schools along the dimensions developed in Phase I (see chapter 1 for overview of the study).

Chapter 4 is organized around the following research sequence:

I. Introduction
II. Sampling
III. The Use of Mixed Methodology and Other Considerations
IV. Instrument Selection
V. Execution of Comparative Case Study Plan
VI. Data Analysis and Inference Plan
VII. Notes on Site Selection and Issues Related to Data Collection and Analyses
VIII. Summary

The goal of Phase II is to utilize the framework developed in Phase I (see Figure 3.5) to generate detailed case studies which describe the cultures of sample schools. Each case study contains descriptions of the four dimensions of school culture (I. Professional Orientation, II. Organizational Structure, III. Quality of the Learning Environment, and IV. Student-centered Focus), as well as the three levels of culture (artifacts, espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions). A variety of data was collected on two levels (artifacts, and espoused values) and used to formulate generalizations about the third and most pervasive level of culture, basic assumptions of the faculty (Schein, 1985, 1992), which appear to be in operation and exerting a controlling force on the norms of behavior.

A comparative case study approach is utilized in Phase III, with the school as the level of analysis. Extreme-case sampling (Patton, 1990, 2001) is performed by selecting six matched schools that differ in the degree of improvement in student achievement they have shown over a two year period. The case studies produced in Phase II are designed to yield “thick” (Geertz, 1973) descriptions of the organizational cultures of each of these schools, along four dimensions. The school cultures will be compared along these four dimensions (described in chapter 3). This
approach is referred to as an embedded multiple case design. The strength of this model is that it allows for a cross comparison of cases on select characteristics (Yin, 1994, pp. 41-52); in this project the basic assumptions for the four dimensions of school culture are compared across matched schools.

Data collection was designed to take place over two semesters, with quantitative measures being administered simultaneously in the spring of 2003 and qualitative data being collected at two schools at a time in the fall of 2003. This however did not turn out to be possible as permission to participate in the study was not acquired for all schools until the fall of 2003. Data Collection began in August of 2003 and continued through September of 2004. The studies of culture in each school are replicated as closely as possible to avoid unintended errors due to variations in data collection methods. The case studies involve the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. This mixed method case study approach permits a wealth of different types of indicators, which can be important when measuring complex constructs such as school culture.

II. SAMPLING

SELECTION OF SCHOOLS

Extreme Cases Based On State Assigned Growth Labels

In identifying specific cases for study, the newly established school accountability system in Louisiana offered the unique opportunity to study school improvement in a format other than a longitudinal research design, since it provides a system for rating schools according to the amount of improvement in achievement over a two year period. Quantitative data, in the form of school performance categories from the 1999-2000 Louisiana School District Composite Reports were utilized to identify extreme positive cases and negative cases of school improvement within a district.

The rationale for the selection of schools follows the principle of replication logic described by Yin (1994 p. 45-46). He maintains that replication in case study research functions similarly to that of replication in experimental research. The evidence gathered in multiple case designs, such as this one is considered more compelling and the overall study is therefore more robust (Yin, 1994 p. 45; Herriot & Firestone, 1983). The replication of findings across cases or predictable outcomes provides a rich theoretical framework allowing for stating the conditions under which the phenomenon (here, school improvement) is likely to be found and conditions
under which it is likely not to be found. Therefore, this project utilizes the multiple case design with comparisons between matched schools. Since maximum contrast is sought between each pair of matched schools, the schools selected are extreme cases (Patton, 1990) with regard to the amount of improvement (change in SPS/SGL over a 2 year period) experienced.

Matched Schools

Extreme cases of school growth within a district were matched on several characteristics to ascertain the sample of matched schools. Each pair of schools contrasted in Phase III was matched with regard to the following school characteristics:

1. State
2. School district
3. Community type (urban, suburban, or rural context)
4. Improvement Initiative (program of school improvement participating in such as state school accountability program, or independent restructuring model such as Accelerated Schools or Comer Project)
5. External support personnel (the assignment of onsite technical support personnel in the form of a Distinguished Educator, or hired consultant, who is on site at the school all or much of the time)
6. Magnet status (or other student selection mechanism that would interfere with the presence of a heterogeneous student body with respect to achievement)
7. Number of principals on-site (including assistant principals)
8. School size (enrollment)
9. School level (grade structure: elementary school/middle school/high school),
10. Student body SES (indicated by the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch).

This purposeful matching strategy ensured that the populations served by the schools were comparable and also served to control for several external contextual characteristics such as district level policies, curricula, and community type that might have impacted the school culture differentially, thereby impacting the credibility and validity of the findings. Lack of comparability on these characteristics might account for differences in school level increases in student achievement, regardless of the influence of school culture.

The study called for a double blind design in which the researcher was unaware of the relative effectiveness status of the schools. An extensive analysis was conducted by a qualified state department of education employee to identify schools that were comparable on these identified characteristics. This individual had access to the relevant data and had written a dissertation on the school effectiveness literature. Table 4.1 displays the data used to match schools for this study.
Table 4.1  School Selection: Matching Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Characteristic</th>
<th>Pair A</th>
<th>Pair B</th>
<th>Pair C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School code name</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*School District</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Type</td>
<td>Urban fringe, mid size city</td>
<td>Urban fringe, mid size city</td>
<td>Suburb, mid-sized city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Improvement Initiative</td>
<td>Only state mandated school accountability program</td>
<td>Only state mandated school accountability program</td>
<td>Only state mandated school accountability program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-site External support personnel</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnet or student selection mechanism</td>
<td>None; heterogeneous population</td>
<td>None; heterogeneous population</td>
<td>None; heterogeneous population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of principals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School level</td>
<td>Elementary; grades PK-5</td>
<td>Elementary; grades PK-5</td>
<td>Elementary; grades PK-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School size</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student body SES</td>
<td>95% on free &amp; reduced lunch</td>
<td>95% on free &amp; reduced lunch</td>
<td>59% on free &amp; reduced lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* coded names

Table 4.2 displays school data with regard to the criterion variable, growth in student achievement (i.e. school improvement) as measured by change in the SPS over a two year cycle. These data were not made available to the primary researcher until the conclusion of all data collection, to prevent the possibility of researcher bias. (See the sections in this chapter entitled Double Blind School Sampling Strategy and Notes on Site Selection for greater detail on this.)

Table 4.2  Dependent Variable: Growth in Student Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Characteristic</th>
<th>Pair A</th>
<th>Pair B</th>
<th>Pair C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School code name</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline SPS (1999-2000 cycle)</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>102.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Growth – Change in SPS (from school baseline to 2002-3 cycle)</td>
<td>- .7</td>
<td>-2.3</td>
<td>-4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+5.8</td>
<td>+7.0</td>
<td>+9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Double Blind School Sampling Strategy

Selection of sample schools based on the criteria above was designed to be performed by a source other than the primary researcher. Descriptive information about the school, particularly its state assigned growth label, were withheld from the researcher involved in data collection and analysis in an effort to control for possible effects of observer bias. Principals and teachers involved in formal interviews were also asked to refrain from disclosing any information about the school’s SPS or SGL rating. On-site data collection for each school was completed as a separate case study prior to beginning data collection at another school. Data analyses were completed after data from all sites were collected. More detail on the specifics of the double blind sampling technique are presented in section VII of this chapter.

WITHIN SCHOOL SAMPLING

Levels of Data

Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) call for more complex and multi-level analyses of process variables within schools. Hence, the data collected is broken down into three units of analysis: school level indicators, teacher/class level indicators, and student/parent level indicators. This approach allows for the identification of varying perspectives with respect to some of the indicators. Murphy & Hallinger’s 1993 book on restructuring schooling stresses the importance of roles of different types of participants in school restructuring; likewise, Fullan (1993) emphasizes the agency of teachers in the process of school change, and Schein (1992) highlights the pivotal role of the organizational leader (here, the building principal) in changing organizational culture. Hence, the multi-level approach to data collection and analysis allows for a more complete exploration of how participants function in their respective roles at each school site. Table 4.3 lists the data types collected at each participant level (also see Appendix C2).

Sampling Procedures

Principal and school level faculty. The principal is interviewed at length at the onset of the study. A brief interview is conducted again at the close of the site visits. Counselors and other administrative level faculty members (assistant principals, librarians, instructional support personnel, etc.) are interviewed and observed informally.
Teachers. Due to the use of six different quantitative and qualitative data sources involving teachers, a random sampling method, stratified by grade was used to insure representation across the instrumentation. A faculty list divided by grade level is used to select which teacher participates in which data collection method. The process is completed by assigning each teacher on the faculty list a number that corresponds to a type of data collection instrument or strategy. For a copy of the within school sampling worksheet used in this process see Appendix C1.

Table 4.3  Data Types by Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Student/Parent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal interview, structured open ended questionnaire</td>
<td>Teacher self-administered surveys (fixed response)</td>
<td>Parent phone survey – fixed response &amp; open ended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal interviews and observation of counselor, assistant principal &amp; other school level staff</td>
<td>Teacher focus group &amp; self administered open-ended survey</td>
<td>Student focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal observations of school</td>
<td>Informal observations</td>
<td>A Day in the Life – observation field notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quantitative Data Sources involving teachers:
1. Sociometric Questionnaire (all faculty must complete this)
2. Modified Revised School Culture Environment Questionnaire (RSCEQ)
3. Leadership and Management of Schools Staff Survey (LAMSSS)

Qualitative Data Sources involving teachers:
4. Classroom Observations for Authentic Pedagogy
5. Teacher Focus Group.

This random selection technique is employed to ensure that the samples used to study each dimension of culture are representative of the school population.

Parents. Parents are selected randomly to participate in a phone survey from a roster of phone numbers provided by the school. The sample size is roughly one tenth of the school’s enrollment. For example, in a school with 439 students, 40 parents would be surveyed.

Students. Permission slips to participate in the study were distributed to one homeroom per grade which was chosen randomly. Ten of the returned permission slips are selected randomly, eight to participate in a student focus group, and two to serve as alternates in the event that one
or more of the eight is unable to participate. Another returned permission slip is drawn from the stack at random to select the student to be ‘shadowed’ by the researcher for the *A Day in the Life of a Student* Observations.

THE FINAL SAMPLE

Schools

Data from three sets of matched schools were included in the study. Refer to table 4.1 for the characteristics of school pairs included in the final sample.

Within Schools

Participants within Schools were selected to participate as described above (see Within School Sampling). The procedure provides for data to be collected at the school level, the teacher level, and the student level. Data collected at the school level involves purposeful inclusion of the principal and other school level staff.

Data collection from teacher participants involved the participation of almost every faculty member in some form of data collection. The representativeness of the sample for a given data source was maintained by random assignment of teachers to select data sources. Assignment of teachers to particular data sources is stratified by grade. The final sample of teachers for all data sources was checked for over and under representation of individuals or sub-groups (i.e., grade levels, subject areas, gender, race) through use of within school sampling worksheet.

The final sample of parents includes 10% of the parent population. Parents in randomly selected randomly selected third fourth or fifth grade classes were surveyed and asked multiple choice as well as open-ended questions. Six to ten students per school were randomly selected from a pool of those who obtained parental consent. These students participated in a focus group interview, and one student who returned the permission to participate form, but was not included in the student focus group was selected at random to be shadowed and observed for a day.

III. THE USE OF MIXED METHODOLOGY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

MIXED METHODOLOGY VERSUS MIXED METHOD

Sandelowski (2003) distinguishes between the use of the terms *method* and *methodology*. She refers to methodology as ‘the over-all approach to inquiry regularly linked to particular theoretical frameworks’ (p. 324), or ‘overarching worldviews’ (p. 325) such as grounded theory.
Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998, p.23) refer to these orientations toward inquiry as research paradigms, which each include their own methods, logic, axiology, ontology, and beliefs about causal linkages. Sandelowski (p. 324-325) calls for greater clarity of paradigmatic position in research reports utilizing mixed methods because paradigms or belief systems themselves cannot be mixed as they entail competing and contradictory views regarding the nature of reality, the relationship between researcher and participant, and the objectives and value of research.

In response to this call for paradigmatic clarity this dissertation began with a statement of paradigmatic position which identifies the research as being grounded in the principles associated with the pragmatic paradigm of inquiry (see chapter 1, also Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 23). A close reading of the headings and sources cited in the review of the literature on student learning also reveals underlying threads of social constructivism that undergirded the selection of particular measurement instruments (e.g., the use of Newmann’s Authentic Pedagogy Rubric as opposed to other existing measures of effective classroom instruction). Hence, the present study can be seen as being grounded in the principles of ‘pragmatic social constructivism’ (Garrison, 1998, p. 43).

Sandelowski (2003, p. 324) defines methods as specific techniques for sampling, data collection, and analyses, which are guided by the paradigm within which the study is designed and executed. The methodology (or research paradigm) determines the specific methods used in the study and governs the interpretive treatment of the data collected.

**PREANALYSIS DECISIONS**

The Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003, p.362-372) Preanalysis Decision Making Framework was used as a guide in selecting methods for this study. Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003, p.362) state that since the use and credibility of mixed methods study is still evolving that the onus is on mixed methods researchers to provide detailed information to their readers. They recommend that researchers make a series of decisions prior to undertaking mixed methods data analysis; these decisions consequently underlie the choices of specific approaches, techniques, and interpretative frames used to collect and analyze data from multiple sources.

This guide calls for researchers to make numerous a priori decisions regarding the specific aspects of the research to be conducted. The presence of a detailed plan is helpful in building a sound research design that addresses the specific questions asked. Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003, p.362-372) specifically suggest that in order to enhance trustworthiness and
credibility of mixed method studies, researchers start with a clear plan which addresses the following aspects of the proposed study:

1. The purpose of the mixed methods research
2. Variable versus case oriented analysis
3. Exploratory versus confirmatory data analytical techniques
4. Which data types to use
5. Relationships between quantitative and qualitative data types
6. Data assumptions
7. Source of typology development
8. Nomination source for typology development
9. Verification source for typology development
10. Temporal design for data-analytical procedures
11. Data analysis tools
12. Process of legitimization

This section deals with the first three decisions in the Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003) planning guide. Considerations for decision 4 (which data types to use) are all dealt with in the section IV. Instrument Selection. The remainder of the decisions are addressed in the section VI. Data Analysis and Inference Plan.

THE PURPOSE OF THE MIXED METHODS RESEARCH

This study utilizes a number of different instruments, administered in a variety of formats at each school site. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches are utilized to collect information about school culture. Sandelowski (2003, p. 328) describes two primary purposes for electing to utilize both quantitative and qualitative data sources in the same study: 1) to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of a target phenomenon, and 2) to verify one set of findings against another. She further asserts that these purposes are at odds with each other and consequently mixed-method researchers should clearly identify the reason they have elected to utilize both data types. The rationale for using multiple data sources, levels and types was determined from the outset as being a means of achieving more comprehensive understanding of school culture than could be provided by exclusive reliance on either quantitative or qualitative sources. The literature review confirmed this assumption (see chapter 3 for information on studying organizational culture).

VARIABLE VERSUS CASE ORIENTED ANALYSIS

This study follows what Miles & Huberman (1994) refer to as a case-oriented approach, which “considers the case as the whole entity, looking at configurations, associations, causes,
and effects *within* the case—and only then turns to comparative analysis of a (usually limited number) of cases” (p. 174, italics in original). This determination according to Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p.363) implies that qualitative data and data analysis techniques will tend to be dominant in the study. It also affects the decisions regarding the assumptions that underlie analytical procedures, and legitimization.

**EXPLORATORY VERSUS CONFIRMATORY DATA ANALYTICAL TECHNIQUES**

This study is conducted in three phases. The purpose of Phase I was to develop a conceptualization of school culture. The data analysis techniques employed in Phase I (see chapter 3) were confirmatory in nature, aimed at validating the four dimensional concept of school culture. However, the purposes of Phases II and III, describing types of school cultures and comparing cultures of matched schools, are more conducive to the use of exploratory data analysis techniques.

One qualitative analytical technique employed is to search through all data sources and to group data by the six symbolic elements of culture (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988; Owens 2001). Another technique to be used is coding data according to the four dimensions of culture and pulling all data for each dimension into a central location. This will help in the identification of themes, or big ideas that will be used to generate descriptions and inferences about the basic assumptions operative with respect to each dimension of the school’s culture. Work sheets for these processes can be found in the appendices.

**IV. INSTRUMENT SELECTION**

Phase II of this study utilizes data from five different quantitative sources (one for each dimension, except Dimension II which employs two instruments) and eight different quantitative data collection techniques to produce descriptive case studies of each school’s culture. The rationale and theoretical basis for inclusion the specific data types is covered in the first two divisions of this section, *Data Related to the Symbolic Elements of Culture*, and *Data Collection Methods and Levels of Culture*. The specific quantitative instruments are listed and described by the dimension of culture that they are used to measure; Figure 4.1 contains a graphic representation of the four dimensions and the quantitative measures for each. This is followed by a listing of the qualitative data sources, presented in no particular order since each qualitative source may contain information on any or all of the dimensions of culture. Table 4.4 provides an overview of all of the data sources used in Phase II of this study.
Table 4.4  Overview of All Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Quantitative Data Sources</th>
<th>Qualitative Data Sources (Multidimensional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>1. Modified Revised School Culture Elements Questionnaire</td>
<td>1. Principal Interviews (formal &amp; informal)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| II. Organizational Structure     | 1. School Leadership & Management Survey  
                                  | 2. Sociometric Survey                                                                      | 1. Teacher Focus Group Interview  
                                  | 2. Informal one on one teacher interviews                                                  | 2. Informal interviews  
                                  | 3. Principal interviews (formal & informal)                                                | 3. Informal observations |
| III. Quality of the Learning Environment | 1. Sources of Authentic Pedagogy (SAPI/SAPA classroom observation rubric)                    |                                            |
| IV. Student-centered Focus       | 1. School, Family & Community Partnership Survey                                           | 1. A Day in the Life of a Student Observations  
                                  | 2. Open-ended questions on MFSCP parent survey                                             | 2. Informal interviews  
                                  | 3. Informal observations                                                                   | 3. Informal interviews |
| All Dimensions                   |                                                                                           | 1. Formal School Observation Checklist  
                                  | 2. Informal School Observations                                                           | 2. Documentation of Archival & artifactual data  
                                  | 3. Informal interviews with various participant types                                      | 3. Informal interviews  
|                                  |                                                                                           | 4. Documentation of Archival & artifactual data                                             |

DATA RELATED TO THE SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS OF CULTURE

This study employs an anthropological orientation toward the study and description of school cultures, supplemented with psychosocial techniques. School culture is studied on a case-by-case basis, with each individual school viewed as a separate case. Several types of data are collected in the study, the determination of which data collection methods were employed was based on the review of the literature and resulting conceptualization of school culture (see chapters 2 and 3) developed in Phase I of this study.

Qualitative data collection techniques employed in this study are guided by the theoretical work of Robert Owens on organizational culture (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988; Owens, 2001, p. 149) which provides a model of six overlapping symbolic elements that can be used collectively to describe the culture of a school. Owen’s symbolic elements of school culture include: 1) Values and beliefs, 2) Behavioral norms, 3) History, 4) Stories and myths, 5) Heroes and heroines, and 6) Traditions and rituals (See chapter 2, Figure 2.3 for a graphic representation of Owen’s Overlapping Symbolic Elements of Culture.).
Owens’s theory of the symbolic elements of culture extends the research tradition of school effectiveness studies, which have focused on school climate variables through observation and survey of values and beliefs, and behavioral norms (numbers 1 and 2 of Owen’s symbols of culture). The inclusion of four additional categories of symbolic elements (history, stories/myths, heroes/heroines, and traditions/rituals) provides a more comprehensive look at the lived experience of the school’s culture. A data collection & analysis worksheet entitled Types of Data Record Sheet (see Appendix C2) was designed to insure that all six data types are included in the analyses of each school’s culture.

The research design used in this study is structured to support the collection of data on as many of these six symbolic elements as possible, for each variable. This is accomplished through utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data. Table 4.5 lists methods used to document data for each of the Symbolic Elements of Culture identified in Owen’s (2001, p. 149) model (see figure 2.2 for a graphic display of these elements).

### Table 4.5 Data Collection Strategies for Owens’ Symbolic Elements of School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs and Values</th>
<th>Behavioral Norms</th>
<th>Traditions and Rituals</th>
<th>Stories and Myths</th>
<th>Heroes and Heroines</th>
<th>History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modified RSCEQ</td>
<td>Formal observations</td>
<td>Formal observation</td>
<td>Informal interviews</td>
<td>Informal Interviews</td>
<td>Formal Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-ended survey</td>
<td>Informal observations</td>
<td>Informal observations</td>
<td>Informal observations</td>
<td>Informal observations</td>
<td>Informal interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone interviews</td>
<td>Phone survey</td>
<td>Informal interviews</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Document analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal interviews</td>
<td>Informal interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND THE LEVELS OF CULTURE

In addition to having six symbolic elements through which culture is expressed, culture is theorized to have different levels. Schein (1992) maintains that manifestations of culture are representative of one or more levels of meaning. Three distinctions are made which refer to how deeply embedded the element is in the minds and hearts of the organization’s members. These levels of culture are defined as 1) artifacts, 2) espoused beliefs, and 3) basic assumptions.
This theory supports the inclusion of both survey data, which is likely to reflect espoused values and beliefs, and observational and interview data more likely indicators of deeply held and often taken-for-granted basic assumptions (Schein, 1992). The selection of quantitative measures was guided by the literatures on effective schools, school improvement, and student learning (see chapter 2) and was organized in terms of the dimensions of culture developed in Phase I of this study (see chapter 3).

The concept of school culture developed in Phase I of this study asserts that the heart of a school’s organizational culture rests in the basic assumptions collectively held by its principals, teachers, students and parents (Schein, 1992; Deal & Peterson, 1999). Therefore, the use of long term (two week) informal ethnographic observations was deemed appropriate for uncovering these extremely difficult to observe, but key determinants of culture. (See chapter 3, Figure 3.6 for a graphic representation of Schein’s theory of the levels of culture.)

Quantitative Measures of School Culture

Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the instrumentation used for each dimension.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension I Professional Orientation</th>
<th>Dimension II Organizational Structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Modified Revised School Culture Elements Survey (MRSCEQ)</td>
<td>1. Leadership and Management Staff Survey (LAMSS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Sociometric Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension III Quality of the Learning Environment</th>
<th>Dimension IV Student-centered Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic Pedagogy Observation Rubrics (SAPI &amp; SAPA)</td>
<td>Measure of Family, School and Community Partnership Survey (MFSCP)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.1 Quantitative Instruments Used for Each Dimension of Culture
Chapter 3 deals extensively with the specific concept of school culture that is used in this study. This concept, developed in Phase I, includes four dimensions: I. Professional Orientation, II. Organizational Structure, III. Quality of the Learning Environment, and IV. Student-centered Focus. These dimensions will be used to describe and compare school cultures in Phases II and III of the study (see chapters 5 and 6). One or more quantitative instruments were selected from existing sources to measure each dimension of culture. Attempts were made to match the conceptual definition of each dimension of the existing study to instruments with very close operational definitions.

Dimension I: Professional Orientation

The selection of specific data sources began with the choice of a quantitative measure for each of the four dimensions since no instrument exists that can provide measures of these dimensions, as described in chapter 3, and the development of a new instrument was beyond the scope of this project. Figure 4.1 displays the quantitative instruments used to collect data for each dimension. This is followed by a brief description of each instrument.

The Modified Revised School Culture Elements Questionnaire (MRSCEQ). The present study focuses primarily on the values, beliefs, and behavioral norms of the school’s professional staff. This approach is heavily influenced by the school effectiveness research of the 1980’s and 1990’s which identified common characteristics of effective schools. Terrance Deal (1986) draws heavily from the effective schools research in his treatment of school culture (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). He proposes that schools which can be classified as effective share a common set of cultural attributes which include:

1. Shared values and consensus on ‘how we get things done around here”
2. The principal as a hero who embodies core values
3. Distinctive rituals that embody widely shared beliefs
4. Employees as situational heroes and heroines
5. Rituals of acculturation and cultural renewal
6. Significant rituals which celebrate and transform core values
7. Balance between innovation & tradition and autonomy & control
8. Widespread participation in cultural rituals

Many of these concepts, as well as similar findings from other notable research in effective schools and their cultures (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993; Lieberman, 1995; Fullan, 1993) have been incorporated into the items on the Modified Revised School Culture Elements Questionnaire (RSCEQ) (Olivier et al., 1998) used in this study of school culture. A sample of
teachers from each school was asked to complete the Modified RSCEQ. This instrument provides specific feedback about attitudes and perceptions regarding the professional orientation of the teachers at the school.

The Modified RSCEQ contains items based on four subscale constructs that were identified as significant components of school culture based on a review of the literature on organizational culture and school effectiveness. These include: Vision/Leadership, Collegial Teaching and Learning, Professional Commitment, Openness/Collaboration, and Professional Commitment. Definitions of these subscale constructs, as well as a list of the items for each can be found in Appendix A1b. A copy of the entire Modified RSCEQ can be found in Appendix A1a. A unique feature of the Modified RSCEQ is that the response sheet asks respondents to distinguish between their perceptions of the way things actually are and the way that they would prefer that they were (see Appendix A1a). This feature gives researchers an insight into the extent to which the faculty desires to participate in professional growth activities in addition to documenting perceptions of current practices.

Greater detail on the psychometric characteristics of the RSCEQ is reported in Oliver et al. (1998). This study uses a modified (shortened) version of the original document, because the original contained items pertaining to the principal’s administrative style. These items were not needed since this aspect of the school’s culture is measured in Dimension II by the Leadership and Management of Schools Staff Survey (LAMSSS).

Dimension II: Organizational Structure

The Leadership and Management of Schools Staff Survey (LAMSSS). The Leadership and Management of Schools Staff Survey (LAMSSS) was designed in 1997 by Kenneth Leithwood and Doris Jantzi to describe the leadership and management practices of school administrators. The survey is a five point Likert-type questionnaire designed to be administered to teachers. The survey contains 51 questions that provide information on six leadership factors (symbolizing good professional practice, developing a collaborative decision-making structure, providing individualized support, providing intellectual stimulation, holding high performance expectations, and fostering development of vision and goals) and four management factors (establishing effective staffing practices, providing instructional support, monitoring school activities, and providing a community focus). A copy of the LAMSSS and Cronbach’s alpha reliability rating for the factors can be found in Appendix A2 entries a and b.
Sociometric Survey. The Sociometric Survey (see Appendix A2c) used to analyze the informal social/leadership network of the school had previously been used by The Louisiana School Effectiveness Study (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993), Durland (1996), and Jarvis (1998). The survey asks respondents two questions. The first question asks teachers to identify all faculty members with whom they have discussed academic matters in the past week, and rank the three persons with whom they have communicated the most. The second question asks teachers which of their colleagues they would select to serve on a school improvement team with them, then to rank their top three choices.

Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment

Formal Classroom Observations

A. Standards for Authentic Pedagogy: Instruction (SAPI)
B. Standards for Authentic Pedagogy: Assessment (SAPA)

Faculty at each school are selected to participate in the classroom observation portion of the study based on the within school sampling procedure described earlier this chapter. Teachers selected for classroom observation were notified in advance that their class would be formally observed for forty-five minutes to an hour at a time and in a core subject (Math, Reading, English, Social Studies, or Science). A time for the observation was scheduled with each teacher in advance. This was done informally in a face-to-face meeting with the teachers. Teachers were reassured of confidentiality and that results would be aggregated by the school, without any reference to an individual teacher, so this would in no way affect their official job performance evaluations, nor would their name appear anywhere (any references to particular teachers would use pseudonyms to protect the privacy of participants).

Each participating teacher is asked in advance to submit the portion of their regular lesson plan that pertains to the lesson observed 5 minutes prior to the observation period. Each teacher was also asked to submit one or two assessment tasks that they feel are valid indicators of the students’ proficiency and understanding of the topic of the observed lesson (Newmann, 1996, p. 306). The assessment should be reflective of something typically used to assign student grades.

The classroom observation methods are based on the notion of Authentic Achievement (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Newmann & Associates, 1996), which focuses on the intellectual quality of classroom learning and assessment practices. The framework used to evaluate
classroom learning experiences and evaluations was developed for the U. S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement and is described in greater detail in chapter 2. Newmann et al. (1995, 1996) developed standards for instruction and assessment practices, which were associated with authentic student achievement. Authentic achievement is defined as intellectual accomplishments that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful, such as those undertaken by successful adults. The theoretical framework posits that the academic achievement of preK-12 students can be predicted in-part by variations in the presence of three factors in classroom learning experiences: 1) construction of knowledge, 2) disciplined inquiry, and 3) value of the knowledge beyond school (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Newmann & Associates, 1996). These standards are described more fully in chapter 2.

Hence, this study assumes that learning environments that rate high in these attributes will be more conducive to improving student achievement. Furthermore, the school’s mean score in these areas is deemed as the primary indicator of the quality of the learning environment at the school, and consequently an integral part of the school culture.

Newmann and Wehlage’s 5-point rubric (see Appendix A3 entries a, b, c, and d for copies) is used to rate the quality of learning experiences according to these standards for authentic pedagogy. Mean scores for instruction and assessment were computed for each of the standards.

Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus

Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships (MSFCP) Phone Survey.

Phone surveying has become the preferred approach of many social scientists in the past two decades because it allows greater researcher control over the entire data collection process (Lavrakas, 1998, p. 429), resulting in fewer incomplete and unusable surveys. It is also quicker and less expensive than mail out surveying.

List sampling techniques (Lavrakas, p. 444) were used to create a random sample of 50 parents was selected from files in the school office. Since the desired sample size is roughly one tenth of the school enrollment, one out of every ten parents were called. This was done to ensure the representativeness of the sample. When home and work numbers listed on the school emergency information data fail to produce a parent willing to participate, a replacement parent was selected from the remaining pool of parents.
The MFSCP was developed by Karen Clark Salinas, Joyce Epstein, & Mavis Sanders of Johns Hopkins University in conjunction with Deborah Davis & Inge Aldersebaes of Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. The survey is a five point Likert-type response format with questions designed to elicit from parents their perceptions of how well their child’s school is reaching out to involve parents and community members in meaningful ways. The measure is based upon a framework (Epstein, 1995) that identifies six types of involvement: parenting help, school/home communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. A copy of the MFSCP is located in Appendix A4; it is also available on the web at the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory website.

Qualitative Data Collection Methods

The qualitative methods used are also designed to collect data on the same four dimensions of culture (professional orientation, organizational structure, quality of the learning environment, and student-centered focus). A particular qualitative method or methods was designed to provide information specifically for each of these dimensions of culture, however, the nature of qualitative observations are such that a particular method may provide data on multiple dimensions. Therefore, the qualitative data collection methods are not listed by dimension as the quantitative methods were. A list of data collection methods employed in Phase II is provided below, followed by descriptions of each method including the rationale for its use, the source the method was derived from, whether any guides are to be used with the process and if so, how the guide was developed, as well as, which dimensions of culture this data is likely to contribute to.

Qualitative data collection processes utilized for this study include:

1. Principal Interview (formal)
2. Teacher Focus Group
3. Student Focus Group
4. A Day in the Life of the Student
5. Formal School Observation Checklist
6. Informal School Observations
7. Documentation of Archival and/or artifactual data

**Principal interview.** Interviewing is used in research to provide insight into an individual’s perception of a situation. At the beginning of the field experience at each school, one formal interview was scheduled with each principal. The interview allows for a wider range
of participant input and responses than can be obtained through fixed response surveys. The face-to-face interview format permits additional opportunities for informal observation by the researcher, which might reveal emotional responses to questions such as the degree of comfort or familiarity the respondent has with the questions. This interview was conducted almost immediately upon entering the field environment, and served as well to establish a rapport between the researcher, as a key informant, and the researcher, since future informal participant observation type interviews would follow this initial structured interview. This initial interview was designed to collect information on all four strands of variables, and to last from thirty to forty-five minutes. Several interview protocols or transcripts were consulted when for types and wording of questions (Stevens, 2000; Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). An example of the School Culture Faculty Interview Protocol used to guide discussions with school principals and other faculty members is provided in Appendix B1.

**Teacher focus group.** Focus groups are a variation of the face-to-face personal interview and are used widely in social science to stimulate in-depth exploration of a topic. This approach to interviewing participants involves a structured conversation of typically 8 to 12 individuals, lasting roughly from an hour and a half to two and a half hours (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998). Focus groups are recommended for projects involving the early stages of theory development because they are useful in generating hypotheses that can be tested later (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1998).

Discussions in focus groups are typically moderated by a researcher who focuses participants’ attention on topics of interest. Focus group moderators rely on the use of a priori interview protocols to structure the interview. These protocols are utilized reflexively by moderators whose job is to collect as much information about the topic as possible. Predetermined and spontaneous probe questions are utilized strategically to elicit more details regarding brief or intriguing statements made by participants in the course of the discussion. Patton (1990, 2001) notes that the group dynamic leads to discovery of valuable qualitative insights that would not surface in individual interviews; Brown et al. (1989, p. 40) concur that this method gives rise synergistically to hidden knowledge of the members, and is therefore a convenient way to evoke the thoughts of participants. This method fits particularly well with the theoretical work of Schein (1992) on embedded levels of culture (artifacts, espoused values, and basic assumptions).
A School Culture Faculty Interview Protocol was developed for this study based upon the dimensions of school culture (see chapter 3), and the symbolic elements of culture (Owens & Steinhoff, 1988; Owens, 2000). Additionally, previously designed interview protocols (Jarvis, 1998; Griffin & Wohlsetetter, 2001) on topics relevant to this project were consulted for structure and wording of questions and probes. A copy of the School Culture Faculty Interview Protocol used to guide Teacher Focus Group discussions is provided in Appendix B1.

Probability samples (see within school sampling methods above) are used to determine inclusion in teacher focus groups at each school. One third of the faculty will participate. This third involves only teachers who will not be observed in classroom observations using the SAPI and SAPA. Focus groups were designed to be conducted during school hours. Audiotapes of focus groups are made and later transcribed to facilitate qualitative analysis. Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) constant comparative method is then used to identify common themes that emerge from the interviews.

Student focus group. A group of six students was selected from a pool of all students who returned the informed consent form. Once parent permission forms were sent home, the returned forms were compiled and 10 students who had secured permission to participate were drawn at random. The first six composed the actual sample and the others were alternates in the event that replacements were needed.

The Student Focus Group size should be kept small to allow an opportunity for all children to speak and be heard. Previous experience with student focus groups indicated the need for small groups, since students’ responses can be more difficult to hear and understand than adult speech. In all other ways the student focus groups follow procedures outlined above for Teacher Focus Groups. A copy of the Student Interview Protocol can be found in Appendix B2.

A day in the life of a student. A Day in the Life of a Student is a qualitative observation technique used in The International School Effectiveness Research Project (Reynolds, Creemers, Stringfield, Teddlie, & Schaffer, 2003) to record the events in the life of a typical student on a typical day. This procedure involves having a researcher follow a randomly selected student’s movements from the beginning to the end of a particular day. The student’s experiences are documented in a variety of areas including how time is organized for the student, the types of learning or assessment activities required of him/her, and the general tone and demeanor of the other students and teachers encountered. Observations are documented in an ethnographic
notebook to be used in concert with other data to allow researchers to ‘get a feel for’ the quality of the average educational experience of students at the school.

**Formal school observation checklist.** Early on in the data collection phase the SEAP II school observation checklist is completed as a guide providing an overview of the school context. This form is used to document any defining or distinctive features of the school, which may be symbolic manifestations of school culture. This form will be used to note any artifacts observed that may hold symbolic meaning for participants. An example of this form is provided in Appendix B3.

**Informal school observations.** Basic ethnographic methods are used to collect data pertaining to school culture (Wolcott, 1999). Informal observations of day-to-day school functions and casual conversations are recorded in open-ended and non-structured field notes. Observations were conducted at key school functions such as faculty meetings, open house and records observations in field notes. Other data recording strategies such as audio recording, video recording, and photographing will be used as opportunities present themselves. The purpose of on-going informal observations and interviews as a part of the case study is to record manifestations of the symbolic elements of culture (Owens, 2001) which are not likely to be revealed through more formal means, including behavioral norms, traditions, rituals, routines, stories, myths, and heroes and heroines.

Ethnographic data is analyzed holistically for emergent themes using the constant comparative method (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Then the notes are coded into one of the four a priori variable strands (i.e., the Dimensions of School Culture). Notation should be made of any observed theme that did not fit well into the Dimensions of School Culture outlined in Phase I of this study, as this could be reflective that the four Dimensions of School Culture, as defined here, may not capture the universe of variables that comprise school culture. Qualitative field notes are made of informal school observations. Sampling for these was serendipitous and based on researcher perception that time spent in a certain place or with particular individuals might yield insights into more obscure manifestations of the basic assumptions (Schein, 1992) operative in the school culture.

**Documentation of archival and/or artifactual data.** The official School Improvement Plan will be examined qualitatively for statements relevant to the identified variable strands. Pertinent statements will be coded and classified according to the variable strands used in this study. These
official statements will be considered evidence of “espoused values” (Schein, 1992) of the school.

Written statements, signs, and notes/communiqués will be documented and analyzed qualitatively as artifacts of the organizational culture of the school. Additionally, lesson plans of teachers selected for formal classroom observations will be qualitatively evaluated for further evidence of espoused values, or basic assumptions pertaining to each of the four variables/determinants of school culture.

Several pieces of archival data will be sought from the principal, librarian, and counselor that may provide a reflection on one or more of the dimensions of culture. Examples include teacher absentee rates, the amount of professional material and resources available to teachers on the school site and the extent to which they are used, the number of teachers who are National Board Certified; all of these pieces of datum provide insight into the professional orientation of the faculty.

Table 4.6 provides an overview of the all data sources used for this study. Data sources are categorized as to the types of data they generate. The limitations inherent with each type of data are also listed. Since the aim of this research is to provide as comprehensive a picture of school culture as possible, a wide variety of data types are employed. The final column of the table lists the considerations that were given to these limitations and the means that were used to counter balance the limitations of each data source. This overview of the data sources was used to insure that this study provides a holistic and comprehensive look at the cultures of participating schools.

V. EXECUTION OF THE COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY PLAN

THE THREE PHASE RESEARCH PLAN

Yin (1994, p. 49) breaks the comparative case study approach into three phases: 1) Define and Design, 2) Prepare, Collect, and Analyze, and 3) Analyze and Conclude. This basic process was used to guide the execution of this study. Phase I involved conceptualizing and defining the construct of school culture. This portion of the study is described in detail in chapter 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeric</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
<th>Considerations Made</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modified Revised School Culture Elements Questionnaire (RSCEQ)</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Fixed response categories limit respondents artificially</td>
<td>Ethnographic Observations and interviews, &amp; document analysis can be triangulated with the ‘preferred’ responses to Modified RSCEQ used to approximate values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Leadership and Management of Schools Staff Survey (LAMSSS)</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Fixed response categories limit respondents artificially</td>
<td>The principal interviews and the teacher focus group provide opportunities to document more spontaneous input regarding formal leadership structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociometric survey</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Relies on self-perception of behavior, and is subject to social acceptability bias</td>
<td>Observations and interviews balance out possible error due to self report data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards for Authentic Pedagogy: Instruction (SAPI) &amp; Assessment (SAPA)</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Ratings are somewhat subjective and reliability may be questioned</td>
<td>A rubric is used to determine ratings, and one observer is used to eliminate the possibility of inter-rater reliability. Findings can be triangulated with observations from A Day in the Life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure of School, Family, &amp; Community Partnerships (MSFCP)</td>
<td>Opportunity for limited open-ended responses</td>
<td>Artificial response categories limit respondents artificially</td>
<td>The inclusion of fixed response categories allows for numeric analyses, while the inclusion of open-response questions allows respondents to address relevant issues of concern to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archived data (teacher qualifications, attendance &amp; resources)</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Data interpretation can be problematic</td>
<td>Interviews provide opportunities to view data in light of the school history and allow participants to explain oddities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnographic Notebook (EN) includes documentation of informal notes derived from observations and interviews</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Data interpretation &amp; analysis is problematic making comparisons difficult</td>
<td>Notes include full descriptions of the context/circumstances, date &amp; characters to assist interpretation. Interview &amp; observation guides are used to further aid comparability of the data. The dimensional structure also provides a guide for focusing observations and comparing data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Observation Checklist</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Data interpretation &amp; analysis, cross-school comparisons difficult</td>
<td>The use of an observation guide standardizes the type of data generated to conform to specified categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Interview Protocol</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Data interpretation &amp; cross-school comparisons</td>
<td>Standardized formal interview with a guide provides greater comparability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Focus Group Protocol</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Data transcription, analysis, &amp; comparisons difficult</td>
<td>Standardized interview format provides for greater comparability of data. Responses are recorded to promote accuracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Focus Group Interview Protocol</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Data interpretation &amp; cross-school comparisons</td>
<td>Interview guide provides a measure of uniformity in types of data collected. Recording responses allows greater accuracy and allows the researcher to conduct a more naturalistic interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>______</td>
<td>Data comparison</td>
<td>Standardized analysis method yields more comparable data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLAN FOR EXECUTION OF PHASES II AND III

Phase II of the plan involves the collection of data at each school site. Phase II is descriptive research in which each school is treated as an individual case; the data from six separate cases are analyzed independently, with respect to the research questions presented in chapter 1. Data from different cases are not compared in Phase II of the research. The goal is to derive thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 1994) of each individual case, along the dimensions derived in Phase I.

Phase III of the research plan involves the contrasting of school cultures described in Phase II. The cultures of schools with extreme cases (Patton, 1990, 2001) of improvement scores (SGLs) are compared to see if discernable patterns exist between the three matched pairs of schools. The research questions for Phase III of the study are then addressed. Table 4.4 outlines the process to be followed in completing Phases II and III of this study.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND INFERENCE PLAN

PHASE II: DESCRIBING SCHOOL CULTURES

Following the collection of data, descriptive and interpretive statistical analyses will be completed for each process. Quantitative data for each dimension will be analyzed using descriptive statistics such as the computation of mean, median, mode, skew and kurtosis. This information along with the qualitative data collected is used to describe the school with respect to each dimension of culture; see Data by Dimensions of School Culture worksheet (Appendix C3) designed to facilitate content analyses in this study. Descriptive case studies are generated to address the research questions posed in chapter 1 (see Table 4.5).

PHASE III: CONTRASTING CULTURES

The discussion of results for the comparative case study will focus on addressing the hypotheses and research questions posed in chapter 1 of this research report. These are presented and discussed by dimension below.

Dimension I: Professional Orientation

Hypothesis.

1. There is a positive relationship between higher levels of teacher professionalism within a school and the rate of improvement in student achievement.

This hypothesis will be tested by looking at the relationship between Dimension I quantitative scores from the Modified RSCEQ and the SGL of the matched pairs.
Research Questions.
1. What processes, procedures, and attitudes characterize:
   a. the most professionally oriented schools?
   b. the least professionally oriented schools?
2. In what ways does a school’s professional orientation impact classroom practices at the school?
3. What similarities exist in the professional culture of high SGL schools? What differences exist in the professional cultures of high versus low SGL matched schools?

Case study descriptions organized by dimensions from Phase II will be used to address these questions. To facilitate inter-school comparison, the data from each school case study will also be reduced into a three point scale for each dimension of a school’s culture. Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998, 2003) refer to this process as quantitizing the qualitative data. A cross-case comparison of the culture of the matched schools will be completed, and the findings will be interpreted using a qualitative interpretive frame. This process is expected to result in the development of a typology or classification system to describe and compare school cultures.

Dimension II: Organizational Structure

Hypothesis.
1. Schools that have shown more growth in student achievement have organizational level structures, policies and leadership that promote improvements in teaching and learning.

This hypothesis will be tested by comparing the qualitative data obtained in Phase II, Dimension II of the study with the SGLs of matched schools. A finding that there are concrete differences in the organizational structures of all 3 pairs of matched schools would support this hypothesis.

Research Questions.
1. To what extent are school staff in formal leadership positions, such as principals, perceived as being directly involved in improving teaching and learning and motivating teachers and students?
2. To what extent are faculties unified by a common vision, and in agreement about a specific plan of action or strategy for improving student achievement?
3. What informal roles are played by school staff? Do the types of informal roles vary substantially from high SGL schools to low SGL schools?

4. What are the major themes of the stories, myths, hero/heroines, and other symbolic artifacts that are perpetuated by school staff? Do these differ between schools?

These questions will be answered by comparing the case descriptions produced in Phase II, Dimension II for each set of matched schools. Inferences will be drawn based on differences found between matched schools.

Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment

Hypothesis.

1. Schools that have higher performance scores also have higher levels of authentic instruction and assessment.

This hypothesis will be tested by exploring the relationship between the SAPI/SAPA scores and the SGLs and SPSs of matched pairs. Correlating the SAPI/SAPA scores with the SPS will tell if there is a relationship between authentic pedagogy and student achievement. Correlating the SAPI/SAPA scores with the SCG will reveal whether authentic pedagogy is related to changes in achievement. Comparisons of this data between matched pairs will indicate the relationship of authentic pedagogy to achievement increases.

Research Questions.

1. What differences exist in the learning environments at high SGL schools as opposed to low SGL schools, with regard to the types of activities students are involved in?

2. What differences exist in the attitudes and enthusiasm towards school and learning in general, between high SGL and Low SGL schools?

3. To what extent are espoused values (statements of beliefs) and basic assumptions (derived from observed practices) consistent at high SGL schools? Between high and low SGL schools?

To address the Dimension III research questions, the case descriptions generated in Phase II, Dimension III will be utilized. Comparisons will be made between matched pairs. Data reduction strategies described in Dimension I of this phase will be employed.
The Research Sequence Checklist

Phase II: Describing School Culture

1. Identify specific ways to gather data regarding the six symbolic elements of culture for each of the variables, at various levels within the school.
2. Locate quantitative measurement instruments with established reliability in each identified dimension of school culture.
3. Design or modify qualitative surveys, focused observation checklists, and interview protocols. Field-test any new data collection methods.
4. Select and gain access (see superintendent letter and principal letters in Appendices D1, D2 & D3) to the specific schools to be included in the actual sample.
5. Secure teacher & parental informed consent (see D4, D5, & D6).
6. Execute within-school sampling techniques for use with each data collection component.
7. Develop a sequence and schedule for the administration of the various instruments, and completion of the structured observations and interviews at each school.
8. Administer quantitative measures & perform statistical analyses on quantitative data.
9. Perform content analyses on each piece of qualitative data.
10. Organize all data pieces by the dimension they inform.
11. Triangulate data & formulate inferences.
12. Use data to address research questions.
13. Write case studies for each school.

Phase III: Comparative Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

1. Utilize the dimensional structure developed in Phase I to compare the characteristics of the school cultures along four dimensions: I. Professional Orientation, II. Organizational Structure, III. Quality of the Learning Environment, and IV. Student-centered Focus.
2. Quantitize data for each dimension to facilitate cross-case comparisons.
3. Note differences & similarities between schools; search for emergent consistencies, principles or generalizations.
4. Discuss results in terms of the initial research questions.
5. Summarize in terms of contribution of this study to the current knowledge base on school improvement.
6. Make suggestions for future research in school improvement.

Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus

Hypothesis.

1. Substantial differences exist in the number and types of support services offered by differentially improving schools.

Data from Phase II, Dimension IV will be used to test this data. First, frequency counts of the numbers of support services offered by the school will be compared for matched pairs. Then a content analysis (Patton, 1990, p. 381-383) will be performed to assess whether there are qualitative differences in the types of services offered between matched pairs.
Research questions.
1. What differences exist in the types, and amount, of services offered to support student achievement in high SGL schools as opposed to low SGL schools?
2. What differences exist in the levels and types of parental and community involvement, between high and low SGL schools?
3. What differences exist in faculty attitudes or practices regarding adjusting the curriculum and/or instruction to fit the characteristics of individual students between high and low SGL schools?
4. How do basic assumptions (derived from practices) about students, the nature of the learning process, and the role of teachers and administrators differ between high and low SGL schools?

Qualitative data from Phase II, Dimension IV will be used to address these questions. Written descriptions of differences found will be generated, in addition to the use of data reduction strategies described in Phase III, Dimension I.

Once all dimensions have been analyzed and the data reduced to a three point scale, a matrix will be used to compare and contrast matched schools. This process will facilitate the generation of inferences and may lead to the development of a researcher generated typology.

The usefulness of the four dimensions (professional orientation, organizational structure, quality of the learning environment, and student-centered focus) for creating a typology which describes a range of cultures that could be found in schools will also be assessed.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE DATA
Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003, p. 365) suggest two questions for mixed methods researchers to address which determine the relationship between quantitative and qualitative data in their study: 1) Will the approaches be used equally or will one set of techniques be dominant? 2) To what extent will the quantitative and qualitative data sources inform each other during the data analysis process?

In the present study, qualitative data sources will be given preeminence. This decision is based on the purposes of the study a (see chapter 1), the rationale for use of mixed methods, and the indications of the theory base that under girds the selection of methods (Schein’s theory regarding the levels of culture, 1985, 1992).
In this study the plan for the execution of Phase II provides for quantitative and qualitative data for each case to be collected and analyzed separately, using appropriate techniques within each tradition. Then quantitative and qualitative data is aggregated by the school and correlated in terms the four dimensions developed in Phase I. Then for Phase III both data sets are to be consolidated (through a quantification process described later) and used to determine a typology to be used in comparing school cultures. Finally, the data generated through the cross-case comparison will be used to address the primary research question of why the variation in improving student achievement in matched schools exists.

Table 4.8  
**Phase II Research Questions by Dimension**

*Dimension I: Professional Orientation*
1. What types of formal and informal leadership and communication structures exist within the school and how do these operate to support or inhibit school change?
2. What types of internal and external supports exist to assist teachers in implementing new instructional practices?
3. How does the structure of teacher time and student time support or inhibit greater student achievement?

*Dimension II: Organizational Structure*
1. What types of formal and informal leadership and communication structures exist within the school?
   a. How do these operate to support or inhibit school change?
2. What types of internal and external supports exist to assist teachers in implementing new instructional practices?
3. How does the structure of teacher time and student time support or inhibit greater student achievement?

*Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment*
1. To what extent, and in what ways are students in the school engaged in:
   a. meaningful activities that have value beyond school?
   b. social interactions aimed at the construction of knowledge?
   c. assessments that require higher level cognitive skills?
2. What types of student achievement are valued at the school?
3. In what ways are professional development and instruction linked at the school?
4. To what extent do the teachers make use of differentiated learning activities and/or assessment strategies based on individual student characteristics?
5. Do teachers desire to teach in ways that embrace constructivist principles, and do they possess the knowledge and skills to do so?

*Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus*
1. What does the school do to support individualized approaches to learning?
   a. How are student assessment data used to plan support services to assist students?
   b. How does the school insure that all students are learning and achieving?
2. What characteristics describe the relationship between parents and school faculty?
3. What types of programs and services for increasing parental involvement, and assisting students and parents (tutorials, etc.) are offered by the school?
4. How does the school approach student discipline?
   a. To what extent is a unified approach to student discipline practiced throughout the school?
   b. To what extent & in what ways do disciplinary practices focus on helping students to become successful learners?
DATA ASSUMPTIONS

Before completing inferential data analyses (or statistics) quantitative data will be subjected to descriptive statistics to insure that the sample meets the assumptions that underlie the inferential statistics selected. These assumptions are fairly standardized and usually include normal distribution, independence, and homogeneity of variance.

Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003) state that one of the most frequently overlooked qualitative assumptions is that samples should be representative of the population that the research will be generalized to in order for inferences to be meaningful and applicable to other cases. The within school sampling techniques described previously in this chapter have been designed to insure representation of all major subgroups (grade level, subject area, level of participant-administrator, teacher, or student/parent, race, SES, achievement level, etc.). The detailed sampling plan, along with triangulation of data along dimensions insures greater generalizability of findings.

Source of Typology Development

“Typology development involves the analysis of one data type that yields a set of substantive categories or themes (i.e. typology) that is substantively ‘applied to an analysis of another data type, the results of which could in turn be used to refine and elaborate the typology’ (Caracelli & Green, 1993 as quoted Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 370)”. Constas (1992) lists five possible sources for the origination of typologies:

1. investigative – researcher constructed
2. participants – participants themselves identify the categories
3. literature – derived from findings and conclusions documented in extant literature
4. interpretative – constructed from a preexisting set of analytical concepts
5. programs – constructed from a set of goals or objectives

The dimensional structure developed in Phase I of this study fits Consta’s description of a literature based typology. The typology generated through Phase II, and utilized in Phase III of this study to compare school cultures will be an investigative typology.

Nomination Source for Typology Development

Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003, p. 371) suggest that Constas’ (1992) categories of typology sources are also appropriate sources for the names selected in the generation of typologies. Using this same system, the names selected for the four dimensions identified in
Phase I (chapter 3) are interpretative in nature because they emerged from a blending of cohesive ideas and concepts in extant literature. This can be seen in the explanation of the name selection for Dimension I, Professional Orientation, and the reason for the inclusion of the word ‘orientation’, to describe what others have referred to as ‘professional learning communities’ (see chapter 3 description of Dimension I).

However, since the typology for Phases II and III are emergent rather than set a priori, the nomenclature has yet to be determined; however, it is likely to be based on investigative results.

Verification Source for Typology Development

Constas (1992) suggests that researchers developing typologies should attempt to justify the creation of their typology and he lists six non-exclusive means of justifying or validating typologies:

1. rational – using reason and logic to justify a typology
2. empirical – verifying typology by examining coverage, distinctiveness, & exclusivity of categories
3. technical – use of quantitative language and concepts to verify typology
4. participative – participants verify that this is the way they would categorize the information
5. referential – using research findings or theoretical frameworks to justify a particular typology through corroboration
6. external – using a panel of experts not connected to the study to verify and substantiate a given typology

The latter part of chapter 3 in this document is devoted to justifying the dimensional structure developed in Phase I of the study. Phase I of this research relied heavily on referential justification, as evidenced by the numerous references to corroborating theory in support of the four dimensional structure for school culture. If the need for a new typology emerges as a result of findings in Phases II and III of this research, the justification for any typology developed will be a combination of rational, referential, and external, depending on the typology that may or may not be generated in these phases of the research.

Temporal Designation for Data-analytical Procedures

This decision involves deciding when typology development will occur: a posteriori, a priori or iteratively (Constas, 1992). The framework developed in Phase I (chapter 3), the four
dimensions of school culture, was established a priori to data collection and analyses in Phases II and III. The final typology for comparing school cultures was left to be determined a posteriori, or after all data have been collected.

The Process of Legitimization

The process of legitimating inferences involves the use of one or more methods to systematically eliminate rival hypotheses until the inferences made and conclusions reached in the study remain the only viable explanation (adapted from Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003, p. 372). For Phase II this implies addressing any possible threats to the validity of quantitative data; Campbell & Stanley (1963) developed a checklist for assessing a number of possible threats to validity. Since this research design also relies very heavily on qualitative data it will also be necessary to assess the “truth value of qualitative inferences” using a framework such as the Onwuegbuzie Legitimation Model (Onwuegbuzie, 2000b).

TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY: RATIONALE FOR MULTIPLE DATA SOURCES

The mixed methods case study approach used in this study allowed for both numeric and verbal data sources to be collected for each dimension. The purpose for the multiple measures is two fold. First, including multiple data points and sources allows for greater triangulation of the data yielding more accurate information. Secondly, and more importantly, it allows for more detailed descriptions of the variables which is highly desirable in an exploratory study of a construct.

Several principles were taken into consideration in the design of the study to increase trustworthiness and add to the overall quality of the inferences drawn (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998 p.90-93). These include:

Prolonged Engagement

Contact with each school is made in the months before the school year starts for the students. Then three contiguous weeks are spent on data collection at each school to allow enough time for the researcher to become familiar with the scope of the contextual factors.

Persistent Observation

The primary purpose of having a single teacher act as a key informant is to add depth to the descriptions of culture by including subtle details that may surface only through the familiarity of daily informal interactions with an insider to the cultural scene.
Peer Debriefing

Following data collection and prior to the completion of data analyses, consultation sessions will be held with a member of the research community not involved in data collection for this project. The purpose of this process is to explore aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise never be made explicit. This exercise is useful for probing biases and clarifying interpretations (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998 p. 91; Lincoln & Guba, 1985 p. 308).

Member Checks

Whenever possible faculty members are asked to check interpretations and conclusions drawn by the researcher to confirm that representations are accurate portrayals based on their experience at the school.

Reflexive Journal

A journal is kept alongside or the ethnographic notebook which details information about the circumstances, the context of the situation, methodological decisions, and events questions or comments that arise.

Triangulation

The use of multiple data points allows data collected in one format to be confirmed or contradicted by data from other sources. The use of triangulation techniques provides a safeguard from the formulation of erroneous inferences. Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie (2003, p.352) and Johnson & Turner (in Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p.299) provide a fundamental principle of mixing methods, namely that “methods should be mixed in a way that has complimentary strengths and no overlapping weaknesses.” An overview of the instruments used in this study, the type of data yielded by each, and limitations/considerations for compensating for these limitations using the design of the study is provided in Table 4.3. This table also provides a guide for triangulation of data.

This study utilizes a mixed method research design strategy, known as Concurrent QUAL+ quan analysis, outlined by Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998, pp. 126-127). Parallel analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data sources provides a richer understanding of the variables and their relationships (Creswell, 1995; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p.126). The study is primarily qualitative in nature; however, qualitative analyses are followed by confirmatory quantitative data collection and analyses in an effort to verify observations through data triangulation. This research design serves the overall purpose of an exploratory study in its
ability to yield thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). The combination of theory triangulation, methodological triangulation, and data and analysis triangulation in the design of the study enhances the credibility, and validity of the research (Campbell & Fiske, 1959; Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1990; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

VII. NOTES ON SITE SELECTION AND ISSUES RELATED TO DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

To execute the double blind procedures called for in this study, assistance was required with the selection of sample schools, so as to preclude the primary researcher from access to data regarding the criterion variable. Assistance with generation of a pool of possible matches was provided by a qualified state department of education employee (LDE consultant) The basic design for school sampling was initially two levels of improvement (improving, declining) by three levels of community type (urban, suburban, and rural). The parameters of the design were provided to the LDE consultant assisting with the school sampling aspect of the study. After receipt of this basic sampling design the primary researcher was informed that the state uses the following labels for urbanicity: large city, urban fringe of a large city, mid-sized city, urban fringe of a mid-sized city, small city, rural.

At this point the LDE consultant was provided with the expanded list of school matching characteristics (listed in Table 4.1), plus an explanation that for the purposes of pairing schools the most important of these matching variables were the SES indicator (percent of students on free and reduced lunches), same school level, and same school district. The goal of finding pairs for each community type that had maximum variation in growth their SPS was also clearly explained to the LDE consultant. The LDE consultant was also advised that the primary researcher was not to have access to any information which disclosed which school was improving and which was not, due to the double blind aspect of the study. Table 4.9 shows the community types of the schools in the final sample. The codes (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) in the table refer to the actual schools that were in the final sample and correspond to school codes used in chapters 5 and 6 of this study.
Table 4.9  Basic School Sampling Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Improvement Status</th>
<th>Community Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large city/Urban Fringe of Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-improving or declining</td>
<td>C1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>C2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROCEDURE FOR SELECTING FINAL SCHOOL SAMPLE

After a second discussion between the primary researcher and the LDE consultant, a procedure for selecting the sample was developed along with a School Sampling Matrix (see appendix C1). The collaboratively developed school sampling procedure involved the following steps:

1. Select all elementary schools in Board of Elementary and Secondary Regions 1, 2, and 3 except for magnet schools and laboratory schools. This gives a total of 259 schools.
2. Calculate the mean and standard deviation for the percentage progress toward the school’s SPS score. This percentage progress could be positive or negative. For the 259 schools, this yields a mean of 44.86 and a standard deviation of 103.11.
3. Determine the cutoff point for outliers. Criterion of 2/3 standard deviations was selected based on previous school effectiveness research.
4. 45 plus or minus 2/3(103) = 45 plus or minus 69 = cutoff points of 114 for positive outlier and -24 for negative outlier.
5. Therefore, a positive outlier would have a score of 114 or more.
6. Therefore, a negative outlier would have a score of -24 or lower.
7. Decide on the three urbanicity groups (large city/urban fringe, mid-sized city, fringe of mid-sized city).
8. Select six schools in each urbanicity group (3 positive, 3 negative). Do not include extreme positive or negative scores.
9. Try to control for percent free lunch and enrollment.
10. Later add controls for district, LINCs (a specific state developed school reform program), and principal tenure (this matching characteristic was not viable due to lack of access to this data).

State department of education data bases were used to compile a pool of possible matches throughout the three regions of the state noted above (see School Sampling-Possible Matches in Appendix C1). These data were emailed to the primary researcher and contained no information.
regarding the SGL, as requested; therefore, the double blind procedure was maintained. Copies of the initial Sampling Worksheet with all Possible Matches can be found in appendix C1. No appropriate matches were found in small cities or rural areas.

When the coded sampling data (i.e., the lists of possible pairs) were received from the state department of education, the researcher used the sampling procedure outline above to eliminate pairs from this initial list. Then contact information was requested for the numbered pairs that remained in the sample pool. When these data were received there was no other information with it except the school and district names; therefore, the researcher was unable to tell which school was improving in each pair, and the integrity of the double blind research design was maintained.

Eventually, the researcher was able to deduce which school was which in each pair from school observations and interviews, but this was well into the data collection process. When the researcher contacted principals via phone or entered each campus to begin data collection, she had no prior knowledge of the school’s performance. Midway through the data collection, however, it became obvious, in all three pairs, which school was improving and which was not. Initial impressions were subsequently confirmed by consulting archived state school accountability data, though this was done only after all data collection was complete and cross case analyses had began.

The pool of possible matched pairs was narrowed at several points. First, district level permission had to be secured. Second, principals were contacted and asked for permission to conduct the research in their schools. In numerous cases one school in a pair agreed to participate, while the other did not. Subsequent inquiries after the study was complete confirmed that for schools in the final sample, it was much more difficult to gain access to the low SGL schools than the high SGL schools.

At the onset of the study, principals at five matched pairs of schools had consented to participate. This sample size was narrowed to three before the research was completed. The participants in one school changed their mind after their original consent; the data from their matched pair though already collected, was discarded, since no other suitable match could be found. When it appeared that another school might fail to complete the study (and there were no remaining options in the initial pool), an additional pair was identified in a rural area. This pair had not been included in the initial pool because the contrast in growth SPS wasn’t as large as
desired. However, it was not necessary to collect or use data from this final standby pair of schools, it was decided that the data from three matched pairs was sufficient to complete the research.

Following data collection at the schools, but prior to the completion of data analyses, the data from this study were involved in a major house fire. Although most data from the study was salvaged, and in good condition, at least some data from each school were lost in the fire. This accounts in part for the low within school sample sizes for some of the quantitative data (see sample size tables in chapter 6). It was not possible to re-administer the same surveys to the same participants twice, so analyses were performed on surviving data.

However, it was possible to replenish all qualitative data, as this only involved additional visits to the school sites for additional focused interviews and observations. The fire resulted in several months of lost time in inventoring of data and additional data collection. All unreliable data (i.e., difficult to read due to water or smoke damage) were discarded. Despite the loss of some data, this study still includes a large volume of information from varied data sources; although, the final study is more dependent on qualitative data than was originally intended.

VIII. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the research design, data collection, and data analysis methods used in this comparative case study of school culture. An overview of the data sources is provided in Table 4.4. This study utilizes a number of theoretical frameworks and a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data sources to explore the complex construct of school culture in order to obtain a greater understanding of the dimensions of school culture and how it relates to school improvement.

The methodology employed in this case study approach is designed to allow triangulation of both methods and data sources. This decreases the chance that conclusions are a product of random or systematic error, which can result from over reliance on one data source or a single method (Patton, 1990, 2002). The triangulation of theory adds credibility to the assertions that the proposed dimensions and methods are related to school culture and that school culture is related to school improvement. The use of double blind sampling of cases, and the separate case study approach reduce the likelihood that observations are tainted by observer bias. The use of a single observer and standard observation and interview guides increases the reliability of the data.
This study is also intended to be responsive to calls for more complex models for exploring school context variables and internal processes in input/output analyses of school functions (Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Chapter 5 presents the six separate case studies generated from the quantitative and qualitative data analyses performed in Phase II. Chapter 6 presents the results of Phase III cross-case comparative data analyses. Chapter 7 contains a discussion of the findings from all phases of this study, with an emphasis on interpreting the meaning of the results and making explicit the implications suggested by the data.
CHAPTER FIVE
CASE STUDY REPORTS

I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the individual case reports for each of the six schools studied. The chapter is organized in the following way:

I. Introduction
II. Case A1 - Sunny Side Elementary
III. Case A2 – La Fleur Elementary
IV. Case B1 – Huntington Elementary
V. Case B2 – Shady Oak Elementary
VI. Case C1 – River Bend Primary
VII. Case C2 – Moss Point Primary
VIII. Chapter Summary

The case reports in this are comprehensive in nature and include a summation of all qualitative and quantitative data collected. For a detailed list of exact quantitative and qualitative sources used, as well as data collection methods, refer to Chapter 4: Methodology. Ten to 15 days were spent on site at each school giving surveys, conducting informal interviews, holding scheduled interviews, moderating focus groups, as well as, observing in classrooms and around the school campus. In addition, several preliminary phone interviews and a follow-up interview were conducted with each principal. Archived quantitative data from the state department of education (such as school growth scores, and school report card information like teacher qualifications, student attendance rates and student achievement data) as well as documents as containing school performance information such as School Assessment Model (SAM) reports or school improvement plans were not read by the researcher until all onsite data were collected; this was done as a guard against possible bias in data collection, especially with regard to qualitative data.

Case reports are organized in the following manner:

1. General Characteristics of the School
2. The School Experience for the Typical Student
3. The Professional Orientation of the School Faculty
4. Leadership at the School
   a. The principal’s leadership style
   b. Teacher leadership
   c. Leadership from other stakeholders
5. The Quality of the Learning Experience
6. The Student-centered Focus
7. Artifacts
8. Espoused Beliefs
9. Shared Assumptions
10. An Overview of the Culture of the School

This case report format was adapted from that used in Reynolds, Creemers, Stringfield, Teddlie & Schaffer (2002). The ten components of the case reports are consistent with the theory of school culture presented previously in chapter 3. The first section gives the reader a sense of the context and external environment of the school. All available data sources are incorporated into a narrative description of the way the school functions along the four dimensions and three levels of school culture. The final section summarizes the findings holistically and discusses the school culture in relation to the degree of improvement in the student’s achievement.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the participating schools and how they fit into the basic school sampling design that was discussed in chapter 4. This table is followed by the individual case studies that were generated following data collection at all sites.

### Table 5.1  Sample Schools and the Basic Sampling Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Type</th>
<th>Large city/Urban Fringe of Large city</th>
<th>Fringe of Mid-sized city (suburban)</th>
<th>Mid-sized city</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Improvement Status</strong></td>
<td><strong>CASE C1</strong>  River Bend Primary</td>
<td><strong>CASE B1</strong>  Huntington Elementary</td>
<td><strong>CASE A1</strong>  Sunnyside Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-improving or declining</strong></td>
<td><strong>CASE C2</strong>  Moss Point Primary</td>
<td><strong>CASE B2</strong>  Shady Oak Elementary</td>
<td><strong>CASE A2</strong>  La Fleur Elementary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**II. CASE STUDY SCHOOL A1 – SUNNYSIDE ELEMENTARY**

**GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

Sunnyside Elementary is an older school that houses grades kindergarten through five. The school dates back to 1927 and is located near downtown in a mid-sized city and serves mainly lower SES minority students. Enrollment at Sunnyside for the 2003-2004 school year was 366 students with 15% of the school’s population identified as special education, and 95% of the student body qualifying for free and reduced lunches. The school population is 99% black and
1% Asian. A statement in the school improvement plan asserts that the vast majority of the students are being raised by single mothers or grandmothers.

The school campus occupies a city block and comprises eight separate buildings connected by covered walkways. The office/teacher workroom building is physically separate from the buildings that house classrooms, with the upper grade classrooms most remote from the office.

The facility itself is aging brick and in need of repair inside and out. The principal and several teachers commented that the facility is slated for replacement in a few years, and consequently improvements are not planned and repairs are done on a priority or emergency basis only. Little has been done in the way of making the school's exterior appealing to students or parents such as flower beds, welcoming signs, or other visible signs of school spirit.

CASE A1 – GOING TO SCHOOL AT SUNNYSIDE

Sunnyside, being an older school, is a well-established institution in the community. Most of the students who attend Sunnyside reside within a few miles of the school. Most students enrolled in Sunnyside know numerous family members or friends who attended the school before them. This knowledge is comforting to younger children and a source of pride for older students.

Attending Sunnyside is somewhat of a rite-of-passage in the community since virtually all community kids attend the school, and this has been the case for generations except for a period of forced bussing several years back; parents still express anger over the fact that some of their kids were sent “way off.” The parents interviewed were all comfortable with the school and wanted their children to attend this school as opposed to a school in the suburbs. One parent commented that “they need to forget all that and just fix this one.”

Students observed and interviewed like coming to school at Sunnyside. One fifth grade boy stated that he would rather come to school than “… stay home and watch cartoons.” Other students in a focus group of eight third through fifth graders randomly selected concurred with this sentiment. These positive feelings about the school in the students and parents are confirmed by the high daily attendance rate of 96.7%, considerably higher than the state average of 93.8%.

The typical student at Sunnyside begins the day by catching a bus at roughly 7:40 AM and arriving at school shortly after 8:00 AM, at which time they report to breakfast. Breakfast is a loosely structured social time which lasts from 8:00 AM to 8:20. Classroom instruction is to
begin promptly at 8:30; this occurs the majority of the time, although a few instances were observed in which a student arrived late from breakfast, and several minutes of teacher time was devoted to scolding the student.

Fifteen minutes into the day students watch a closed-circuit broadcast of the morning announcements. During this time Mrs. Jones, the principal, is up beat and positive as she reminds teachers and students of impending deadlines and school business such as getting applications for free and reduced lunches in on time, and collecting behavior compacts from all students and keeping them on file. Several students are also involved in the daily broadcasts. At the end of the broadcast, Mrs. Jones asks the student body to join her and the two students in a motivational “chant” in which they vow to do “good, better, best, better than the rest!” The entire process takes five to ten minutes. Students seem to enjoy the time. The principal felt like it gave her greater contact with the students and teachers and that everyone responded better to this than oral announcements.

Most classes at Sunnyside are self-contained and heterogeneously grouped. Reading instruction typically occurs first, directly following the announcements. Students are most likely to receive 15-20 minutes of small group instruction, and spend roughly 30 minutes involved in independent Reading work. Independent work frequently involves some form of students working in learning centers with instructional games such as electronic games, computer games or engaged in more traditional pencil and paper activities like copying from the board or completion of worksheets. Reading block is typically the most structured time of the day.

In many, but not all classes, Reading is followed by Math. Math is much more likely to be taught using whole class direct instruction. Lessons are typically presented by the teacher with the use of a textbook and possibly some instructional aids such as chalkboard, overhead projector or manipulatives. Classrooms are well equipped with instructional resources.

During instruction students are frequently called upon to give short factual answers and informed of the correctness of their response. Very little discussion typically occurs about why or how the concept works. Rarely are students asked to explain or justify their answer, especially if they are right. Even more rarely are students asked thought provoking questions which require multiple student-to-teacher and student-to-student exchanges. Assignments tend to be independent drill of the facts presented in the lesson. No cooperative learning was observed. Nor were any alternate assessments observed.
Student engagement in learning is typically passive. Students on the whole do not seem highly excited about what they are learning in their classes. The extent to which teachers monitor students to insure that students are on task varies from teacher to teacher, but on the whole is very low. Teachers are very aware of student disruptive behavior, but numerous instances were observed in which students were quietly not paying attention and never received any teacher attention.

At some point between 10:45 and 12:00 students will break for lunch. At lunch students sit with their classes and are supervised by their teacher. Students are allowed to socialize during this time. Bathroom breaks are supervised as much as possible, due to past incidences of misbehavior and vandalism in restrooms; this process cuts into instructional time somewhat.

Afternoon classes typically include Social Studies and Science lessons with the classroom teacher. Instructional methods in these subjects closely resemble those described for Math. Students leave the classroom daily for PE instruction by the coach and weekly for computer and library time with those respective teachers. Students qualifying for non-self contained Special Education services are pulled from the classroom at regularly scheduled times, or the special education teacher assists them in their regular classroom, depending on the student’s need.

In a normal day most students see the principal on the announcements and on the playground if they are in lower grades. Upper grade children encounter her less frequently, unless they are sent to the office for disciplinary reasons. When school is out at 3:20 it is estimated that students will have spent 40% of their day listening passively, 40% working on independent activities, and 20% on other tasks. Few opportunities are provided for students to interact in the course of learning activities.

During less structured or transitional times students tend to talk loudly and engage in a great deal of rowdy behavior. During these times it is common to hear teachers loudly scolding students both in the classroom and in common areas. It is common practice for teachers to yell at students in the walkways or common areas, but take no action as far as implementing consequences. Though most classes have a behavior management system in place, there is great variation from teacher to teacher in how skillfully it is used. Likewise, there is a schoolwide discipline plan which is enforced differently from teacher to teacher. Observations and teacher interviews revealed that student discipline is a widely recognized problem, so teachers are
making a concerted effort to motivate students to behave appropriately. To this end class parties or treats for those who have behaved are commonplace on Fridays or before holidays. Many students look forward to these incentives, and teachers feel that student compliance with the rules and expectations are higher when incentives are offered. Student fighting is dealt with swiftly and harshly and is consequently not a frequent problem. “A safe campus” is listed as a school strength on a School Assessment Model (SAM) report written by a district assessment team (DAT).

CASE A1 – DIMENSION I: THE PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION OF THE SCHOOL FACULTY

Teachers at Sunnyside spend little time in collaborative planning. Observations and teacher interviews indicate that occasionally, they catch each other on the run and ask rudimentary questions such as what chapter the other teacher’s class is on in Math, but teachers report that rarely do these exchanges involve in depth discussion of instructional methods. When asked why this is the case the initial response was that time and scheduling didn’t permit. But upon further prompting one teacher, Mrs. Bourque, stated that she didn’t think that teachers would meaningfully collaborate or work together in teams even if they had the time because “…it sounds good, but they just don’t do that around here.” Mrs. Bourque’s comments are particularly credible because interviews with her revealed that she possessed a great deal of professional knowledge, she had several years’ tenure at Sunnyside, she claimed to be doing many tasks around the school such as helping teachers she perceive in need of assistance, and her colleagues frequently named her as a person they talk to about instructional matters and someone they would select for the school improvement team.

On the Sociometric Survey teachers reported talking to four members of the faculty more frequently than others; these individuals were the principal, the TIS, a Special Education Teacher, and Mrs. Bourque. Data from this survey (see Table 5.2) seem to indicate a fair amount of interaction; however, follow up questions reveal that teacher to teacher exchanges tend to be brief and casual in nature and are only in-depth discussions when a specific problem is troubling a teacher. Casual observations of teacher interactions indicate that numerous brief exchanges occur in which teachers are polite and cordial, but distant with each other. The notable exceptions are exchanges between the TIS and new teachers she is working with.
Table 5.2 Sociometric Survey Question 1a – Teacher Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of times a teacher was named by colleagues as “someone spoken to about school matters this week”</th>
<th>Frequency count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 - 7</td>
<td>8 cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 -13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 -22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite these reported interactions, teachers frequently claimed to have no knowledge of what other teachers were doing nor an interest in finding out. Teachers were observed speaking cordially to each other in frequent but brief and superficial exchanges. No true collaborations were observed or described by teachers, in fact the topic of instructional content or methods seemed to be deliberately avoided in teacher to teacher exchanges. At Sunnyside, a code of silence passes for mutual respect; teachers maintain a “live and let live” attitude toward each other. Numerous statements were made by teachers to the effect that “that’s their business” or “I just concentrate on what goes on in my class”. To be involved in some other teacher’s business seems taboo among Sunnyside’s faculty. Asking for help equates to an admission of incompetence, and offering unsolicited advice, a sign of disrespect. Hence, qualitative data indicate that a norm of teacher autonomy persists among the teachers at Sunnyside, which is camouflaged by an attitude of tolerance and superficial politeness.

Ninety four percent (94%) of Sunnyside’s teachers meet the state’s definition of highly qualified (NCLB, 2000). Several have advanced degrees and a few are enrolled in graduate programs through nearby universities. However, the teachers interviewed did not report taking classes with another faculty member, or having heard of teachers participating in an outside professional development or activity together except district mandated workshops. Neither observations of faculty meetings or interviews revealed the presence of a strong program of ongoing staff development focused identified needs. Teachers said that faculty meetings are usually used to address district or school business, and frequently involve brief presentations of instructionally relevant matters. No indication was given that these meetings are or have ever been times of intense learning or skill development for teachers.
There is a school improvement plan in place, but the teachers interviewed could only state that they were aware that “…test scores are low and we gotta get ‘em up” and “We’re mainly working on Reading. Reading and Math.” The Teacher for instructional Support (TIS) seemed to be the most knowledgeable and spoke about her plan to assist new teachers and certain others with critical areas. However, she expressed frustration that she couldn’t “do it all alone”; follow-up interviews revealed that this individual was transferred to another school at the end of the school term, despite a long tenure at Sunnyside. Some teachers, particularly newer ones, were trying some newer methodologies and instructional interventions, but there is no indication of any structured or systematic reflection or review of the effectiveness of instructional practices or programs, other than that done by the district. Nor did any regular education teacher ever mention having had the opportunity to observe in another teacher’s room.

There does not seem to be a great deal of instructional support available to teachers at Sunnyside, apart from those services offered by the TIS, who reports having her hands full simply assisting new teachers, and teachers with high concentrations of special needs students. She feels like the need for assistance for teachers is far greater than one person could possibly provide. Though she described herself as very dedicated and hard working, she likened her position as TIS here to placing your finger in a broken damn to stop the water.

The school has strongly prevailing norms of autonomy; however, teachers individually appear to be trying to do the best they can on their own. Some feel that exposure to new ideas would not be a help to them because they have their hands full just doing what is expected of them already. Very few veteran teachers spoke of being involved in professional associations or classes where they acquire ideas or feedback about their work. New teachers seemed to be receiving more instructional support from sources external to the school than others. They spoke about professional groups or associations that they belong to or talking to coaches from university programs that they are involved in much more frequently than more veteran teachers did.

In short, the concept of a successful teacher at Sunnyside is one who tends to one’s own class and does not interject oneself into another teacher’s affairs. There is no push among faculty members to continue growing in knowledge and skills; this is a private affair. Those pursuing advanced knowledge seemed motivated primarily by the desire for salary or career enhancement. There is a strong sense that to be successful as a teacher at Sunnyside one must genuinely love
the students. This, in the eyes of many of Sunnyside’s veteran teachers is the true sign of a good teacher, as the only teachers spoken ill of are those who left for reasons interpreted by their cohorts as a lack of caring about “these kids.”

The faculty seems split in the amount of commitment they possess. Many veteran teachers expressed a passionate commitment to the students and community of Sunnyside; however there seems to be a perpetually high rate of faculty turnover, as is evidenced by the departure of the principal, the TIS, and nine of the teachers the year following this study. Many of those who left were looked to as leaders in the school like Mrs. Bourque who was among those not returning to Sunnyside the following year. Although reasons for the departure of these individuals are not known, it is known that most of them continued to teach in other schools within the district or in neighboring districts. This may be an indication that that these individuals found it difficult to be effective as a teacher in Sunnyside’s prevailing culture.

There is also indication that the Sunnyside faculty may be unwittingly influenced by assumptions of academic futility (i.e. the belief that there is little hope that students’ academic achievements will ultimately impact the quality of their lives) because there is much more discussion of the importance of “caring about” and “helping these kids” than there is a concern for pressing students to excel academically. Consequently, the Professional Orientation of the faculty is one that values acceptance over high levels of professionalism; there is little notion of a push for excellence in the performance of teachers.

CASE A1 – DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership from the Principal

In the 2003-2004 school year, Mrs. Jones, the principal of Sunnyside, was newly appointed to her first principalship after previously serving as assistant principal at the community middle school. This background evoked some degree of confidence in the teachers that the new principal both understood the community and could handle discipline – a major concern of Sunnyside’s teachers. Though teachers expressed optimism about the new principal’s potential, several were still distressed over the loss of the previous principal who had served for five years and was well respected by the faculty for the structure she had provided and the large grants she had helped to secure. Still other teachers had a “let’s wait and see” attitude about the new (and soon to be departed) principal, because “not just anyone makes it here”. Several veterans of the school were wary because they had seen a lot of people come and go and strongly
believe that “it takes a special kind of person…” [to stay at Sunnyside a long time and be
successful]. When interviews were conducted during the fall, most teachers expressed a positive
attitude toward the new principal, though some reservations were expressed.

Initial perceptions of the new principal were that she was a strong disciplinarian, but
somewhat lacking as an instructional leader. This is confirmed by teachers selecting the TIS over
the principal as the person they were mostly likely to talk to about instruction. During three
weeks of observations the principal was never seen far from the office complex, except for a
period in the afternoons when she went out for recess duty with the younger grade students. Most
days she spent virtually all day in the office, only coming out for the morning announcements,
broadcasted from the library, and afternoon recess. Lunch was usually taken at her desk as
opposed to her being visible in the cafeteria. Never was she seen entering or departing a
classroom; though she was observed calling teachers to her office to review professional growth
plans on a one-on- one basis. Later she would comment that health problems prevented her from
spending as much time in the upper grades as she would like, particularly the classes that are up
stairs.

The new principal was very proud of the morning announcements done on closed circuit
TV and broadcast to all students. She used this time to remind teachers and students of forms to
have returned, deadlines, school rules and to motivate students. Her delivery was very positive
and upbeat which seemed to go over well with students and teachers alike. No other plans for the
future were discussed by the principal except that she wanted this to be a caring place and a safe
haven for students. Her passion was for every student at Sunnyside to know that they were loved
by their teacher.

She also felt strongly that it was her responsibility to insure that misbehavior was not
tolerated at Sunnyside. Her approach to discipline was more aggressive than her predecessors,
which resulted in angry parents stopping in to the office from time to time demanding to know
why their child had received certain consequences. The principal was observed on two of these
occasions, and she immediately stopped what she was doing and quickly defused a potentially
volatile situation by pulling the parent into her office and conferencing behind closed doors.
When questioned about these events later, the principal prided herself on explaining the situation
to the parent and not backing down from consequences for the student. This earned her no small
degree of respect in the eyes of the teachers.
The teachers expressing guarded skepticism over the leadership ability of the new principal had their suspicions confirmed; the new principal did not make it through the school term. She left in March citing health reasons and did not return. Her contract was not renewed by the school board and the replacement that finished out the year was announced as the new principal the following year.

Teacher Leadership

Observations, surveys, and interviews all indicate that teachers at Sunnyside concern themselves primarily with affairs inside their classroom. One teacher pointed out in a private interview that “there are three or four of us who do everything around here”. She was referring to serving on schoolwide committees, helping new or other teachers, and writing grants. She named the other teachers who, when asked in private, all seemed to feel like they “do more than their fair share” and are “carrying a lot of dead weight” in terms of pushing to find strategies to increase student achievement. These same teachers were the ones most frequently named by teachers on the Sociometric Survey as the ones spoken to most frequently about instruction and were the top picks for a school improvement team. Like the others these teachers felt that working at Sunnyside was a calling and that caring about the students was the number one characteristic that determined teacher success at Sunnyside. However, these teachers differed from the faculty norms in two primary ways: first they did not adhere to the strict norms of autonomy that the other teachers observed, and secondly they spoke more about matters related to setting high standards for students than other teachers did, with a few exceptions. It seemed that most of the instructional leadership and academic push at the school emanated from this small group, which had formerly been very loyal to the previous principal. One member of the four commented that the loss of the old principal was a tremendous blow that she wasn’t sure how they would recover from. Hence, leadership among teachers at Sunnyside is not widely distributed, but rather is the shared responsibility of a small select group. This group expressed feelings of distress over the lack of leadership and initiative taken by other teachers at the school; two members of the group did not return to Sunnyside the following year.

Little indication of other teacher leadership, student leadership or parent leadership was found. However, many local churches, universities, civic groups and a private school had become quite involved in providing school supplies, uniforms, shoes, and coats for students. There were also a very high number of volunteer hours logged by members of these
organizations. No evidence exists that there is any sort of training for these individuals or any organized plan for how these human resources could best be utilized by the school. Hence, it can be concluded that Sunnyside suffers from a very weak organizational structure with instability in the principalship, weak instructional leadership, minimal teacher leadership, virtually no parental involvement, no student leadership, and a loosely structured program of community support.

CASE A1 – DIMENSION III: THE QUALITY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Student achievement at Sunnyside is lower than district, state and national averages across all grade levels and subject areas. The faculty and administration are well aware of this. There is a school improvement plan in place, but there was no indication that it actually impacts the quality of instruction in the classroom in any real way. There is a school wide emphasis on Reading, which is taught first thing in the morning daily by most, if not all, teachers. Students are much more likely to be taught in small groups, and required to demonstrate mastery before moving on, in Reading than in other subject areas. The parent handbook also contains a list of suggested ways that parents can help their children become better readers.

Teachers at Sunnyside reported that planning for instruction and assessment was primarily an individual task, though they “…do get together on some things”. The primary exceptions are computer instruction in which the teacher over the computer lab utilizes the Compass Learning Software, which is designed to reinforce basic skills taught in the classroom. Teachers typically tell the computer teacher weekly what they are studying that they would like reinforced. A similar type of coordination on content occurs with the librarian who teaches library and research skills that will compliment classroom learning. Teachers are most likely to have assistance in the classroom during lessons in the morning when there are lots of methods students and community volunteers on campus. These individuals seem to hang out more than actually providing a lot of assistance. One undergraduate student from a neighboring university said that she wasn’t sure exactly what she was supposed to do, she had been told by the university to do what the teacher said, but complained that the teachers’ directions were ambiguous. The same was true of other outside volunteers, none reported ever receiving any detailed information about what they to do nor any training about how to do it or what actions were impermissible.

Observations in classrooms found that low levels of student enthusiasm for learning were present throughout the school and certain classes were characterized by high levels of student
disinterest and apathy, even when revisited several times. Some classes had high levels of
distractions and low levels of on task behavior, but this varied greatly from teacher to teacher.
The school improvement plan explicitly states that teachers were to “design lessons to connect
emotions to learning”, but little evidence was found that this is actually being done.

Very few innovative instructional methods were observed. Very few hands-on or
inquiry/discovery type lessons were observed. No cooperative group instruction was observed;
although, it is specifically stated in the school improvement plan that the faculty would study
cooperative groups and use them daily. Teachers overwhelmingly did most of the talking during
instruction and followed up oral lessons by assigning students independent work from a textbook
or worksheet. Teachers did frequently ask students questions during instruction, but these tended
to be at the fact-recall level and were almost always followed by the teacher telling the student
whether the answer was right or wrong without asking that student or any other to justify or
evaluate the response. Again the school improvement plan explicitly states that teachers should
“encourage social interaction” and utilize “interactive teaching strategies in all areas”.

Lively discussions with thoughtful input by multiple students were very rare. On the
whole, students were seldom challenged to think beyond, apply knowledge, analyze, justify or
evaluate in any classroom observed. Students were given little opportunity to contemplate or
generate premises, propositions, or original ideas. Teachers tended to structure inquiry for the
students by constantly telling students “how to” rather than allowing exploration and rewarding
student resourcefulness. Higher order thinking is not a priority at Sunnyside. Conversely,
teachers spend a great deal of time stressing the importance of conformity to students.

Little differentiation in the delivery of instruction or assessment in the classroom was
observed. Teachers did not mention meeting individual student needs except in their discussions
of behavior management. Neither observations nor interviews indicated an awareness of student
learning styles or attempts to accommodate student interests into instruction. Teachers did,
however, make use of numerous instructional resources such as math manipulatives, computer
games, electronic Leap Frog games, or books both during instruction and to reinforce skills.

Assessments at Sunnyside tend to consist primarily of traditional pencil and paper tests
which accompany the textbook series. Few teacher made tests were seen in use. No alternative
assessment methods were observed or mentioned by teachers interviewed. Teachers reported that
rarely if ever are assessment results used to re-teach for mastery. They cited time constraints as
the primary obstacle to this, fearing that if they took the time to re-teach and re-test students after tests, they would not have time to sufficiently cover the mandated skills required for the grade and subject. Some teachers also felt that behavior problems would increase if they spent additional time working with individuals or small groups, instead of with the whole class. The notable exception to this is Reading where younger students are routinely tested with DRA tests and must demonstrate mastery to move on. Likewise upper grade students take “STAR” tests on the computer that assess the student’s reading level. It is unclear how these data are used.

There is variation in the quality of the learning experiences available to students, depending on the teacher. However, no instances were observed or described by teachers or the principal in which students were engaged in extremely high quality learning experiences. Numerous formal and informal observations led to the generalization that students’ learning experiences at this school are not consistent with highly effective learning environments.

CASE A1 – DIMENSION IV. A STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

Students at Sunnyside are loved; this is evident. It comes across in teachers’ conversations, comments, and actions. The caring faculty was prominently mentioned as the best thing about the school by both students and parents. It is this love for the students that motivates Sunnyside’s veteran teachers and the principal. There was consensus among the “lifers” that it is this trait – a strong love for the students of the community – that makes or breaks a teacher at Sunnyside. Veteran teachers at the school seemed to maintain a degree of social distance from new teachers until they had ascertained whether the novice was going to become one of them – a teacher who accepted their value system which prizes strong commitment to these high poverty minority children above all else, including student achievement, ease of teaching assignment and teacher career advancement. Said one veteran teacher, “It takes a special kind of person to work here…one that isn’t scared off easily. Teachers here have to be willing to make [personal] sacrifices [for the children]. No, some just don’t have what it takes.”

The school counselor speaks proudly about the generosity of the community in providing school supplies for all the children in the school, and helping families to secure school uniforms, shoes, and coats. Tears come to her eyes when she relates stories of students involved in domestic violence, neglect, crime, or drug abuse. She is pleased that from time to time parents feel comfortable enough to stop in for help filling out forms or to use a computer that is not in use. When asked if the school offers supports to families such as parent education workshops or
literacy training, she responded that some of this had been tried in years past, but there was low
parent participation. She felt like the cause was lack of interest, transportation, or babysitters, but
little had been done to overcome obstacles and find a way to offer services to families. Instead,
the school had simply resigned itself that it just wouldn’t work here.

The school website lists several programs offered to students, which could support their
chances for success. These include extended year, speech therapy, adaptive PE, and special
education services offered to qualifying students. I CARE and D.A.R.E. drug prevention
programs are in place and delivered to all students in selected grades. The school also advertises
that it supports the Big Buddy program, a Math/Science Family Night, a School Fix-up Day, and
Academic Awards Programs. However, the academic awards program was never mentioned by
teachers, students or parents in any focus group discussion, informal discussion, or open-ended
survey questions and there was little evidence that much was accomplished at the last School
Fix-up Day.

In general, there seemed to be a great deal more emphasis placed on “loving the kids”
than on pushing the students to achieve academically. Academics were almost downplayed in
teachers’ discussions about students. In their talk to each other and to the researcher, teachers
spoke more frequently and more emphatically about student discipline than they did about
student learning. Orderliness seemed to be prized more highly than achievement by the teachers.

When asked how assessment drives instruction, teachers in the focus group said that they
use test scores to determine skill deficits within each subject on which to focus the following
year. However, no one spoke of bringing the data down to the student level and tracking the
performance of individual students over time. When asked specifically about this, teachers spoke
of the standard SBLC process used to screen students for special education. There was no
indication that a similar process for identifying and addressing student needs (based on
individual level performance data) was being utilized in any systematic way for other students in
the school. Nor was there any indication that data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of any of
the school’s programs, even though the school improvement plan identifies this as a goal.

The focus of the instructional program at Sunnyside seems to be on meeting the major
needs of the generalized school population, rather than focusing on the specific needs of the
individual students. Although parents seem pleased with the school, parental involvement at the
school seems to be low based on teacher, student and principal perceptions. This conclusion is
also supported by observations and is documented as a school weakness on the school improvement plan.

CASE A1 – ARTIFACTS AND SYMBOLS

Observations of the school campus common areas revealed that no obvious symbolism is present and visible on the exterior of the office building. The casual observer or passerby would notice nothing particularly outstanding except perhaps the rundown state of the facility or the eight foot chain link foot surrounding the school property. There are no noticeable efforts to beautify the campus with flowerbeds or landscaping; nor are there obvious visual symbols of school spirit such as signs, banners or mascots. The school does have a mascot, but its identity was not evident to the casual observer, unless one happened to log onto the school website.

The insides of classrooms are typically bright, with the walls of many classes plastered with bulletin boards, posters, or displays that are usually instructional, disciplinary, or motivational in nature. Proportionally fewer displays celebrating student achievements are observed. Classrooms are well-equipped to the point of being somewhat cluttered. Most classrooms have a cheerful and homey feel about them. The furniture in classrooms tends to be older and in need of updating, but each room seems to have an ample supply of high tech resources such as TVs, computers and electronic games. Classrooms at Sunnyside are comfortable and functional.

Very little student artwork is displayed in the school, especially in grades three through five and even fewer pictures of students are displayed. Some displays are found which feature student papers. The only celebration of accomplishments or awards up in the school during the times observed was a commercially made poster set celebrating the accomplishments of famous African Americans.

CASE A1 – ESPoused BELIEFS

The mission statement of Sunnyside Elementary states:

Sunnyside School will provide learning experiences to foster a thirst for knowledge, facilitate the development of high student academic achievement and self-esteem, and the desire to become productive citizens.

This statement was developed by six individuals, only one of whom is a classroom teacher. Teachers and the principal consistently affirmed that these are the core values of Sunnyside. However, observations of faculty practices and interviews with faculty, students and the principal lend support to the conclusion that only portions of this statement reflect shared
values of the school. For example the first component of the school’s mission is to “provide learning experiences that foster a thirst for knowledge”. Classroom observations reveal that students display anything but a ‘thirst for knowledge’ or an eagerness to learn. Likewise, instructional methods employed seemed to bore students and evoke apathy. Little innovation or creativity seemed to be incorporated into lessons. Neither actions listed in the school improvement plan, nor descriptions of staff development by the principal or the teachers indicated that strategies were being developed or implemented that would support the use of different approaches to instruction that would provide students with experiences more likely to foster a thirst for knowledge.

The second component lists that the school’s mission is to facilitate high academic achievement. Documented achievement data show that high achievement is not occurring at Sunnyside. Observations and interviews suggest that the school’s efforts to facilitate individual student achievement are marginal at best (refer to descriptions of findings in dimensions I, II, III, and IV of this case study). In fact, observations suggest that the core value system of the faculty actually de-emphasizes academic achievement. Recall that the school does not make a major effort to celebrate student success, and informal statements made by several teachers allude to the presence of feelings of academic futility and a reluctance to push students to achieve because of the difficulty of their home lives.

There is evidence that the espoused value of facilitating self-esteem in students, is one that genuinely expresses the beliefs of the faculty. This comes out in the encouraging way teachers interact with students one-on one and is spoken of by teachers very prominently. There is also evidence to support the notion that most teachers share the value that the school should facilitate the desire for students to become good citizens. Citizenship issues can be heard frequently in teacher to student communications. The schoolwide emphasis on safety, conformity, and student discipline can also be seen as a way of facilitating productive citizenship. Despite this, teachers were still frequently observed yelling at students in public places such as walkways. Humiliation is a common disciplinary technique employed by Sunnyside’s teachers. Hence, this written vision of the school captures some of the shared core values of the school, but seems to project an image that is in some respects inconsistent with the daily activities of teachers and students.
CASE A1 – BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

All observational and interview data were reviewed to ascertain what basic assumptions seem to be perpetuating the behavioral norms observed or detected at Sunnyside. These assumptions are not written anywhere and may agree with or contradict espoused beliefs. Each assumption listed is supported by three or more data bits. These assumptions are the silent code of rules that inform participants of what is really important at Sunnyside and what are the best ways of doing things around here. They are listed in no particular order:

- Teaching here is a calling, not just a job.
- The most important characteristic for a Sunnyside teacher is a love of the students.
- Treating students politely or with respect isn’t always an option.
- Being strict with the enforcement of student consequences for misbehavior is important.
- The school is important to the students, their families, and the community.
- Each teacher is only accountable for what goes on in their own room.
- It is more important to be sure all students meet minimum standards than to be sure that each student is challenged at his own level.
- Teachers should make the best of the situation they are in, but pushing for excellence from teachers or students may be unrealistic given the circumstances.
- Parents of students can be of little or no assistance to the school.
- Structure should be emphasized over creativity when working with students.
- Academics will not be the key to a better life for most of these students, so it is more important to stress skills that they will need to function as citizens such as adherence to rules and basic skills.

CASE A1 – AN OVERVIEW OF THE CULTURE OF THE SCHOOL

“Culture fosters school effectiveness and productivity” (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Purkey and Smith, 1983; Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Newmann & Associates, 1996). All available data were analyzed and ranked in terms of the effectiveness of the school’s practices (Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993) along the four dimensions of school culture. Sunnyside’s school culture is one that Deal & Peterson (1999) might refer to as “toxic.” The basic assumptions and the
accompanying practices at this school perpetuate a value system and set of behavioral norms that are counter productive to producing high levels of student achievement.

The most pronounced area of ineffectiveness is in the Professional Orientation of the Faculty (Dimension I). Many veteran teachers seem to be either unknowledgeable about how to function in a professional manner, or uninterested in changing established patterns of behavior. New teachers seem more plugged in to more effective ways to practice the art and science of teaching, but they have little influence because they are frequently viewed as outsiders by the veteran teachers of the school, and as many noted they don’t typically stay around very long. Strong norms of autonomy interfere with meaningful teacher collaboration. The lack of long term and substantive professional development based on identified needs in the school’s students and the instructional staff allows the perpetuation of ineffective teacher behavior.

There is also a pronounced need for changes in the Organizational Structure of the School (Dimension II). The highest priority is the need of a strong transformational leader in the principalship. An individual with experience in inner city schools with high poverty minority populations would be most likely to be perceived as legitimate to the teachers at Sunnyside. It is essential that this individual be a visionary and a strong motivator, since there is considerable resistance to change at the school. There is also a need for stability in leadership in both the principal’s position and the informal leadership offered by teachers. There is a need for more distributed leadership among a broader base of teachers. Student and parent leadership roles are also lacking at Sunnyside.

The Quality of the Learning Experiences (Dimension III) in which students are involved is consistently low. The ineffective practices in Dimensions I and II leave the school infrastructure weak, with very little foundation on which to build more effective instructional practices. Hence, there is little teacher exposure to newer, or more effective instructional strategies. The result is a delivery of curricula that fails to capture the heart and minds of the students and has minimal impact on actual student learning.

The strength of this school is the Student-centered Focus (Dimension IV) that exists. At Sunnyside it truly is “all about the students.” The most effective aspect of this school’s culture its genuine love for students and its insistence that teachers that hang around long be ones that care about these kids. This shared value is a good starting place for motivating teachers to adopt more effective practices in the future. While Dimension IV is the primary strength of the school
culture, it must be noted that even in this dimension the school norms are not highly effective. This is in part due to the concept of caring here; the faculty’s notion is more maternal or paternal in nature and less focused on results in terms of academic achievement by students. Hence, despite a genuine affection for students, the supports offered to insure student success are marginal at best.

III. CASE STUDY SCHOOL A2 – LA FLEUR ELEMENTARY
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

La Fleur is a small school of 323 students with a faculty of 25 teachers and one principal. The school is in a high poverty area; 95% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunches. The school building dates to 1955, but the interior has been renovated in recent years. The exterior brick resembles its original appearance; there are few “frills” or attempts to beautify the building’s exterior.

The building’s main entrance opens up into a wide foyer with the school office visible on the opposite wall. The inside of the school has a newer, well-kept feel about it. Most of the classrooms are adjoined to the office building, except two newer additions which are still in close proximity to the school office. The new buildings house the library, a computer lab, and several classrooms.

The campus is neatly tucked away in the back of a quiet lower middle class neighborhood. The surrounding housing is well-maintained and peaceful, but the school is just blocks from the business district of a mid sized city. The attendance zone includes both single family housing and several federally subsidized apartment complexes in a high crime area. The faculty at La Fleur has been stable for a period of years with low teacher turnover, but the student body is transient with frequent transfers into and out of the school. Many of the student’s reside in single parent households or are being raised by extended family members.

CASE A2 – THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE FOR THE TYPICAL STUDENT

Most students that attend La Fleur live within a few miles of the school and catch a bus at school at roughly 7:30. Students arrive at school between 8:00 AM and 8:20 and report directly to breakfast. Talking is allowed during this time, but duty teachers are around and do not tolerate loud or rowdy behavior in the cafeteria or the halls. When students are finished they report to their class. School starts promptly at 8:30. Several students were observed reporting late to class, which had started without them and didn’t slow down much at their entrance. The principal later
explained that a certain bus wasn’t arriving early enough, so she had requested that the bus driver adjust the route to allow students enough time to eat breakfast before class.

Most students at La Fleur remain with their homeroom teacher for all academic subjects except computer and library. The first subject of the day in most classes is Reading. Most teachers at La Fleur employ a wide range of instructional methods and materials in Reading as well as in other subject areas. Learning activities are for the most part interesting and most of the students participate in the assigned activities.

Few classroom discipline or management problems were observed. Students frequently talked out of turn or were corrected for inappropriate playing, but these incidents were handled with little wasted time. No fighting was observed, but this is a concern of students particularly on the busses, at recess, or in the cafeteria, several students spoke of bullies. Others spoke of being afraid of or not liking the principal, feeling like she was out to get kids.

Interviews with the principal and teachers revealed that the principal deals with problems like fighting “swiftly and decisively”; fighting simply is not tolerated. This has earned the principal a reputation of being “hard and uncaring” among the students and parents, who are wary of her. Students also complain that the principal doesn’t let them “have any fun”. When questioned what this meant students responded that she had taken away their free dress days and didn’t allow parties or field days. They spoke enviously of past principals and schools where “the kids get to do more fun stuff”.

Teachers at La Fleur are for the most part very focused on the learning activities taking place in their rooms, and have a no-nonsense and no-excuses approach toward completion of assignments, homework, and staying on task. They do not typically devote class time to lengthy disciplinary sessions, listening to excuses or explanations. The norm is to simply check who has done the work, document, and move on. This leaves some students frustrated because they want to tell their side of things and the teacher isn’t interested.

Students are typically compliant with teachers and work contentedly on assignments, but look forward to recess. The playground sports newer swings and equipment. School is out at about 3:30 each day. When students board busses to go home, they typically have homework in two or three subjects. At dismissal duty teachers insure that this part of the day proceeds in an orderly fashion. Though discipline at the school is strict, never at anytime was a teacher observed
screaming at a child or being physical with them. However, it was not uncommon for teachers to appear aggravated or exasperated with students who were not doing what they were supposed to.

CASE A2 – DIMENSION I: THE PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION OF THE FACULTY

Teachers at La Fleur Elementary consistently appear very busy and preoccupied with activities relevant to their teaching assignment. There is very much a sense of urgency among the teachers who are obviously trying to make good use of available time. Observations of teachers during informal times such as in the library, the lounge, the cafeteria, and the halls revealed that little time is spent chit-chatting between teachers. Teachers can be frequently observed arriving early for school carrying in arm loads of materials to prepare for the day’s activities. Teachers are often enthusiastic and eager to discuss the projects they are working on with students. Similarly, most teachers do not leave campus quickly at the end of the day, but frequently linger behind for some time working in their rooms.

Many teachers at La Fleur are involved in professional communities beyond the school. These associations are encouraged by the principal, who is currently planning to implement a program in which all faculty members at La Fleur exchange ideas with teachers at another school in a structured way. Roughly 32% of the La Fleur’s faculty hold advanced degrees, and 95% of the school’s teachers meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified” (NCLB, 2000). One faculty member at La Fleur has received National Board Certification, and another is considering undergoing the rigorous process.

Teachers at La Fleur exhibit a desire to continually acquire new professional knowledge and skills. They frequently and voluntarily participate in workshops sponsored by the district, the school and outside sources. The school improvement plan repeatedly mentions plans to increase teacher knowledge or skills through enhanced professional development, as a means of achieving school goals. A significant portion of Title I funding for next year has been allocated to hiring a consultant from a local university to train teachers in effective instructional methods and to assist the principal in providing performance based feedback to teachers to support planned change.

School goals are focused on student achievement and are based upon multiple data sources to determine student needs. Student needs are assessed at the school level, the grade level, the teacher level, and the level of the individual student. Site based strategies for evaluating the effectiveness of programs are well defined and routinely used to inform decisions. Planned staff development is focused on data supported assessments of student need, is focused
on identified goals, is interactive, involved in class support for teachers, and is on-going for a minimum of a year.

The school has been the recipient of numerous competitive grants last year and this year. Some are for large school wide programs and involved lots of teachers in the writing; others are smaller and procured through the efforts of individual teachers or small collaborative groups.

There is no evidence that the teachers are engaged in any formal or structured self-reflection for the purpose of improving the quality of services they offer students; however, informal comments made by teachers indicate that at least some teachers make deliberate choices about instructional methods and materials based upon information about needs of specific students and awareness of what is “working” and what is not.

Teachers at La Fleur exhibit a high degree of collegiality. Each teacher has a partner with whom they share a collaborative planning time. These collaborations seem to be productive; many teachers were able to describe meaningful insights that were gained and successful projects or products that emanated from these small groups. Peer collaboration is perceived by teachers and the principal as having a positive impact on student learning. Observations indicate that it may also have a positive impact upon teacher motivation.

CASE A2 – DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership from the Principal

This year marks the principal’s second year at La Fleur. She is perceived by the faculty as capable and committed. When asked about various faculty members, she has a good working knowledge of each teacher’s training, experience, desires, teaching styles, and strengths and weaknesses. She relies on this knowledge to pair teachers into collaborative planning teams, place students with demonstrated needs, and to plan staff development. Sociometric Survey responses indicate that teachers look to the principal as the primary instructional leader of the school.

The principal provides direction and unity to the efforts of the teachers, bringing a sense of shared mission and teamwork to the school. She actively instigates professional development opportunities that she feels will enhance the performance of teachers. The principal frequently meets with teachers and provides feedback regarding instruction and discipline. She meets with teachers to discuss the performance of every single student. She also helps teachers procure the things that they would like to have to enhance instruction. She has an open door policy with
teachers, who report that she encourages them to bring in new ideas, and she actually listens and acts upon suggestions for improvements. They report that she constantly pushes them to be the best they can be.

However, parent surveys and focus group interviews with students reveal that their perceptions of principal leadership are not as positive. Criticisms include the perception that the principal is too strict on the students, she doesn’t listen to students, and she does not allow informal occasions for students to socialize. Many parents also complained that parental involvement was low because the school doesn’t plan events at times they can attend, provide ways they can help around campus, or provide child care or transportation for meetings.

Teacher Leadership

Faculty turnover at La Fleur is low; all but three of the 25 member faculty returned to the school the year following this study, and the principal said that she had recommended one of these teachers for a promotion based on the outstanding performance of the teacher. Discussions with teachers reveal that they work closely together in small groups or pairs to accomplish shared goals; this frequently means identifying and writing grants to obtain additional funding. These relationships are important to teachers at La Fleur. Although teachers report strong leadership on the part of the principal, they are especially enthusiastic that they are allowed and even encouraged to do their own thing – and they do. Learning environments vary a great deal from room to room.

This is a school where teachers take initiative. The faculty is well informed and most teachers have definite ideas about what they want to accomplish and how to accomplish it. Several teachers mentioned that they consciously tried to incorporate “best practices” in their classroom. When asked, most teachers could easily explain why they were using the methods that they were to instruct. Teachers are not shy about consulting each other or the principal. One teacher spoke of the importance of having a large repertoire of skills at her disposal to meet the different needs and learning styles of her students. Several teachers echoed the principal’s words about utilizing a problem solving approach to identify the causes of problems with students.

Leadership by Others

Parent responses on open-ended survey questions indicated that many feel that they have inadequate opportunities to influence practices at the school. There was no indication of students involved in any significant leadership positions.
CASE A2 – DIMENSION III: QUALITY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Several of the learning experiences in which students were engaged in during observations were of a high quality. The majority were in the average to above average range. One class observed involved students in inferior quality learning experiences. The quality of the learning experiences varied more from teacher to teacher to teacher, than from subject to subject within the same room. Specifically, observations in classrooms yielded the following information:

- 66.6% of classes observed involved students in a moderate to high amount of higher order thinking; 34.4% involved students in little or no higher order thinking.
- In 50% of classes observed students were involved in deep exploration of knowledge. In 66% of classes many students were engaged in moderately to highly substantive conversation, but none were observed that involved every student in substantive conversation, and in 33% of classes observed very little substantive conversation occurred.
- In 50% of classes topics or assessments were highly relevant and connected to the real world beyond the school.
- In 83.3% of classes observed the level of student interest, enthusiasm and engagement in learning activities was high or moderately high; in 16% it was moderately low.
- In 50% of classes observed distractions were kept to a minimal level; in 33.4% distractions in the environment were moderate; and in 16.7% distractions were problematic and interfered significantly with student learning.
- In 83.3% of classes students were asked to organize, interpret, apply, synthesize, explain or evaluate information. In 16.7% of observations students were not asked to perform these operations or the teacher did it for them.
- In 83.3% of classes students could successfully complete assignments with marginal to little understanding of the larger relevant disciplinary concepts or theories.
- In 66.7% of classes students were involved in some form of inquiry, though not necessarily those central to the field of study.
• In 16.7% of classes the final product of learning experiences was presented only to the teacher; in 67.7% of observed classes students presented their work to an audience within the class; and 16.7% presented the products of their learning to an audience beyond the class, but within the school. No classes were observed involved in a project to be presented to an audience beyond the school.

On the whole, the quality of the learning experiences students were engaged in was fairly high. Teachers observed utilized a wide range of instructional methods and materials. Most of the students were compliant and on task the majority of time. Very little instructional time was wasted, though some over emphasis on repeated drill and practice of basic skills was noted.

CASE A2 – DIMENSION IV: A STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

The principal at La Fleur makes an overt effort to make sure that all students are achieving to their potential by meeting with teachers at regularly scheduled intervals and discussing the progress of each individual student. This process is important since every student at the school is potentially at risk for academic failure simply due to economic circumstances. The school philosophy in dealing with students that have problems, according to the principal, is to identify the root cause of the problem and take steps to neutralize its effects on the student’s school work. The principal and several teachers acknowledged that decisions are made on a case by case basis and that there are no simple formulas that work for everyone. The school’s approach in dealing with students is that the student will be successful; it is the responsibility of the faculty to be flexible and resourceful enough to make sure it happens.

La Fleur Elementary is very focused on academics. In interviews with the principal and teachers little mention was made of concern for the whole student or attempting to mediate the effects of the rough home life many of the students inevitably face. The “no excuses – just do it” approach leaves little room for compassion. Parents and students repeatedly echoed the phrase “they don’t care” or “they don’t listen” in reference to the teachers and the administration. Many feel the school is out of touch with what life is like for them, and this creates a feeling of distance and estrangement between parents and school personnel.

No parent volunteers were seen at the school, though there is a sign on the front lawn that advertises the “Golden Apple Award” for volunteer service. However, the school website clarifies that the award actually went to one particular community member who helps out at the school; she received it for a lifetime of service to area public schools.
Teachers commented on low parent participation at sponsored school events such as open house, Family Math or Literacy Nights, and parent conference days. The inference was made several times that parents just don’t care enough to come out. Teachers were more or less resigned to the fact that low parental involvement was just a fact of life at this school. Parents on the other hand expressed considerable frustration that the school didn’t offer more assistance so that they could be involved. The reasons parents cited for lack of involvement were conflicts with work, no transportation, and no child care for children.

The school’s expressive communication (i.e. telling) seems highly effective, according to parents, who report feeling informed about what is happening at school. However, parental and student perceptions are that the school is unwilling to listen to them or to structure things so that they have any meaningful input into the way their school is run. There is a need for more flexible and innovative ways to increase parental involvement at La Fleur Elementary.

CASE A2 – ARTIFACTS

The outside of the school building is not especially notable in any way; it’s not run down, nor does it appear especially attractive or inviting. A small sign outside denotes that this school received the Golden Apple Award for volunteer service. This is interesting since all other indications are that volunteerism at the school is low.

The inside of the school is neat, clean, orderly and in good repair. Several motivational bulletin boards and posters line the front hall by the office. No images of students or displays of their work are visible in common areas, but the school mascot is displayed prominently. The office is decorated in a warm homey manner. The secretary greets any adults who enter the office area promptly and is conscientious in trying to handle issues with as little delay as possible. People in the office and adjoining work room all appear busy and absorbed in what they are doing.

CASE A2 – ESPOUSED BELIEFS

The school improvement plan uses the phrase “Teachers will become more knowledgeable” three different times, indicating a belief in teacher knowledge as a means of increasing student achievement. Several statements made by teachers and the principal also reflect this belief. Repeated references were made in the school improvement plan involving teacher use of “research based methods” or “best practices”. Observations, student interviews and parent questionnaires indicate that the school faculty has a shared belief in firm discipline.
Teachers’ comments indicate a belief that a teamwork approach to teaching and learning is their best hope for success.

The opening statement in the school’s mission statement states that the school’s goal is to “develop the whole child into a contributing citizen capable of achieving his or her whole potential”. However, an analysis of the way the faculty perform their jobs indicates that more emphasis is placed on academic achievement of the student than on the development of the whole child. The next phrase states that it is the responsibility of the faculty to provide appropriate instruction, maintain rights and respect for individuals, and provide a safe and positive environment. The school’s mission statement further states that “They hope to help every child develop academically, psychologically, and physically through relating the basics of daily life, and stimulating thought processes”. On the school’s website, they place the phrase “We take our learning seriously” just under the mission statement.

CASE A2 – BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Observations of practices at La Fleur show a high degree of alignment between what they say (i.e. espoused beliefs) and what they do. This indicates that few shared basic assumptions held by the faculty violate what they put into print and say about themselves. Below is a list of assumptions that are collectively held by the faculty at La Fleur which guide the manner in which they perform their work. The assumptions are in no particular order.

- Time is a precious commodity and should not be wasted.
- All students here can achieve IF teachers instruct them properly.
- Professional growth is important to performing well in the classroom.
- Each student’s educational needs are different.
- It is up to the teacher to know what each student’s needs are and to make adjustments to the instructional program to help students.
- Parents in this community don’t care enough to be involved.
- The responsibility of the school is simply to schedule opportunities for parental involvement; it is up to the parents to find a way to actually take advantage of the opportunities presented.
- Hardships faced by students and parents are beyond the control of the school and, therefore, are not the concern of the school.
- There are no excuses for failure to meet responsibilities.
• Teachers can perform better when they work together.
• Academic achievement and responsible behavior will make a difference in the lives of the students.
• Consequences are necessary to change student behavior.

CASE A2 – OVERVIEW OF THE CULTURE OF THE SCHOOL

La Fleur is a good school. This is confirmed by multiple data sources collected at the school site and growth in student achievement. The data reduction charts (see Appendix E2 school A2) summarize the components of the school’s culture in terms of the effectiveness of the practices in each dimension. The most effective aspect of the school’s culture is the professional orientation of the faculty. The organizational structure of the school is fairly strong due to good instructional leadership from the principal and the large extent of informed distributive leadership exhibited by teachers. However, the organizational structure is weakened by the absence of students or parents in leadership roles.

The quality of learning experiences students are exposed to is generally high, though, there is variation from teacher to teacher. Modification in student schedules and assignments could be made to insure no student spends all day in an inferior learning environment. The most ineffective dimension of the school culture is maintaining a student-centered focus. The school does a good job of breaking achievement data down to the level of the individual learner and monitoring student progress at regular intervals. However, few programs or support services are offered to help counter the negative effects of students living in high poverty. No unique, innovative or extraordinary measures have been made to elicit greater parental involvement. Instead, the faculty has resigned itself to the idea that low parental involvement “… is just the way it is around here”.

IV. CASE STUDY SCHOOL B1: HUNTINGTON ELEMENTARY

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Huntington Elementary is an attractive school situated in a quiet suburban neighborhood of a mid-sized city. As one leaves Huntington’s well kept grounds, and enters the one story brick building, the appearance of the front foyer and hall match the exterior in its neatness, cleanliness, and well maintained simplicity. The school office is visible from the entrance and is centrally located to most of the campus. A mood of calmness and orderliness pervades the school and is observed by passing teachers and students alike. Students in the halls are somewhat playful, but
demonstrate an awareness that they must keep the volume down in the halls, including a roving group of costume clad gifted preschoolers engrossed in imaginative learning activities with their teacher.

Most of the school’s classrooms are under the roof of a single building whose floor plan resembles a capital H. Approximately four rooms are housed in a second building which sit in close proximity to the main building. People around the school are for the most part engrossed in their own activities, and visitors to the school are not always noticed or attended to quickly.

The school boasts a diverse student population with a 360 total students in grades preschool through grade five; of this group 66% are African American, 27% white, 4% Hispanic, and 3% Asian/Pacific Islander. Fifty nine percent (59%) of the student body qualify for free and reduced lunches, 13% have identified disabilities, 4% are gifted, and 1.3% have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Most of the school’s population lives within the designated attendance zone, which has an odd configuration on the map due to district efforts to comply with federal desegregation orders.

Huntington hosts several special district wide programs for special needs students such as three separate Special Education/Autistic programs and a preschool for gifted students; these students may or may not reside in the attendance zone. Housing in the district varies greatly from middle class single family homes to federally subsidized apartment complexes and everything in between. Since this school has less than the district average of African American students, African American students from other attendance zones may request a transfer here, provided that the school enrollment is below capacity. The principal estimated that the school services roughly 10 such families of children. Unlike other students who carpool, or have relatively short bus commutes to school, the transfer bus students often must spend an hour or so one way getting to and from school. Some of the students on this bus reside temporarily in a community battered women’s home.

Mrs. Grace Skyler is the principal of Huntington Elementary. She has great compassion for and commitment to the underprivileged students served by the school. Mrs. Skyler is beginning her second term as principal, after a very turbulent first year at Huntington. Huntington’s scores on the state school accountability program show a downward trend in student achievement. This is a matter of great concern to the school faculty, Mrs. Skyler and the local school board. Mrs. Skyler was appointed following a very successful stint as the TIS for an
inner city school within the district. It was hoped that she would possess the knowledge and leadership to turn this trend around. Mrs. Skyler approached the job with much optimism, but would soon discover that she was the latest in a long succession of principals who encountered difficulties here.

When the school was first contacted to participate in the study the principal was anxious to get some outside feedback about why her school was plagued with such extensive difficulties. The faculty was most uncooperative with her request to participate in this study, or do anything else she asked. In her eyes she was kind to teachers and was more than reasonable with the things she asked teachers to do. At the end of one year with this group who opposed her every utterance, Mrs. Skyler was beginning to doubt her ability to do any real good at Huntington and was considering the possibility that her continued presence might actually be making a bad situation worse. None-the-less she trudged on, motivated by her desire to make this a better place for students to learn, though internally she doubted her own efficacy to affect meaningful change.

CASE B1 – LIFE FOR THE TYPICAL STUDENT AT HUNTINGTON

Huntington’s students can arrive on campus as early as 8:00 AM. When weather permits they report to the playground, where they form a seemingly endless single file line to await their turn to be served breakfast. The serving line moves very slowly. Two ancillary teachers stand duty and carefully supervise students during this time. This situation reflects two separate battles Mrs. Skyler had to fight with her faculty. The first is the fact that now only ancillary staff provide before school duty, a chore that before Mrs. Skyler’s arrival was rotated through the entire faculty. Mrs. Skyler felt that regular classroom teachers needed the preparation time more than the ancillary staff did, so she stood her ground and insisted on the change. The second, we shall call, “The Battle of the Breakfast Biscuit”. It seems in times past teachers at Huntington were accustomed to bringing their breakfast with them to school and eating it during their planning time before school. This became a problem for the ancillary teachers who suddenly found themselves strapped with “recess” duty every morning. At first they continued to eat their breakfast, usually a biscuit while they visited and watched the students. Mrs. Skyler put an end to this. Teachers were told that they would not eat in front of students, especially when these particular students may not have had anything to eat at home and were forced to wait in this long
line to be served breakfast at school. Needless to say, Mrs. Skyler’s demands were seen as unreasonable by ancillary teachers.

The principal, frustrated that students were often late for class, frequently joined the cafeteria serving line to speed things up. She had spoken to the cafeteria manager and even called the food services department at the central office to fix the problem, but to no avail. So in addition to the ancillary teachers’ anger, Mrs. Skyler now had ruffled the feathers of the cafeteria staff, and regular education teachers were annoyed that they still could not start class on time without interruptions from late students. Students, however, seem oblivious to this; only aware that the breakfast line is always so long and wondering why “they” don’t do something about it.

To alleviate the number of interruptions once class has started, special education students and gifted preschoolers begin their class in the cafeteria when the bell rings. They eat as they begin their day’s activities, since instruction often includes activities of daily living anyway. Class for regular education students typically begins promptly. Students in kindergarten through grade three are self-contained and remain with their homeroom teacher all day. Fourth and fifth graders are semi-departmentalized and change to a different teacher mid day, allowing teachers to concentrate on Language Arts or Math, Science, and Social Studies, and allowing students to get a break from the same teacher all day.

The types of activities and the classroom climate a child experiences at Huntington is highly dependent on whose class they are in. Each classroom has its own personality, tone, and rhythm. Some classroom environments are bright and creative, while many others have few interesting activities or décor. Likewise, instructional methods and available resources vary tremendously from class to class, with more experienced teachers having noticeably more in their rooms.

The main commonality is an almost tangible sense of order that blankets the school – as if some silent code dictates acceptable energy levels. This is true of all but one first grade class, where students’ behavior is almost completely unchecked. Some teachers in the school are observed requiring strict accountability of students by marking charts of those who talk in the halls or lunch lines, their demeanor to students is harsh and unbending. Other teachers are much more liberal and flexible, especially inside their own classes, but none-the-less they too, observe the code of hushed tones at all costs. Students engage in passive resistance to the code through making use of informal centuries that keep watch and send out signals when the enemy (i.e. the
teacher) is near or watching. Thus the students amuse themselves throughout their days by working in little bits of playtime while minimizing the consequences to themselves or their comrades.

Bathroom and water breaks tend to be supervised, and take a fair amount of time due to limited facilities. The scarceness of common facilities such as bathrooms, and water fountains, which are in good repair, means that classes of students are often stuck waiting in the halls until all students work their way through a few functional toilets and a single working water fountain. Students are rarely allowed to use these facilities unsupervised. Students look forward to recess and PE, the two times a day when volume control is less emphasized. The playground is large and attractive though it has sparse equipment. At the end of the day, students riding busses are called out to board busses first followed by a large number of carpoolers.

CASE B1 – DIMENSION I: THE PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION OF THE FACULTY

Huntington’s teachers speak knowledgeably about matters of teaching and learning. Many of the school’s teachers possess advanced degrees or multiple certifications. All teachers on the faculty meet the state’s definition of a highly qualified teacher (NCLB, 2000). The Huntington faculty does not suffer from a lack of ideas about how to run things. Quite the contrary, the faculty members seem to have multiple competing visions for how the school should operate, none of them shared by a vast majority. The result is a dynamic tension that perpetually exists between leading proponents of diametrically opposed philosophical orientations.

There are basically two camps of teachers within the school and numerous issues on which they hold differing views. The teachers are not split exactly along experiential lines, but most of the outspoken leaders of one faction belong to a group we shall refer to as the “old guard” because those who held to this belief system tended to be teachers who had taught at the Huntington for a long time, some twenty years or more. The other group or the “New Guard” is primarily composed of teachers who have been at the school for fewer than five years or so. These teachers may or may not have taught elsewhere, but are on the whole well informed and have a vision for how they intend to practice their profession, and it does not line up well with expectations that they feel are being imposed upon them by the old guard.

Most teachers express positive attitudes towards the idea of collaboration with teachers, especially the old guard who nostalgically tell stories of the collegiality that existed at
Huntington in times past. It is unclear what circumstances existed that supported the past collaborative climate they recall; however, the present reality is that a number of circumstances do not lend themselves to supporting a collaborative culture. The first obstacle is that teachers do not have a common planning time. The second and more daunting problem is the impasse that exists among teachers regarding instructional, assessment and disciplinary ideologies. Teachers simply do not see eye to eye about the best ways to do things. The old guard typically favors setting very high standards of conduct and achievement, and holding students and parents accountable through strict adherence to rules and consistent application of consequences. They feel that the student population changes have resulted in a relaxing of expectations. The new guard teachers feel that old guard teachers are out of touch with the needs of high poverty students. They favor more creative instructional methods and a more patient approach for students who may be unfamiliar with as much structure and formalism as old guard teachers impose upon students.

Old guard teachers feel that the school has gone into decline in recent years because the current students are not self disciplined and they feel like the influx of new teachers and administrators have exacerbated the problem with their more liberal ways of dealing with students. These teachers feel like they were here and a part of things when the school was doing well; hence if the others would follow their example, the school would again be on the right track. The new guard is armed with modern methods and ideals fresh from college or other schools, and feel time has come for a changing of the guard. Neither side is flexible in their resolve to “do the right thing”.

In the midst of these differences some attempts at collaboration were going on. Mrs. Hanks, the old guard fifth grade teacher agreed to work with the new fifth grade teacher, Miss Richardson, who had been transferred to Huntington from another school. Unbeknownst to Miss Richardson, her position had been created when district administrators decided to move the previous teacher, a friend of Mrs. Hank’s, because of ‘all of the controversy she was stirring up in the faculty’. Mrs. Hanks initially took the lead in the relationship by telling Miss Richardson how were done here. This did not sit well with Miss Richardson, a very dedicated teacher of many years who had definite ideas about how she planned to teach. The ill fated pair lasted throughout the year, but the principal reported that Mrs. Hanks seemed to be at the bottom of a nasty letter written about Miss Richardson’s teaching that reached the school board. It had
supposedly been written by a parent of a child in Mrs. Hank’s room who was an education student at a local university. The parent had never requested permission to observe from the office and no evidence was offered that she was indeed in college at all. At the end of the year both teachers requested to be self-contained. Similarly, Miss Judice, a first year teacher struggling with class management commented that several teachers had offered assistance to her, although in her case it was welcomed. When asked who had offered assistance, she named members of the old guard.

Many teachers on the campus, aware of how divisive this chasm has become, prefer to stay neutral. They expressed to the researcher that they are aggravated by the constant gossip and the pressure to take sides. But as is often the case when strong feelings exist on both sides of a controversy, it is difficult to remain neutral. These teachers see merit on both sides and wish that they could just be left alone to teach. However, the prevailing mind set is that “if you are not for us you are against us”. This divide permeates most any faculty endeavor and is a formidable obstacle to functioning as a unified team. The pity in the situation is that teachers on both sides passionately care about their work and are committed to “doing a good job”; they just define the phrase differently.

CASE B1 – DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Principal Leadership

Mrs. Skyler, now in her second year as principal of Huntington, is a soft spoken gentle person with a strong commitment to students. Her demeanor is kind and personable, but she is fierce and unshakable in her pursuit to act in the best interest of her students, as she sees it. One issue that she is passionate about is anything that she perceives as teacher insensitivity to student needs. She draws heavily on her experience as a classroom teacher and TIS in the way she defines her role as principal. In an interview the principal said that it was her job to make sure the teachers are doing a good job “because the students deserve no less”.

Mrs. Skyler’s concept of leadership is a distributive one in which all teachers are members of a team whose objective is to make sure that students are cared for and learning. To this end, she immediately began consulting teachers about perceived problems and tried to organize committees of teachers to address areas of concern such as discipline. Two primary obstacles blocked the success of her initial efforts to address issues. The first is that the approach assumed that teachers agreed that there was a problem and that they framed it as she did.
The second obstacle involved a fundamental difference in conceptions of leadership between Mrs. Skyler and the old guard teachers. For Mrs. Skyler, an effective leader is one who gets input from others and facilitates teachers in solving problems and accomplishing goals. This shared decision making approach was viewed as indecisiveness and incompetence by many teachers. The old guard were accustomed to a much more autocratic style of governance, where the principal makes decisions and “leaves the teachers alone to teach”.

From accounts on both sides, the more Mrs. Skyler delegated or tried to create an interactive environment in the school, the more the old guard lost confidence in her ability to lead. However, Mrs. Skyler had a different effect on the new guard; these teachers responded to her efforts and began to take on greater leadership in school affairs. This in turn angered the old guard who felt the whole school was “going down the tube” and that Mrs. Skyler was showing favoritism to the new guard teachers.

One example of such favoritism that was relayed by an old guard teacher was her outrage upon being moved out of her class right next to the office to a much more remote location in the outside wing. According to the principal, what really happened was that this teacher had kept a log on Mrs. Skyler, in her first year as principal, with the intent of “collecting dirt” to have the new principal dismissed. Mrs. Skyler consulted with central office, who advised that she move the teacher as far from her as possible. That is what she did. Mrs. Skyler’s close contact with the district office is also viewed as a sign of weakness; it weakens the legitimacy of her authority in the eyes of the old guard. Said one teacher in the focus group, “We’re used to a principal that sees a problem and does something about it.” “We already have enough work to do,” another chimed in, “if she would just do her job, then we could do ours”. However, one teacher said in private, in hushed tones, “All teachers don’t feel that way; some of us think she’s doing a good job. They just don’t like her because she isn’t doing things their way.”

Teacher Leadership

The issue of leadership and who should be doing what is a hot topic with teachers at Huntington. Teachers in an after school focus group voluntarily stayed over an hour longer than the focus group was scheduled for because they wanted to air their opinions and frustrations. The next day the school was all “abuzz” with people wanting to know what was said “in that group”. Everyone was incredulous at the things that were discussed. Teachers wanted to know how members had been selected for the group and what was going to be done with the information.
Though this had already been addressed at a faculty meeting, teachers were suspicious and wanted reassurance that the school board wasn’t actually sending in a spy to relocate other dissident teachers. The same questions were asked to this focus group that were asked to focus groups for the other five schools in this study (refer to Appendix B1), but at none of the other schools did they spark the slightest controversy.

The surprising reaction of the faculty and the fear of district reprisals led the researcher to pursue the issue of principal effectiveness in greater depth in private conversations with teachers on both sides. It was discovered that teachers of the old guard felt as if the school was being “dumped on” by the district leadership, and they were tired of it. One teacher pointed out that Mrs. Skyler is the seventh principal she has worked under at Huntington in fourteen years. They felt this instability was part of the cause of Huntington’s recent poor showing in growth of student achievement. They wanted good leadership, and in their opinion, Mrs. Skyler didn’t fit the bill. One teacher, Mrs. Smith, actually contacted the school board members and the superintendent’s office with her complaints in the Mrs. Skyler’s first year. Just prior to the start of the next school term she was informed by district officials that she was being transferred to another school. Mrs. Smith’s colleagues, the old guard teachers, were greatly dismayed by her transfer, and felt that Mrs. Skyler must somehow be complicit in this, though she maintains that she wasn’t involved in the decision.

These old guard teachers now felt their job security was being threatened by the new principal with her “buddies” in the district office. This fueled hostilities. One teacher was indignant because she said that Mrs. Skyler had threatened her by saying that she didn’t have to work there if she didn’t want to. “Just what’s that supposed to mean?” she demanded.

Mrs. Skyler tells the story somewhat differently. She says that late in her second year she became really aware of the damage that gossip was doing among the faculty members. She addressed the issue at a faculty meeting and sent out a memo about it. She had also begun to approach teachers chit chatting in the halls and asked that they not do that. This made teachers defensive. Word came to the principal through one of her “scouts” that a teacher was saying ‘mean unkind things’ about her. Mrs. Skyler said she decided to confront the issue head on and insist that the teacher discontinue this unprofessional behavior. She said that she told the teacher she could come discuss her grievances any time and they could work through their differences. Or if she was so unhappy that she didn’t feel like differences could be resolved and wanted a
transfer she would help her with that as well. Regardless how events actually transpired, the alleged statement, that teachers don’t have to teach here if they didn’t want to, was now an infamous legend in the lore of the school.

Teacher leadership in the school is characterized by power struggles for control over key issues like student discipline. The principal appointed a committee to study the problem and make recommendations. One old guard teacher complained that the committee never met or did anything, so on her own she designed a student recognition program for good conduct. The “Red Hot Conduct” program turned out to be very popular with students, parents and teachers in both camps. However, the program did not address the more contested topic of whether or not conduct grades should be averaged in to determine eligibility for honor roll.

Parent Leadership

The school has a PTO group, which does some fund raising for the school, but teachers, parents and the principal all expressed that the group is not as active as they would like. Little evidence was found of any meaningful student leadership. Community corporate sponsors seem to also make minimal contributions to the school’s functioning.

CASE B1 – DIMENSION III: THE QUALITY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The following percentages were obtained from classroom observations using the SAPI/SAPA rubric. Learning and assessment activities varied greatly from teacher to teacher. On the whole there is a great need for consistency and greater teacher motivation, as it was perceived that many teachers were discouraged and not planning the and executing the quality of instructional program they are capable of. This point is illustrated by the large number of teachers who were uncomfortable with the activities their class was doing when observed; several teachers apologized and explained that “normally” their students were involved in more cooperative groups hands-on activities or other strategies deemed more effective than what was actually observed.

In 71.5 % of classes observed students were involved in mostly or only Lower Order Thinking (LOT). However, in 28.6% of classes students were engaged in high levels of Higher Order Thinking (HOT). In 42.9% of observations students were exposed to only thin information meant for memory; knowledge exploration by students was superficial and information is fragmented in to isolated bits rather than connected to larger concepts. In 28% of classes, student
exploration of knowledge was uneven, deep at times and shallow at others. But again, in 28.6% of observations student exploration of knowledge was relatively deep.

In 33.3% of classes observed students were engaged in organizing, evaluating, applying, or synthesizing information. However, in 66.7% of activities observed students were not asked to do anything with the information such as organize, categorize or use it in some meaningful way. Typically, the teacher had organized and structured the activity for the students and little was left for students to do but answer questions with the required information. Likewise, in 50% of classes students were never asked to consider alternative solutions, strategies, or points of view. However, in 16.7% of classes students spent a great deal of time and energy considering alternate solutions and were encouraged to analyze suggestions and think creatively on a focused topic or objective.

In 42.9% of classes observed little student interest or enthusiasm for learning activities was displayed and student participation was characterized by compliance and passive engagement. However, in 14.2% of classes students were excited about their learning, displayed interest, and eagerly participated in learning tasks. In 42.9% of classes levels of student engagement and motivation were somewhere between these extremes. Students were engaged in substantive conversations with multiple students-to student or student-to teacher exchanges in only 14.3% of classes observed.

In 57.1% of classes observed, distractions were kept to a minimum and most students remained focused on learning tasks through the entirety of the lesson. However, in 28.6% of classes distractions were problematic; severe disruptions occurred or numerous minor distractions continued and interfered with the learning of several or most students.

Assessment tasks in general did not require students to understand disciplinary content or processes. In 33% of classes observed students could successfully complete assigned tasks with little or no understanding of major ideas, theories or concepts central to the discipline. In 67.7% of classes observed students were not involved in any form of inquiry or disciplinary process utilized by practitioners in the field.

In 28.6% of observations student work was relevant to real life experiences and students clearly understood the connection between class activities and life beyond school. In 57.1% of observations student activities were somewhat pertinent to real-life skills, but there was no indication that students made the connection. In 87.3% of classes students presented the products
of their learning to peers in the class, but in 16.7% of classes, students only presented their work to the teacher. In none of the classes observed did students present their work to an audience beyond the class or the school.

Thus, as these percentages would indicate, there are good things going on in a small number of classes, while marginally effective learning experiences and assessment techniques are the status quo. Extremely ineffective practices were only observed in one classroom in which a first year teacher was struggling with basic classroom management skills. There seems to be greater teacher knowledge and capabilities present at the school than these data indicate. Teachers report feeling underappreciated and seem to lack the support and desire to go the extra mile to be sure the activities in their classrooms are as outstanding as they can be. The norm is to maintain an orderly room and to keep students on-task completing lack luster activities that require little involved planning or preparation on the part of teachers.

CASE B1 – DIMENSION IV: THE STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

The Huntington SIP lists several programs available to students which could increase students’ chances for success. These include: D. A. R. E. drug prevention program, INTECH, the K-3 Reading/Math initiative, extended day program, and Council of Arts. There is no explanation, however, of who is eligible for these programs and how these programs directly benefit students and fit into the overall plan of insuring that no student falls through the cracks. In the same document statements are made that at-risk students will be targeted for additional help such as small group instruction and tutoring from an outside volunteer group. However, no actionable detailed plan is laid out for how this is to be done. For example, it is unclear what is meant by “at-risk”, the person or persons responsible for identifying these students is not named, a timeline is not given, and no methods for monitoring the success of the program is provided. The idea of this program offers promise, but it was not seen in action, nor was it discussed by teachers or the principal in interviews. The principal did confess that she and two other teachers did put the SIP together over the summer, so it is possible that teachers were not entirely aware of this new plan.

Teachers expressed frustration that one of the school’s most successful programs, the gifted preschool, is not extended to other grades at the school. Teachers feel like these students should remain at Huntington and should receive gifted services here rather than move to other
schools. They feel like this population of students would not only bring up test scores, but would be a positive influence on the entire student body.

Parental involvement at the school is lower than teachers, the principal, or the parents would like. Teachers point out that they provide a number of night functions in which parents can participate. Participation is modest. Many teachers interpret this as a sign of parental disinterest. Parents on the other hand indicate that the timing of these one shot events is often inconvenient. Several parents expressed a desire to be involved in a routine way such as coming to the school on a set day to help with specific activities, but found little structure or organization to the volunteer program The PTO is somewhat better organized; they conduct fund raisers to supplement the school budget. Several teachers reported using some of these funds in the past to attend conferences and workshops.

For the most part, parents are happy with the instructional push of the school. Their comments about the new principal were especially supportive. Parents feel like she is available, listens to them and really cares about the students. Parent comments about teachers indicate that they feel like teachers are doing a good job in the classroom, but are often too hard on students, even “mean” in the way they deal with and discipline students.

Teachers at Huntington feel personally responsible for student achievement. This responsibility is carried out by making sure all students come to school, listen, don’t play in class, and complete assigned tasks. However, there was little indication that teachers make much effort to differentiate instruction or assessment based on student needs. Nor was there evidence that individual student progress throughout the year and from grade to grade is tracked. Student recognition varies from teacher to teacher. School wide student recognition for academic achievement is sparse, but increasing with the implementation of the new “Red Hot Conduct” program. There is an on-going debate over whether conduct and work habits grades should be included in calculations for honor roll. Therefore, honor roll tends to be down played and deemphasized.

The intent to provide supports for individual student success is evident in the school; none-the-less despite good intentions, very little is actually being implemented to insure that every student’s needs are being consistently met. Faculty efforts are piecemeal and sporadic, with no real structure or follow through. This can be seen in the school mission statement: “Huntington will prepare all students for success.” This is the entire statement; no mention is
made of what is meant by success, or how students will be prepared. The school seems to just be “winging it”, or making it up as they go in this regard.

CASE B1 – ARTIFACTS

Very few noticeable external symbols of school spirit or identity are noticeable from the exterior of the school or upon entry into the front foyer. One bulletin board about the Red Hot Discipline program can be seen outside the office. The obvious message here is that discipline is of central importance at this school. The four page school monthly newsletter plus other parent education materials dealing with ways parents can help their children at home are organized on the counter of the school office. These indicate the school’s desire for order and the instructional push that exists at the school. A few bulletin boards or displays around the school celebrate student success or display academic accomplishments; many in class displays have to do with discipline or are instructional in nature. The school is clean which indicates a sense of pride.

CASE B1 – ESPOUSED BELIEFS

Teachers at Huntington believe that they are responsible for student achievement, which is illustrated in their passionate fight to be sure “things are done the right way”, even if that means contradicting fellow teachers, the principal or the district. Teachers also believe that parents should take an active role in participating in their children’s education, hence the detailed parent newsletter, and the obvious preparation teachers put into parent educational opportunities like family Math or Literacy Nights. The SIP lists some form of staff development as a primary action to be taken for each area targeted for improvement, indicating that at least the principal and the teachers who drafted it believe that there is a connection between teacher knowledge and student achievement. Interviews and the SIP indicate a shared believe in providing individual attention for students who are experiencing difficulties, although there is no indication that this is being acted on in any structured way. Teachers also believe in the power of teacher collaboration, and desire to have a more cohesive faculty.

CASE B1 – BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The following phrases attempt to articulate the core assumptions that seem to be implicit in the norms of behavior observed at Huntington:

- Proper student conduct is a prerequisite to learning.
- Safety and order are of primary importance.
- Teachers know what is best for the school and their students.
Teachers who are knowledgeable have an obligation to share their insights with their colleagues.

Teachers are individually responsible for doing what they feel is best in every situation, despite pressure to do otherwise from others.

Principled determination and resistance is better than half hearted compliance.

Parents are basically apathetic about their child’s school work and need to be motivated.

High standards equate to strict policies

It is not appropriate to make a big deal of a student simply doing what is expected of him.

No one is looking out for this school, so the school must look out for itself.

Student home life is irrelevant to performance at school.

Flexibility in rule enforcement based on circumstances amounts to lowering expectations; the same standards apply to all.

Teacher and administrator competence is important to running a good school.

**CASE B1 – AN OVERVIEW OF HUNTINGTON’S SCHOOL CULTURE**

The school culture of Huntington is in transition. There is a great deal of turmoil in the faculty and between one faction of the faculty and the principal. Part of the difficulties result from legitimate philosophical differences. However, a significant amount of the trouble this school is experiencing emanates directly from resistance to change put forth by the old guard teachers. They are engaging the principal and the new guard teachers in an all out struggle for control of the school. They want to see the school return to the policies and operational patterns of the past and genuinely feel this will return the school to its former high status in the district.

While the issue of which direction this school will go in is not ultimately settled, there are strong signs that things are beginning to settle down and the principal is prevailing. In a post data collection follow-up interview the beginning of the following year, Mrs. Skyler reported that six teachers did not return, including one who had adamantly opposed her and repeatedly tried to rally support for the resistance. Another was confronted by the principal for unethical conduct (i.e. selling goods to her students during class) and not only requested a transfer, but convinced her friend to join her in the move to a new school. When asked why she thought that such a high percentage of teachers transferred out of a school that historically has had a very stable faculty,
Mrs. Skyler replied, “I think they thought they could run me off, then I guess they realized I wasn’t leaving.” In her own defense she added the after thought that she didn’t ask anyone to leave. Mrs. Skyler feels good about the present school term. She described the faculty when she first arrived as a “one big sick family – nobody realized how sick they really were”. She backed up this point by sharing stories of professional jealousy, and summarizing that “new kids on the block are not well received”. She feels like the strong district support she has received along with the exodus of seven teachers (over two years) who she perceived as being against her have made the difference. The scales are no longer stacked against her or “the poor kids”.

Mrs. Skyler admits that formidable problems still exist and that many teachers “don’t get the way I do things”, but she says that the teachers are beginning to understand that “I am a child advocate. I will always do what is in the best interest of the students.” She feels like the teachers who have been here a long time frequently are pushy and overstep their authority. She relayed an incident where an old guard teacher told a new replacement teacher how she needed to set up her room. “They still hold onto that ‘I was here first, so let me tell you how to do things around here’ mentality.”

The strongest dimension of Huntington’s culture is its Professional Orientation. This is somewhat paradoxical since staff development is not focused and on-going, nor are teachers collaborating. However, they desire to have a more collaborative culture and the recent transfers shift the balance of power away from one of the factions, making it more possible for teachers to work together and create a mutually shared vision. Teachers and the principal also believe that it is worth their while to spend time acquiring new knowledge and skills. Theory predicts that in time their behavior will conform to these basic assumptions and the faculty will find itself engaging in more effective professional practices.

The second area of strength is the child advocacy stance that the principal and many of the newer teachers have taken. This is could be the groundwork for revamping and whole heartedly implementing policies, plans, and programs that could actually reinforce students’ chances for academic success at Huntington. However, much work is needed in this area since present plans seem either ineffective or not well implemented or monitored.

The weakest dimension of Huntington’s culture is its organizational structure. Few systems in the school are well running and efficient including the cafeteria operations, the secretarial staff, the parent volunteer program, the PTO, the plan for administrative substitutes
during principal absences, the school improvement team, or problem solving strategies. These managerial functions need to be formally addressed. Problems in this area impact the smooth functioning of the school in other areas.

V. CASE STUDY SCHOOL B2: SHADY OAK ELEMENTARY

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Shady Oak Elementary is located near the entrance of a lower middle income neighborhood in a mid-sized city. Within walking distance of the school is a day care center, a dentist office, an office building and numerous single family brick homes. The neighborhood is older but fairly well maintained. Printed on a wooden landscaped sign located prominently at the front of the neighborhood is the name of the subdivision and “Home of Shady Oak Elementary.”

The school itself is a one-story brick structure built in 1960, situated on a quiet side street, a few hundred yards from a highway. The 8.7 acre site is nicely landscaped with shrubs. Numerous large live oak trees border the parking lot and are distributed over the ample acreage. From the front the grounds appear well maintained; although, the sides and back of the school obviously do not receive as much attention.

The school capacity is 390 students. The current enrollment at the time of this study was 318. This means that up to 72 students will be transferred to Shady Oak from overcrowded schools. Receiving an influx of students two months into the school year is not something the teachers or principal are happy about, but they understand the need and do not complain. In 2002, 59% of the student body was on free and reduced lunches; by 2004, this figure had increased to 74%. There was also a simultaneous increase in the percentage of minority students. The principal felt changes in his school composition reflected demographic shifts in the neighborhood due to “white flight” to more affluent suburban areas. Other than single family homes and rent houses, the district also takes in one low income apartment complex.

The school plant is roughly shaped like a capital printed E, with an additional wing to the back left, and a separate kindergarten complex to the front right. The office is directly visible upon entering the covered patio which serves as an entrance. The office is centrally located to most classrooms. The cafeteria and gym are directly across from the office area. The inside of the school is clean, quiet. Students seem calm, happy and relaxed as they move through the corridors, play at recess, eat lunch or participate in PE. The 98.2% daily attendance rate exceeds
both state and district averages. Student achievement on nationally norm referenced tests is higher than the district and national averages, but does not exceed the state average.

CASE B2 – LIFE FOR THE TYPICAL STUDENT AT SHADY OAK

Most students that attend Shady Oak arrive by bus; although, a few carpool or ride busses. Students unload busses in the morning and report directly to breakfast. The average student will spend the entire day, except for PE, with the same classroom teacher. Most teachers begin their day by taking attendance, collecting money and assigning seatwork for students to begin.

Most teachers begin Reading instruction first, followed by Math. Social Studies and Science tend to be taught later in the afternoon. In most every class throughout the school, Reading and Math are emphasized over other subjects. This is obvious in the time of teacher talk and bulletin board space devoted to these subjects.

The amount of student participation in learning activities is high throughout the school. Students seem to enjoy their work and feel comfortable and at ease. Occasionally, teachers can be heard loudly scolding children in their rooms or public areas. No student fighting or major disciplinary episodes were observed; the school seems to run as peacefully on the inside as it appears on the outside. Students in the focus group had positive opinions of the school, but were not overly passionate about their experiences here.

CASE B2 – DIMENSION I: PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION

Shady Oak has 24 teachers, 100% of whom meet the state’s standards for highly qualified teachers. During the focus group and in private informal interviews, teachers spoke knowledgeably about instructional methods. Most teachers, including newer teachers, were able to clearly articulate the major focus of the School Improvement Plan was to enhance reading achievement through increasing student recreational reading. When questioned, they were able to consistently explain why they had selected the particular instructional methods. Teachers also reported collaborating with colleagues “as much as possible.” Newer teachers felt indebted to more experienced teachers for helping them with guidance with classroom management, instructional methods and materials.

The School Improvement Plan lays out a course of action for consistent professional development focused on Reading. The plan repeatedly lists increasing teacher knowledge of effective instructional methods and materials as the primary strategy for increasing student
achievement. The outgoing principal and teachers verbally confirmed that professional
development consistently focuses on useful strategies for increasing Reading achievement.

All teachers questioned expressed favorable attitudes towards learning new and more
effective instructional strategies; several participate in professional communities beyond the
school. The new principal was national board certified as a teacher and encourages teachers
pursue advance training and certification. By all indications, this faculty has a very strong
professional orientation. The teachers uniformly expressed an awareness of the relationship
between teacher knowledge and skills and student achievement. The teachers also displayed
professional conduct refraining from gossip and discussion of controversial topics with or in
front of the outside observer, despite a very abrupt and disconcerting mid-year administrative
transition. Teachers remained focused on teaching through extremely difficult and distracting
circumstances.

CASE B2 – DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Principal Leadership

Shady Oak historically has been a very peaceful school with very little faculty turnover.
The school secretary, Mrs. Hawthorne, once a parent here, greets all who enter the office just as
she has for the past 22 years. As Mr. Gene King, the principal of Shady Oak for a quarter of a
century, begins this year, he mistakenly assumes it will be as uneventful as most. At the
beginning of the year, he met twice with the researcher to discuss his vision and goals for the
school. His passion is to involve students in as much reading as he possibly can. He is
convinced that this is the way to raise student achievement. He patiently shared the story of how
student achievement began to decline as the school demographics changed over the years,
transforming the once high achieving middle class, white school into a moderately achieving,
mid to low SES minority school. During this time, he explained that he found it more and more
important that teachers not only do a good job, but an extraordinary job teaching Reading. He
was quite proud as he described the way he shared this burden with the teachers and they rallied
behind him to push Reading harder than ever before.

The faculty realized that it was going to take a tremendous commitment to instill a love
of reading in a different type of child who may or may not be exposed to reading in the home.
Mr. King described the faculty’s efforts to upgrade Reading instruction by sending teachers to
conferences and wrote grants. The school received a comprehensive school reform
demonstration (CSRd) grant. Staff development focused very heavily on implementing strategies associated with this program such as SOAR To Success, Accelerated Reading and Math, STAR Early Literacy, Reading and Math, Perfect Copy, and Surpass.

Then with little warning, Mr. King was no longer principal. The district sent a representative to a planned faculty meeting and explained that an undisclosed event involving a student had resulted in Mr. King’s immediate resignation and that a temporary replacement would be sent to the school the next day. The teachers, particularly the one-third who had been at the school twenty or more years with Mr. King and Mrs. Hawthorne, were speechless. All were in complete shock. One teacher would later describe the loss as being like a death in the family; she said she felt completely disoriented for several months afterwards. Other teachers seemed to concur. Mr. King seemed to be well liked and respected by teachers and parents alike. Numerous parents commented that they thought his loss was unfortunate for the school. Mr. King’s abrupt removal also caused an outcry from other principals in the district who rallied to his support.

For the next three months, Mrs. Catherine White, a retired principal, presided as acting principal of Shady Oak. Mrs. White is not a shy or easily intimidated person; she moved in, took over, and went boldly forward without skipping a beat, as if she had always been there. Stunned teachers followed her lead. The first thing Mrs. White did was reassign the job of the time out room monitor, due to the low number of discipline problems at Shady Oak. She was reassigned to do miscellaneous tasks around the school that needed to be done like organizing, painting the office, fixing copy machines or assisting the teachers. Mrs. White reminded teachers that their job was to stay focused on doing a good job in the classroom, and as classroom observations during this time indicate, that’s just what they did.

In March of the school year, Mr. Tony Brasseaux walked onto the Shady Oak campus to assume his first principalship. A short, wiry, white man in his mid-thirties, Mr. Brasseaux stood in stark contrast to the towering Mrs. White or the aging Mr. King. Mr. Brasseaux had a brief but stellar stint as a classroom teacher in another state; the highlights of his career, his educational background and a list of the awards received were posted on the school website shortly following his arrival.

Shortly after his arrival, teachers were very hopeful that the change would end up being a very good thing. The school improvement team had been given the opportunity to interview the
top applicants for the position, and Mr. Brasseaux had been their first choice. One teacher shared that she felt the school had been very lucky to get him; she was excited that he had decided to continue the school-wide focus on reading.

Soon after Mr. Brasseaux’s appointment, things began to perk up around Shady Oak. The most noticeable sign was the repainting of the waiting area of the school office with a three dimensional mural of a swamp scene featuring bright cartoon alligators, the school mascot. On a bench in this same area there now sits a large 3 X 4 foot framed poster of a large, expensive, brightly colored playground climbing set; the words ‘Shady Oak Elementary’ are printed onto the poster above the play set. Mrs. Hawthorne beamed when she explained that the PTO was raising money to buy this for the school.

In addition to these changes, there is new furniture in the principal’s private office and all extra space is filled with stacked boxes of candy and snacks. The principal explained that these are being sold at preset times to raise money to upgrade instructional resources. There is also a new addition to the covered walkway outside the office, in this common area is a large nicely painted bulletin board which reads “Mr. Brasseaux is looking for Good Gators.” In the classrooms the teachers seemed encouraged and said the change they noticed the most was a revamping of the school discipline policy to insure consistency. When Mr. Brasseaux was interviewed briefly in the fall following his appointment, he was asked what he thought the biggest change in the school was since he arrived. Without hesitation, he very plainly said, “Teachers don’t yell at kids any more.”

Teacher Leadership

Although admittedly stunned at the loss of their long time leader, the teachers at Shady Oak carried on like troopers. The SIP team teachers demonstrated great wisdom, clarity of mind, and purpose when they interviewed and discussed choices for a replacement principal. These teachers were able to articulate that they were looking for someone with experience whose vision of an effective school would compliment school improvement plans and programs already in motion.

In addition to this steadfast leadership demonstrated by the select few on the school improvement team, ordinary teachers were observed assisting each other in many ways. For example, when discussing preparation for a lesson that had just been observed, a third year teacher quickly credited the other more senior teacher at her grade level with developing and
sharing the plan. When asked if this is common, she responded affirmatively. When asked if her ideas were well-received by her partner, she hesitated and felt the need to clarify that “of course” they were. She proceeded to describe the collegial climate that exists among the faculty members at Shady Oak, summarizing by saying, “We really do work together as a team; whoever wants to or has the knowledge or background in something takes initiative. We all listen and make our own decisions.” She contrasted this approach to another faculty she had been a part of right after college where she had felt isolated and on her own. In a state where thirty percent of new teachers resign within three years (LDE, 2003), this third year teacher couldn’t see herself leaving Shady Oak anytime in the near future, because of the collegial support she felt from other teachers.

Additionally, one of the scheduled observation days occurred during a time when teachers were invited to partake of “potluck” dishes and snacks which were set up in an empty classroom. There was quite a spread. Teachers came in and out during the day. They were cordial to each other, but fixed themselves a plate and left without loitering. Though they weren’t being observed to their knowledge and were in between permanent principals, anyway, teachers had a sense of urgency about them that guided their behavior. These teachers did not have to be told that there were important matters that needed their attention – they knew it and acted on it without prompting from others. These examples illustrate that teachers at Shady Oak lead by example.

Other Leadership

Shady Oaks has a PTO which Mrs. Hawthorne says was much more active in the past than it has been recently. No members were seen or campus nor were printed materials readily available, but if the large playground sign in the office is any indication, Mr. Brasseaux has plans to revitalize this group so that it can contribute to operations in a meaningful way. During observations and interviews, there was no indication of any significant student or community leadership. Neither were issues with the custodial staff or cafeteria staff observed or discussed, indicating either that these programs were running efficiently or that Shady Oak was too preoccupied with more important things to notice problems. Parent surveys indicated that under Mr. King’s administration, they usually felt up-to-date on school matters. No data are available for parent communications about Mr. Brasseaux’s leadership, but teachers report that whereas
principal to teacher communications have traditionally been informal and verbal, now they receive weekly written communiqués.

In short, in the space of a year’s time, Shady Oak has gone through three principals. While this inherently an unstable situation, they seem to have weathered the storm well and ultimately moved from effective leadership to more effective leadership. The stabilizing force that seemed to make this transition as smooth as possible was the informal leadership exhibited by the school’s teachers; although, in the year following this administrative change, eight teachers left the school – a very large turnover for Shady Oak. Mr. Brasseaux said that all left for personal reasons, no one had requested a transfer. It should also be mentioned here that Mrs. Hawthorne, the school secretary, also provided stability, direction and a sense of continuity during the transfer. She executed her routine duties efficiently, adapted to the new principals’ expectations, and maintained a positive attitude in her interactions with principals, teachers, students, parents, and outsiders, though constantly bombarded with questions about the sudden changes.

CASE B2 – DIMENSION III: THE QUALITY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Unscheduled observations were done randomly throughout the school over a four month period. A total of ten classes were observed; this is roughly fifty percent of the regular education classes in the school. The SAPI/SAPA classroom observation rubric was used to document the learning experiences of students in these rooms.

In 60% of classes observed, students were engaged in one or more activities requiring HOT. In 40% of observations, student exploration of knowledge was deep or relatively deep. In 20% of classes students participated in sustained substantive conversation and were asked to explain or justify answers. Forty (40%) percent of assignments in observed classes asked students to organize, classify, interpret or evaluate information. These data demonstrate an awareness of the need to build students’ thinking skills. There is still room for growth in these areas, since few of these thinking skill indicators were present in more than fifty percent of classes.

In exactly half of all observations, students appeared moderately interested in learning activities. Participation was passive and compliant, but less than enthusiastic or eager. No classes were observed in which a large percent of students appeared off-task; however, neither were any classes observed in which extremely high levels of student interest and motivation were
In 16.7% of classes observed, distractions in the learning environment were problematic and interfered with the learning of several students; this was not a problem in 83.3% of classes observed.

In 40% of classes, completion of assigned tasks required some understanding of broader principles or concepts central to the discipline and 30% of the classes involved students in inquiry processes similar to those used in the field of study. In 40% of classes observed, students were working on topics relevant to real world experiences and seemed aware of the connection between school work and real life. In 70% of classes, students presented products of their learning to an audience beyond the teacher but within the class. Only 10% shared work only with the teachers. These data indicate an awareness of engaging students in meaningful content and learning processes; however, here again, there is room for improvement.

On the whole, some effective instructional techniques were observed in most classes. There was considerably less consistency in the instructional methods and quality from teacher to teacher. Classrooms are fairly well equipped and somewhat attractive and inviting. Observations indicate that more effective than ineffective instruction taking place at Shady Oak.

**CASE B2 – DIMENSION IV: A STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS**

Shady Oak has elected to concentrate school improvement efforts on bringing up students achievement in Reading, with a secondary emphasis on Math. To this end, the school wrote and received a Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Grant from the district. Funds from this grant were used to implement technological supports for student success in the form of software programs such as SOAR to Success, Star Reading, Star Math, Accelerated Math, and Perfect Copy. These are programs that are used by students in the classroom to drill and practice skills and periodically assess student progress at the level of the individual student. Observations in classrooms and informal interviews with teachers and students confirm that these programs are actually in use on a regular basis and teachers actively use data from these programs to assist students and reward progress. Students eagerly participate in these programs and are competitive with each other. The SIP indicates that teachers will conference individually with students and provide one-on-one feedback on their Reading progress. No data was available to indicate whether this is actually taking place consistently across teachers.

This technology program seems to be the primary means the school uses to monitor and assist students’ progress at the individual level. Although Shady Oak does sponsor several
parent educational opportunities through one time meetings in the evenings, this is not a main emphasis. Both parents and teachers report disappointment in the amount of parental involvement. Parents mention in open-ended surveys that lack of regularly scheduled events make it difficult for them to coordinate their schedules and find time to participate. Parent surveys completed shortly after the departure of Mr. King indicated that parents were pleased with the instructional push of the school, but were concerned that the quality of the programs may suffer after his loss. Parents also expressed a desire to be more actively involved, but were frustrated that the school did not provide a means for this other than periodic night meetings.

CASE B2 – ARTIFACTS

As one approaches Shady Oak’s brick structure recessed back on a well maintained lawn, one can’t help but notice the large 10 foot high sign near the front drive which reads “Shady Oak, Home of the Alligators” with a large cartoon gator head. Below this are spaces for posting upcoming school events. Just beyond this is a flag pole sporting the American flag and a flag issued by the State Department of Education indicating the school’s growth in student achievement. The flag actually reads “School of Recognized Academic Growth;” although, this can’t be made out except on a windy day. The obvious feature that a casual visitor to the campus can’t help but notice is the early childhood friendly structure to the right of the main building. This area includes a separate fenced playground with age-appropriate outdoor climbing equipment and a covered patio for shade and use in inclement weather.

Upon entering the school, there are numerous indicators of school spirit both in the present and over a period of time including a framed piece of stained glass featuring an alligator hanging in the office window, near Mrs. Hawthorne’s desk. The office reception area has made a dramatic transformation since the arrival of Mr. Brasseaux. Now the occupants are surrounded by bold colored swamp scene murals with 3-D attachments such as signs and nets. The artwork was done by the former TOR teacher, whom Mrs. White, the interim principal had reassigned to work on miscellaneous projects around the school. Her handiwork can also be seen on a hand painted bulletin board between the office, the library and the cafeteria which reads “Mr. Brasseaux is looking for Good Gators.” Other bulletin boards, which formerly held preprinted public service to nutritional type ads were empty – possibly in transition for a new use. Featured prominently in most classrooms are a set of class rules and a behavior management chart to accompany the new school-wide discipline plan. Occasionally class displays are seen
recognizing student achievements on one of the software programs to enhance student performance such as Accelerated Reader or Star Math.

Taken collectively, these artifacts symbolize a sense of pride in the school’s past and present. These symbols communicate a strong sense of identity to students, parents and teachers which says, in effect, “This is who we are – it’s a good thing to be. We are unique. We are a part of something special.” A strong positive sense of identity such as Shady Oak’s builds confidence that future directions will be as productive as past endeavors. The abundant artifacts help build a sense of unity and loyalty for the school. This theme is carried through with the school motto found on the website – “The Hope, The Pride, The Future!”

CASE B2 – ESPOUSED BELIEFS

The school mission statement created by the SIT team under the administration of Mr. King simply states: “All Shady Oak Elementary School students will have the opportunity to learn as much as they can.” This simplistic statement affirms the notion that students should be able to progress at their own individual rates; however, it fails to communicate a vision of how and why these things should be done.

An expanded version of this mission was added to the school website once Mr. Brasseaux arrived. The new version is labeled as the school philosophy rather than the mission statement, and reads:

Shady Oak Elementary School was established … for the purpose of preparing students to assume their place as responsible productive citizens in our community, state, nation and world. To accomplish this mission we provide experiences and opportunities for each student to develop his or her potential. We seek to impart knowledge to our students as well as the thinking skills necessary to use that knowledge. We are charged with assisting students in acquiring skills, attitudes and insights that will help them function effectively and productive in a challenging and changing world.

This revised statement provides the why and how lacking from the previously articulated mission. It also adds an emphasis on thinking skills not found in previous statements. Following the revised statement of philosophy are seven “governing values” which are condensed below:

1. Everyone deserves to be treated with respect.
2. We must demonstrate and encourage responsible behavior.
3. All students are individuals with unique talents and abilities.
4. All students should be given the opportunity to reach their potential.
5. We are committed to prepare students for the future.
6. Learning should be provided in a stimulating environment.
7. Learning is a life-long process and responsibility should be shared between the learner, school, home and community.

This updated statement provides guidance and direction to the faculty which should contribute to greater unity of purpose and action. It also provides parents with a “bill of rights” in terms of knowing what to expect from the school.

The espoused values expressed in writing indicate that the school believes in fostering the individuality of the students. Several references were also made to the desirable types of learning environments which are “inviting,” “stimulating,” and provide “experiences and opportunities for each student to develop.” A third theme expressed is the desire to have a school community in which students are “treated with dignity and respect” and teachers “demonstrate and expect responsible behavior.” Implicit in these statements are both the notions that teachers must conduct themselves and discipline students in a professional manner and that students are held accountable for their behavior.

CASE B2 – BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Espoused beliefs are formal statements of position made by the participant, whereas basic assumptions are inferred from the behavior of participants by an outside observer. In the case of Shady Oak, espoused beliefs emphasize:

1. the individuality of the learner,
2. stimulating learning experiences, and
3. disciplining students in respectful ways.

An analysis of observations indicates that teachers are aware of all three of these, but have not yet mastered or perhaps do not desire to fully bring these practices into complete alignment with the espoused beliefs. For example, teachers have altered behavior management techniques to comply with the new school discipline plan, but teachers were seen rolling eyes at students, inconspicuously expressing disapproval and annoyance to each other and making statements like “these students just don’t get it.” This behavior is inconsistent with genuine respect for students.

Observations in classrooms also revealed partial alignment between espoused beliefs (e.g. individual progress, and the importance of stimulating environments) and the reality of what takes place in Sunny Oak’s classrooms. Teachers are using computer software to track individual growth of students on skills practiced and assessed with these programs; however, a
great deal of instructional differentiation in lesson planning or delivery was not seen in classrooms. Instruction was primarily delivered to whole classes, with the same content and assessments for all, except for the small group instruction observed primarily in Reading.

As far as stimulating experiences, most teachers did conscientiously try to involve students in discussing the lesson or otherwise focusing on learning tasks, but as the absence of high levels of student enthusiasm or motivation on SAPI/SAPA observations might indicate, learning activities are not as stimulating as they could be. Some hands-on activities were observed, but these were not widespread.

Basic Assumptions inferred from observations of Shady Oak faculty include:

- Team work among teachers is important.
- Lower SES and minority students are harder to work with, but they can achieve at high levels with the right supports.
- We (the faculty) are up to the challenge of raising the achievement of our students.
- Drill, practice and regular assessment is important to student achievement.
- If we do a good job of traditional instruction, enhance the curriculum with technology to drill skills, and track individual progress, student achievement will improve.
- Leisure reading will enhance achievement across the board.
- Good discipline is important, but should not be the primary focus.
- We push students hard and reward them well.
- We stay optimistic and focused on our work regardless what else is going on.
- The more we know, the better we will be able to help our students.

Shady Oak is a good school that is trying to successfully adapt to changing student demographics and sudden shifts in administrative leadership. Teachers are level headed and well informed with a strong professional orientation. Classroom instruction seems to be improving, but teachers have been slow to adopt more innovative approaches, choosing instead to stick with the tried and true.

Principal Leadership at the school has gone from good, with a stable principal grounded by much experience, to an ambitious new principal who is well trained though inexperienced.
This may work well with the experience and strong teacher leadership present at Shady Oak, especially since Mr. Brasseaux was their first choice for a new principal.

The school has a well developed, functional plan for improvement, which centers on focused professional development and enhancing reading instruction. The new principal has articulated a specific vision which fits well with established school plans and programs. Some effort has been made to conform practice to live up to stated ideals, though there is much room for improvement. All in all, Shady Oak’s culture embraces more effective norms of behavior than ineffective.

VI. CASE STUDY SCHOOL C1: RIVER BEND PRIMARY

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

River Bend Primary is a school of 289 PK through grade 5 students. There are 25 teachers on faculty and one principal. The school is located off of a busy street in a suburb of a large city. Commercial property borders both sides of the school’s front. Residential property, consisting of small homes and duplexes, borders the sides and back of the school. The school campus occupies a city block. The main building itself is a plain three story brick structure built in 1939. The businesses surrounding the school are thriving, and the homes of the middle class neighborhood are mostly in good repair; the school is within blocks of very exclusive upscale residential housing.

The attendance zone for the school takes in the surrounding neighborhood; however, about 26% of the students have received permits from the district to attend River Bend to escape “failing schools” in the district or the neighboring inner city district. Sixty-three percent (63%) of the students enrolled qualify for free and reduced lunches; 35% of the population is minority. These percentages are up from 45.9% on free and reduced lunch and 22% minority the previous year. Fourteen percent (14%) of the students receive special education services, 7% of students participate in the gifted program and 6.4% in the talented program.

The interior of the building is aging and in need of updating. During the course of the study, construction crews were working on restoring some of the stairwells. Near the front entrance, numerous photographs line the walls of students on field trips to various locations and of special occasions including a visit from a past sitting first lady. The office is located near the front of the rectangular building. Prints of famous works of art are framed along the first floor
halls. In the office reception area, several original paintings by local artists adorn the walls along with student artwork including a large patchwork quilt and hand painted ceiling tiles.

The school secretary directs traffic in the office region. She greets all who enter and stays on top of who is there for what, all the while answering phones and completing paperwork. The tone is friendly but businesslike. Early mornings or late afternoons, students move about the halls – in pairs or individually – doing various tasks such as delivering notes, going to the restroom, or asking to call home. These students are settled and well behaved.

River Bend has a strong reputation in the community. Teachers in this school and others in the district still recall several years ago when it was labeled “the top school” in the district due to its high test scores. However, in recent years enrollment has declined as the neighborhood ages and urban renewal projects have converted older homes into exclusive residences that do not typically have young children in public schools. In the last two years, the district has been considering closing River Bend Primary and converting it to a magnet high school. This proposal has caused a great deal of upheaval in the community, as River Bend has been a part of the community for a long time; many parents and grandparents of current students once attended the school.

Follow up interviews at the conclusion of the data collection period revealed that despite much public outcry from parents and the immediate neighborhood, the school board nonetheless voted in April that River Bend would reorganize over the summer and reopen in August as a pilot elementary magnet school for academically gifted students. The teachers and the principal were stunned. April and May were about saying good-bye to students and parents and a familiar identity and way of being. May and June were about reinventing themselves, starting with developing a new vision for who they were as a school, including developing admission standards and procedures. June and July were about getting a handle on how to best organize and meet needs of a radically different student population and securing some basic training in working with gifted students. To say the least, the faculty was in shock and the laid back “auto-pilot” culture was destined to be shaken up and fast. Most of the details in this case study reflect the culture prior to the knowledge of the restructuring. However, comments have been added to the end of each section to reflect the initial changes observed as the school began its transition into establishing a new identity.
CASE C1 - THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE FOR THE TYPICAL STUDENT

Most students attending River Bend live in the surrounding community and have little commute. The exceptions to this are those who have obtained permits to transfer in from other schools. Students and parents report that students like coming to school here for the most part – the fact that roughly 70 students from other attendance zones have voluntarily selected this school and gone to the trouble of obtaining transfer permits attests to the positive reputation of the school. Students in grades Pre-K through three are self-contained and 4th and 5th graders have two teachers. Parents feel confident that the school is pushing students to achieve in basics such as Reading and Math. Parents and students both said that teachers “teach in ways kids can understand” and provide lots of one-on-one help for students. However, some students complained that their classes are boring. Parents and students alike commented that field trips and special events make school life more interesting. Most parents feel that the school campus is safe and the researcher found the atmosphere to consistently be relaxed, but orderly. Strangers on the campus are quickly identified and escorted to the office by janitors or other staff.

A few parents commented on surveys that the school needs to do a better job respecting differences and not embarrassing students when they are disciplined. Observations revealed that some teachers do loudly berate students involved in severe disruptive behavior such as fights. The principal, however, is very conscientious to handle private matters in private and to discipline without humiliation. In general, teachers are tolerant and students are well-mannered and responsive. Parents and teachers alike are pleased that class sizes are small. The principal and several parents commented that the school is like a large family – everybody knows each other and even the kids watch out for each other. Classrooms are fairly well equipped, though some equipment appears dated. There is a lack of playground equipment and whatever exists is very dated. On the whole, River Bend students seem content and readily participate in class. Student attitudes are positive, though somewhat complacent when they discuss school. Discipline does not seem to be a major concern for students or parents.

CASE C1 – DIMENSION I: PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION

The most outstanding attribute of the Professional Development at River Bend is the ongoing faculty study. The principal selected a book that deals with effective instructional methods and ordered a copy for each teacher. Teachers have a schedule for reading, and on regularly scheduled professional development days, meet in small groups to discuss their
readings. These professional development groups are very informal; teachers were given permission to leave campus in small groups and reconvene in nearby restaurants or coffee houses to discuss their readings. Many teachers spoke of this experience as refreshing. Several teachers mentioned staying well beyond the required time because they found the discussions stimulating.

The principal observed that the teachers were genuinely beginning to reflect on their own practices and open up to alternate ways of doing things. This was her aim in initiating the study which lasted the duration of the data collection year. Although the principal felt that there is a high level of competence in the instructional staff, she noted that many of the teachers are hesitant to adopt new ways, and the low teacher turnover means that teacher exposure to new ideas is limited. She was also very aware that the teachers here are very proud of past accomplishments and react defensively to urgings to improve areas of their practice. Consequently, she decided that this approach to staff development would both expose teachers to new methods and cause them to reflect on their own teaching without making anyone feel threatened.

River Bend Primary is accredited by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, an independent regional agency, which requires a rigorous process of self-study for participating schools, which must be updated every few years. Participation in this process is optional for schools in the district; River Bend is one of a select few to achieve accreditation from the prestigious organization. It is the only school in this study to have under gone the demanding accreditation process.

All of River Bend’s teachers meet the state’s definition of highly qualified. One teacher, new to the school, is Nationally Board Certified for high school Social Studies, but is obviously teaching out of this area with her first grade assignment. Interviews indicate a limited amount of collaboration occurs; many teachers would like more, but some felt more comfortable working independently. The principal said that despite relatively close access to a local university, most teachers do not take classes on a regular basis. A small percentage of teachers are involved in a professional community or association beyond the school. Early in the year, few teachers reported participation in any recent professional development though many were open to the idea and some had attended conferences or specialized professional training in the past. This was the first area to be dramatically impacted by the change to a magnet program. While River Bend’s teachers had become somewhat set in their ways over the years, they had always been a very
conscientious group who prided themselves on being “good teachers.” This is very much a part of their belief system and self identity as professionals. This basic assumption was ultimately what motivated numerous teachers to seek additional training over the summer. The principal selected not one, but two new books for the new year’s faculty study – and no one objected. The teachers met the sudden changes in their roles with great resolve and determination to “master” this new thing. They instinctively began to embrace a much more collaborative approach. A month after reopening as a magnet school, the principal felt like everyone on her faculty, except possibly one, had opened up to new ways of doing things.

CASE C1 – DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Principal Leadership

Mrs. Grace LeBlanc has been the principal of River Bend Primary for six years; prior to that she taught at the school for some time. She is a kind person and is very committed to the River Bend Primary School and community. She is well informed in her field as evidenced by her intelligent discussion of leadership, student achievement, parental involvement, discipline and staff development in the three principal interviews. Numerous professional trade books that line the shelves of her warm and inviting office.

Mrs. LeBlanc is a big believer in adapting established policies, procedures and plans to the specifics of the circumstances. This is how she arrived at her approach to staff development – she perceived the need, took into account known faculty dispositions, and selected a method that she felt would have the greatest chance for success. Even her choice to depart from district norms and allow teachers to leave campus was calculated based on an intimate knowledge of her staff. She knew them to be highly committed teachers, who worked well together and felt most comfortable in less formal settings. When asked if she wasn’t concerned that some teachers would simply disappear and not participate when allowed to leave campus, she responded that she knew them better than that, adding that this was a small school and even if her teachers wanted to shirk their responsibilities, they wouldn’t because they would be found out and given a hard time by the other teachers.

Mrs. LeBlanc is well liked and respected by teachers and parents alike. Parents frequently described her as caring and involved. Most parents surveyed said they felt well-informed of school events and appreciated the monthly newsletter. One teacher said of her, “If Grace asks us to do something, its done. These teachers would walk to the moon for her.” This
is consistent with a statement that Mrs. LeBlanc made in an interview regarding her philosophy of leadership. She said that teachers usually go along with her requests because they know she never asks teachers to do something without good reason and wouldn’t consider asking them to do something she wouldn’t do herself.

In a discussion about discipline, one teacher said, “Well, they’re (the students) not afraid to go to the office, but discipline is not really a problem here like at other schools, so I guess its okay. She talks to ‘em. Besides, if Coach hears they give Grace an attitude, they hear from him.” Neither observations nor interviews indicated the use of a consistent school wide discipline plan; however, class rules were posted in several classes. Students observed in a variety of situations exercised self-control and responded to teacher requests.

Teacher Leadership

The principal indicated that typically three teachers are very helpful in organizing and doing things around the school. She says that because they do a good job and have a good attitude that she calls on them repeatedly. Sociometric Survey results also reveal that these same teachers were frequently identified by other teachers as being someone they talk to about instruction or someone they think would be a good choice for the school improvement team. These teachers seem to have considerable contact with other teachers and have considerable influence in the school.

Teachers at this school are efficacious about their ability to improve student performance. The school improvement plan is clear and includes concrete steps that are being followed to improve student performance in Language Arts and Math. Teachers are aware of what the SIP lays out and know exactly what they are supposed to do to make it happen. Observations reveal that SIP components, such as daily journal writing by students, are actually being carried out at the class level.

River Bend’s teachers are accustomed to a great deal of recognition from the district due to past accomplishments. There is a sense of frustration and resentment over the new state accountability program which requires continuous improvement by all schools regardless of baseline performance. Upon the announcement that River Bend had not shown growth in student achievement in the past two-year cycle, teachers were both discouraged and defensive. Several were quick to point out that the school still exceeded district and national averages and tied state averages for student performance. More than one teacher said that they didn’t know
what more they could do. Teachers at River Bend look to Mrs. LeBlanc and their own experience for answers to questions about how to improve performance. Consulting with colleagues and collaborative planning is a new concept for some of River Bend’s teachers. Mrs. LeBlanc says they’re not resistant to change, but neither do they quickly jump on the bandwagon for every new program that comes along. Prior to any knowledge of the change to a magnet program, the principal said that they (the teachers) simply need to be guided into changes. For new things to take hold, teachers need to be convinced of the need to change, be shown a better way, and encouraged into slowly incorporating it into their repertoire.

Researcher observations after the change to a magnet program indicate that this indeed seems to be the case. The school board’s decision seems to have “jump started” this faculty. Teachers formerly contented to “cruise along” are taking initiative and voluntarily assuming responsibilities they never had before. By all reports, they consult, adapt, reflect, ask, and do more than ever before.

Other Leadership

The secretary at this school is very comfortable in her position and seems to take a great deal of initiative in assisting things to run smoothly. Parents participate in special fundraising events to help purchase items on the school’s wish list. Recently local businesses took initiative by donating money to the school and making calls to the district requesting that the school stay open, as is.

It is unknown what type of parent, student, or community leadership will emerge in the new school. The principal has already noted several differences in the way “these parents” react to common policies that the school has always followed, such as lunch money collection. She wonders if they are so anxious about mundane things like kindergarteners handling quarters for juice money, how they will react to other policies like honor roll guidelines. She was stunned that prior to the opening of school, she had received several requests for the “year’s curriculum.” She commented that it wasn’t available yet, but confided that “this (parent group) was a horse of a different color” and that she could never let on to these concerned parents that “we are making it up as we go.”

CASE C1 – DIMENSION III: QUALITY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The SAPI/SAPA classroom observation rubric was used to assess the quality of the learning experiences students at River Bend are involved in. This instrument examines
opportunities for cognitive growth in the environment and also incorporates the principles of
authentic pedagogy (Newman & Assoc., 1996). Observations were random and unannounced in
order to sample the typical types of learning activities that exist at the school. All observations
were done prior to changing to a magnet program.

Several items on the instrument measured levels of cognitive stimulation. Observations
for opportunities for student engagement in higher order thinking (HOT) revealed that in 50% of
classes observed, students were involved in mostly lower order thinking (LOT), but had at least
one minor exposure to HOT. However, in 16% of observed classes, there was high use of HOT.

Similarly in 66% of classes observed, knowledge exploration was superficial and
fragmented. In some classes (16%) knowledge exploration was deep at times, shallow at others.
However, again in 16% of classes, there was consistently deep knowledge exploration by most
students. Highly interactive substantive conversation was observed in 66.7% of classes.

In general, student participation in learning activities was characterized by passive
engagement. Students were compliant with teacher requests, but displayed little overt enthusiasm
for learning. In 16% of classes, higher levels of student interest and motivation were observed.
There were no classes observed in which high levels of interest, enthusiasm and motivation for
learning were seen in most of the students for the majority of the lesson. In 50% of the classes
observed, moderate levels of distractions were present in the environment which interfered with
the concentration of one or more students.

Learning tasks or assessments in 50% of classes required little or no organization or
manipulation of information; organization and structure was typically provided by the teacher.
However, this was not true in 25% of classes where students were asked to sort, classify,
organize or make sense of information. In 50% of classes students were not challenged to
consider alternative solutions, perspectives, or strategies.

In 25% of classes students were engaged in processes central to the discipline, and
success on assigned tasks required comprehension of major ideas, themes or theories central to
the field. In 75% of classes the disciplinary content of lessons was moderate. In 66% of classes
the content was relevant to real world problems, but it was not evident that students made these
connections. In 50% of classes observed, students presented the products of their learning only
to the teacher; in the other 50% students presented their learning to peers in the class, but in none
of the classes observed did students present or plan to present their work to an audience beyond the class or school.

These data indicate a small percentage, possibly 25%, of learning environments in River Bend Primary School provide high quality learning experiences for students on a routine day-to-day basis. The other roughly 75% of the learning environments fall within the average range – neither exceptionally low quality, nor exceptionally high quality. These data make sense when one considers that student achievement is consistently high, but despite its best efforts, the school has been unable to increase achievement levels for two consecutive years.

CASE C1 – DIMENSION IV: THE STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

Discussions with Mrs. LeBlanc and several teachers, as well as comments made by parents on surveys, indicate that teachers at River Bend take time to work with students as they perceive the student is having difficulty. However, there is no evidence available to indicate that student progress is tracked in any systematic way or that there is widespread use of problem solving techniques to identify the cause of a student’s difficulty, or to monitor whether non-struggling students are working at their potential.

By all indications, River Bend is a caring, nurturing environment for students. The perception is that the campus is safe; although, few security measures such as fences, locked doors, identification badges or video camera are in use. Several programs are in effect which contribute to the success of students; these include Class Size Reduction, Junior Achievement, K-3 Reading and Math Initiative, a gifted program, a talented program, Accelerated Reader Software, Every Day Counts Math Enrichment kits, Character Links, and D.A.R.E. In addition to these programs, before and aftercare is offered at the school site; this program was mentioned repeatedly by parents as being a help to them.

Due to its prestigious past and precarious future (i.e., the threat of closure), River Bend is experiencing a renewal of community support. The year of this study the school was contacted by an association of local business owners who wanted to show their support by donating several thousand dollars to the school. The principal, Mrs. LeBlanc, was thrilled at an invitation to speak to this group about her vision for River Bend’s future. These are indications of a strong relationship with the community.

Parents also expressed overwhelming support for the school. Many said they had helped when contacted for special events. Others said they would participate more often in one-time
school events if they were offered on weekends, rather than or in addition to nights. Others mentioned child care as an obstacle. Several parents wrote elaborate notes in response to a question asking for ways the school could increase parental involvement. Two ideas were mentioned repeatedly; one was the establishment of a phone chain to let parents know how they could help for special events, the other had to do with wanting an organized volunteer program with regular schedules for which certain routine tasks are performed to assist on a day-to-day basis. These parents presented themselves as eager to help. In fact, even the response rate of greater than 95% for completion of parent survey indicates significant interest. It is then surprising to learn that fewer than 5% of the parents surveyed indicated that they volunteered at school from time to time. The school is grossly under utilizing these parents who seem to be supportive of the school and want to help. This is a vast untapped resource for River Bend.

Student recognition is a big part of the social life at River Bend. An awards ceremony is held every nine weeks and families are invited, though only a few show. Students receive pencils and certificates from the principal for numerous achievements including: honor roll, BUG Club (Brought Up Grades), citizenship and attendance. Students eagerly look forward to this event. Prior to the ceremony, students can be seen clustering around a bulletin board near the office to see if their name is listed, others strain to see if those are “the certificates” in Mrs. LeBlanc’s arms.

CASE C1 – ARTIFACTS

The architecture and external appearance of River Bend are somewhat nondescript and blend effortlessly into the surrounding metropolis. The building is painted brick with no distinctive features. Except for being dotted with a flagpole and a few climbing apparatuses, the well cut grounds could easily be confused with those of the nearby shops or offices. Despite being located near a nursery with beautiful exotic plants lining its gates, River Bend Primary has little in the way of landscaping or outdoor embellishment.

It may be surprising then to the casual visitor entering the office area or surrounding corridors to suddenly find oneself surrounded by colorful displays of student artwork, paintings by original artists and framed prints of classics. These displays of art are tangible ways of embracing local culture. The school itself is located across the street from one art gallery and down the road from another. Several parents mentioned that they would like to see the school adopt a curriculum which promoted the arts to a greater extent.
Other symbols of “who we are” line the front foyer. There numerous photos line the walls showing students on fieldtrips to Washington D.C. and other places; prominent among these is an 8 X 10 of Nancy Reagan’s visit to the school when she was First Lady. There is also a state issued flag which reads “School of Academic Achievement.” The flag has been displayed flat on the wall in a manner which allows it to be read easily at all times. Several bulletin boards on the first floor display student’s pictures, one board near the office lists names of students who will receive perfect attendance awards at the ceremony to be held at the end of the nine week grading period. These displays make two prominent statements: first, that the people that inhabit the school, particularly students past and present, are important; second, a subtle but definite statement is being made that River Bend is a good school and noteworthy place that contributes to the community in a positive way.

CASE C1 – ESPoused BELIEFS

The leadership and teachers at River Bend believe that the best way to boost student scores is just plain, old-fashioned good teaching. This comes across in interviews with teachers and the principal. Teachers also believe in the importance of one-on-one attention. This is evidenced by the prominence with which the class size reduction program is mentioned by the teachers as an asset to the school. When asked what they do to enhance success, teachers frequently come back to statements about monitoring or “watching” students “to see if they’re catching on.” In the event that a student “doesn’t get it,” teachers report that they “try a different way,” referring to adjusting instructional methods.

CASE C1 – BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Observations and interviews were designed to identify norms of behavior at the school. Basic assumptions about the nature of reality at the school and the best ways to handle things were inferred from these norms of behavior found at River Bend Primary. The assumptions are in no particular order.

- The faculty and leadership here is capable of increasing student achievement.
- We are good teachers and we know we are doing a good job, regardless what anyone else says.
- If we simply do a better job of what we’re already doing, things will improve.
- New ideas can be helpful as part of a large repertoire, but it isn’t wise to abandon what we know works.
• Change is not always a good thing; it should be approached with great caution
• We’ve always had a diverse population, so the presence of these permit transfer kids makes no difference in the way we should function.
• A main reason our scores are down is the influx of low achieving permit transfer students.
• One-on-one attention is more important than fancy methods and materials.
• If there are any alarming trends or a need for more drastic change, Mrs. LeBlanc will tell us.
• Students thrive on lots of feedback, especially positive.
• When implementing something new its best to look to those with experience as a model, rather than reinventing the wheel.

CASE C1 – AN OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL CULTURE

River Bend is what Stoll and Fink (1996) would refer to as a “strolling school.” They are a good school by traditional standards, but are slow to embrace change. They prefer to rely on their past solutions and accomplishments. Only when it is obvious that this isn’t working are they willing to seek out new ways of doing things. The defining characteristic of the faculty is that they have a high level of professional orientation. Teachers are conscientious and committed to make change work once they are sufficiently motivated. They have a strong self-image as being competent and are intent on doing a good job. Teachers at this school also value their reputation in the community and are desirous of once again receiving the recognition and notoriety that they once enjoyed. Though slow to embrace change, their efficacious attitude causes them to seek professional development to further the skills they will need to succeed. The school also has strong, steady leadership. There are effective informal communication patterns within the school, including a desire to collaborate. The faculty is very harmonious and unified. Teachers respect the principal and rely heavily on the guidance and structure she provides. Student recognition is also a strength.

River Bend’s story is one of a very good traditional school struggling to adapt to a rapidly changing world. They are doing very little differently than they were doing four years ago when they were celebrated as “the top school” in the district. Then the rules changed, so to speak, when the new school accountability program was implemented. Suddenly they were judged not on their test scores, but on improving scores, which were already high. Measured against this
new standard, River Bend’s rank in the district radically changed from “top school” to “in need of improvement”. This leaves teachers, who are working just as hard as they always have, feeling somewhat baffled and defensive.

In addition to coping with changes in the accountability system, they are facing the challenges that come with sudden shifts in population. Like many other urban schools, River Bend’s demographics have changed; as increasing numbers of middle class families relocate to the suburbs, the school population includes a greater percentage of lower income and minority students. To exacerbate this effect, the district’s new transfer program which came along with the new accountability program and NCLB, coupled with the school’s historically strong reputation have made it a popular choice for inner city parents wanting to escape inferior schools. Recall that almost a third of their enrollment the year of data collection were on transfer permits.

Just as River Bend’s teachers were adjusting to these shifts and slowly beginning to adjust their strategies, the school board votes to radically change the population and the focus of the school by making it a magnet school. Now rather than becoming adept at meeting the needs of at risk students, the faculty must reorganize to meet needs of an academically gifted student body. This is a lot of change in a short period of time for a school that has functioned as a traditional middle class neighborhood school for a long time, with much stability and few faculty or administrative turnovers.

River Bend’s teachers were comfortable with the way things were, the changes they have experienced have been unintended on their part. While they are slow to embrace change, they are none the less, competent professionals, and resign themselves to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of their students. While River Bend failed to show improvements in their baseline score, it should be noted that student achievement remained high despite dramatic increases in the number of at risk students. This is to their credit and may account for why teachers were unconvinced of the need for change prior to the decision to transform the school into an academic magnet.

Subsequent visits to the school reveal that teachers are shouldering their new mission admirably. They have focused much attention on acquiring specific professional development to equip them to adapt successfully to the new student body. Teachers are somewhat unsure of what they are doing and are not entirely comfortable with the complete overhaul of the school’s policies procedures and programs, but they are efficacious that they can make it work and once
again be recognized as an outstanding school. They are however, reluctant to trust their own judgment, preferring instead to find out what other schools and teachers have done in similar situations. The teachers seem to be accepting the need to change the way they do things now more whole heartedly than they did before the remaking of the school into a magnet program. Prior to the change in mission, teachers seemed unconvinced of the need to change and were stubbornly sticking to their established ways. The resistance to change seems to have dissipated as teachers recognized the legitimate need for change. The early stages of this cultural transformation find teachers and the principal almost frantically grappling for information about “the best way to do this”. This highlights the high level of professional orientation present in the school. Time will only tell the extent to which they successfully reinvent themselves by adopting new norms in the other dimensions of culture such as the Organizational Structure, the Quality of the Learning Environments, and the Student-centered focus.

VII. CASE STUDY SCHOOL C2 – MOSS POINT PRIMARY

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Moss Point Primary is a grand old structure which is located prominently on a major highway of a small community on the urban fringe of a large city. The original building was built in 1925 and features classic Spanish style architecture. The structure was added to the U. S. Interior’s list of historic sites in 1993. The school is listed as a historical landmark. The exterior of the building is quite attractive with intricate detailing around the front entrance which is now kept locked; the current main entrance door is a door off of a side street. The school has a well-kept, fenced front lawn and playground.

Behind the original building is a two story brick addition, which doesn’t match architecturally but is quite functional and not readily visible from the street. The bottom story of the new building houses the cafeteria while 4th and 5th grade classes occupy the top floor. There is yet another addition which connects the cafeteria addition to the original structure; many of the early childhood, kindergarten and first grade classes meet in this hall.

The office is the first space a visitor comes to when entering the building from the side road, which has become the main entrance, since the main entrance original to the structure is no longer used in this manner. The reception area is somewhat plain, but is adorned by several artists’ renderings of the original Moss Point school building. Several plaques also hang in this area for awards received by the school in recent years. Down the hall from the office is a
magnificent circular rotunda with a three story vaulted ceiling, beautiful woodwork balconies (no longer functional – only decorative) and an intricately patterned hand-laid tile floor. Several glass encased display areas contain old trophies, newspaper clippings and so forth alluding to the school’s accomplishments in the distant past. Several small office spaces within the rotunda contain desks and supplies for ancillary or support staff. While the rotunda, once the front entrance and office area, serves no real functional purpose anymore, except housing storage and ancillary staff, it is obviously a cherished spot and a point of pride for the school faculty and the community at large.

In the hallways with classrooms, student artwork and academic work line the walls. Images of students are found on numerous bulletin boards. Classrooms on the whole are well-equipped, and each one has its own distinctive personality or feel. Most of the learning spaces in the school are cheerful and inviting.

Moss Point has the feel of a small hometown school. Everybody knows each other, and there is a familiarity and constancy about the school which gives the feel of a much smaller place. In actuality, there are 456 students currently enrolled in grades preschool through 5th. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the students received free and reduced lunches and 15% of the population are classified as special education students.

Moss Point has a strong reputation in the district and the neighboring inner city school system, and in the wake of the federal ‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation (NCLB, 2000), numerous students have requested permits to transfer out of “failing” schools and into Moss Point. These students, according to Mr. Duplesis, the principal, tend to not function at as high a level as the typical Moss Point student. The principal is diligent about meeting with these parents to explain the school’s high standards for student performance. Teachers test all incoming transfer students and make placement decisions; frequently, students are sent back to a previous grade because they are unable to perform on grade level. According to faculty reports, many transfer parents are so shocked by Moss Point’s standards and push for academic excellence that some even opt to reenroll their children in the “failing school” they originally sought refuge from. Others agree to placement in a lower grade or mandatory after school tutoring by a Moss Point teacher hired for this purpose. The tutoring program is required for all students not performing on grade level; it is paid for by the school, though parents must provide transportation.
Most of the Moss Point students live nearby, within the small closely knit Moss Point community. Moss Point itself is actually a small township which dates back to the early 1900’s. Adjacent to Moss Point are several other small municipalities all of which border a large metropolitan area of over a million residents. Moss Point Primary School is located in the older section of town near numerous historic buildings complete with sprawling hundred year oaks. While some of the nearby property appears run down and in need of renovation, the township seems to be thriving; right next to the school is a fast food establishment. Lining the highway on both sides are “mom and pop” type businesses and strip malls with dress shops, hardware stores, paint and building supply shops; all seem to be thriving.

The community is primarily comprised of blue collar workers and small business owners who reside mostly in small to middle class single family homes, such as the neighborhood immediately behind Moss Point Primary School. The school district also includes several new multi-family dwellings such as town homes, condominiums and apartments, built in what used to be the buffer zone between Moss Point and “the city.”

CASE C2 – LIFE FOR THE TYPICAL MOSS POINT STUDENT

Most students at Moss Point live nearby and have no substantial commute, several parents carpool, others walk to and from school. Many students ride busses, those with transfer permits having the longest rides.

Everything at Moss Point is very personal; the principal is very involved one-on-one with teachers, and the teachers are very focused on their students. It would be very difficult for a child to “slide by unnoticed” here. Teachers across all subjects and levels were observed trying to pull students in and get them involved. A child who is hesitant sends up a warning flag and teachers zero in on this child to encourage the child to think and process the information or try another way to complete the task.

When asked what they liked about school, students at Moss Point talked about class projects or activities rather than recess or parties. School is an intriguing place for many of Moss Point’s students. Some said the work was hard, but even these students said they liked school.

The researcher visited with one teacher while her students enjoyed some free time on the playground. The teacher answered questions about an activity students were doing in class. This teacher went on and on about all of the learning activities that she had developed or found centering around a favorite holiday book. She had weaved Math and Reading skills throughout
the holiday art projects, so that learning was taking place “even during the fun stuff.” She felt good about letting them have a break now because “they had worked extra hard today.” This teacher’s enthusiasm was not uncommon among the faculty and this same exuberance was reflected in the attitudes of the students.

Students in preschool through second grade spend their days with a single teacher. However, third, fourth and fifth graders remain in homeroom groups, but change classes. The exception is one transitional self-contained third grade class where a special education certified teacher assists mainstreamed and at risk students in acquiring the organizational skills needed to succeed in a departmentalized program. Teachers specialize in content and content specific methods and they teach more than one level, for instance the Math teacher teaches third, fourth and fifth grade. Alternate day blocked scheduling is used to avoid wasted time. Homeroom classes remain together all day. Of all the classes observed, only students in one class seemed bored, and even these students remained on task most of the time. On the whole, students find Moss Point a challenging, but positive place to spend their days. No disruptive events were witnessed; neither did students, parents or teachers mention discipline or fights as a major problem at Moss Point.

**CASE C2 – DIMENSION I: PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION**

The teachers for each grade at Moss Point have a common planning time each day. They work together on weekly planning as well as addressing larger issues of curriculum, instruction, methods, materials, or discipline. The team-work approach is integral to the school’s instructional program; however, as one teacher pointed out “because we plan together doesn’t mean we are all the same – the lesson may look one way in my room and completely different in hers – we just like to bounce ideas off of each other.”

Every two weeks the teachers meet around a small work table in the principal’s office during their grade’s planning time. During this time, the principal covers several informational updates. Then he refers to his notes and follows up on the status of individual students with very specific questions such as “How is Johnny doing now? Did his mom get him back on his medication?” or “Is Tiffani doing her homework now? Did you call her parents about it? What did they say?”

After several minutes of updating the status reports for several students who are having difficulties, he moves on to discussing possible problems, such as perceived gaps in the
curriculum, and announcing new directions or concerns. He is always asking his teachers for input: “What do you think? How can we make this happen? Is there anything else we should be doing?” He listens and takes notes as they speak. This process of small group meetings is repeated in cycles continuously throughout the day until he has met with every group of teachers and discussed issues with individual students, and common concerns.

Several of the usual programs are in place at this school such as class size reduction program and Accelerated Reader software, but Moss Side has their own system for making sure “no child is left behind.” It’s called the Helps, Supports and Assistance Team (HSAT). The teachers on this team, in conjunction with the principal, developed a “student portfolio” similar to a cumulative record but containing pertinent information useful for tracking the long term progress of students. This form contains a record of each students’ standardized test scores, grades and teacher notations about possible obstacles to achievements, as well as interventions tried and whether or not successful. The committee requires that this sheet be consulted and a learning styles inventory be given with appropriate individual adjustments in instructional and assessment methods before any child is referred to go through the standard SBLC process to qualify for special education. The school faculty looks on this process as a gold mine, allowing them to unearth treasure troves of information to help them reach children who aren’t achieving because of some undetected but easily rectified situation. Teachers were brimming over with success stories attributed to the HSAT process. The process and the existence of the committee seemed to bolster their confidence that a way can be found to help every student.

In addition to this, the school hires teachers to remain after school for an hour each day to tutor identified students who are at risk for academic failure. Notes were sent home to parents of identified students and these students were expected to stay after school one day a week for additional tutoring or remediation. This was presented to parents as a valuable service to benefit the student, and students who failed to show twice or for whom prompt transportation was not provided were to be dropped from the program. This program was implemented across all grades and was viewed by the principal as an important factor in helping struggling students to succeed.

The school also had decided to target high ability students, not qualifying for gifted instruction, but perceived by teachers as not performing to their potential. The principal put the question to the faculty: “How can we grow more gifted kids? Are there ways we can reach, challenge and enrich that we haven’t tapped into yet?” Teachers were asked to think about this
and to bring their thoughts and resources to the table so that a program could be developed. Upon subsequent follow-up interviews, it was discovered that the focused faculty study for the next school year became “Growing Gifted Kids.”

Moss Point had one new teacher the year of the study, who reported receiving lots of assistance with planning, curricula, and materials. The principal said and it was observed that her mentor was very well organized and liked sharing the detailed things she had developed over the years. He said the paring was deliberate because he wanted his new teacher to focus on classroom management and learn to effectively monitor students for comprehension. She seemed very pleased and positive about her position at Moss Point. All of Moss Point’s teachers meet the state’s definition of highly qualified. Although the educational level of the teachers approximated that of other schools in the area, Moss Point’s teachers came across as exceptionally dedicated in one-on-one informal interviews. One teacher stated, “Here we go beyond…do whatever, stand on our head if we need to – we all do it.”

CASE C2 – DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Principal Leadership

Mr. Jim Duplesis has been the principal of Moss Point Primary for five years. Before taking this job, he was principal of another school in the district for 9.5 years. In his early career, he was a special education teacher in elementary and middle school settings; mid-career he served as an administrative assistant at an alternative setting for behavior disordered high school students. He recalls that following the death of the previous principal, he felt fortunate to be selected from a pool of 16 candidates to become the new principal of Moss Point Primary.

Mr. Duplesis described Moss Point, upon his arrival, as “a school with lots of internal problems.” When probed for more information about this, he proceeded to describe a situation where there were lots of “cliques” among the faculty. He felt that the teachers, at that point, were unaccustomed to a situation where “there are no favorites,” and everybody talks to each other and makes joint decisions. “That all changed within a few months,” he recalled.

When asked what specific steps he took after his appointment, he said the first thing he did was meet one-on-one with each teacher to discuss their specific concerns; at this time he let it be known that he wanted all teachers to work together and with him to make the best decisions for students – there would be no favoritism – period. The second thing he did was reorganize schedules to create a common planning time and to require grade level meetings – a new concept
for Moss Point teachers. The next thing he did was to make it a point to regularly attend grade level meetings. During these meetings, teachers were encouraged to share what they were doing and how it was working. They were also asked to discuss what they wished they could do and why. He told teachers that if they could convince him there was a better way, he would make sure they had whatever they needed to make it happen. No matter what it was – he would find a way.

Observations of these meetings five years later reveal that this approach seems to have worked. Teachers were very comfortable with sharing ideas and providing feedback for each other. They listen to ideas open-mindedly, but then begin to analyze each saying things like “yes, but…” “well if we did that then we’d need to…” “Do you know anyone who’s ever tried that before?” The approach is truly collaborative.

Mr. Duplessis frequently makes observations and asks for input from his teachers. At one meeting he was observed telling teachers that “I think I’ve found a hole in what we’re doing… I don’t think our above-average, but not quite gifted, students are being challenged enough. How do we push them to achieve all they are capable of without frustrating or overwhelming our other students?” This question then became the focus of informal inquiry that year and the central focus of planned staff development the next year. In the year following on-site observations for this study, a policy was implemented in which teachers who 1) wrote a differentiated lesson to challenge advanced students, 2) taught the lesson and had data to show that it had impacted students, 3) submitted a written lesson plan with the assessments, and 4) presented it at a grade level meeting would receive supplemental compensation of $15.00 per lesson. The lessons then became property of the school and are being compiled into a resource book for teachers.

Teachers interviewed all had very positive stories to tell. One teacher, who had transferred to Moss Point in Mr. Duplessis’s second year as principal, said she had liked her job at the other school – until she came here. She loved working under Mr. Duplessis and couldn’t imagine going back to a situation where everybody just did their own thing. The teachers here see time, resources, and conventions as flexible; if the current structure doesn’t fit what they feel they need to do they find a way to reconfigure these elements that others might see as inflexible barriers. They attribute their open-minded approach to the leadership Mr. Duplessis brought to Moss Point.
Teacher Leadership

At Moss Point, there is not really a select few teachers who assume more responsibility for school matters than others. There are those who are respected for their knowledge and creativity and these teachers are consulted frequently by others. Creativity is valued very highly at this school. Interviews indicate that the more creative and innovative teachers appear to be respected by their colleagues. Other characteristics that were mentioned highly as traits of teacher leaders included being well organized and “getting results.” These are the behaviors that Moss Point teachers seem to want to emulate.

As mentioned previously, teachers here are very collaborative. They seek input on ideas and strategies even from new teachers. One teacher said that one thing she had learned was the “everyone has something to contribute.” Another said, “We discuss it, usually several times, and go with what works… whether it’s old, new, or whatever doesn’t really matter. If it works, it works.” This collegiality seems to be the source of the high level of teacher efficacy observed at Moss Point.

Teachers here also present themselves as being very committed to their work. This is whole heartedly supported by the principal, who constantly praises his faculty. Parents also acknowledge how committed the teachers are. Informal conversations with teachers revealed that many teachers put in numerous hours well beyond the paid work week. They did not complain about this, but several teachers appeared very tired – possibly overworked. None seemed actually burned out, but the teachers here definitely take their work to heart. Morale seemed high, but energy levels, it seemed, could not necessarily keep up with all these teachers wanted to do.

Leadership from Other Sources

Moss Point has a PTO, but very little turned up in artifactual data (leaflets, flyers, plaques, articles) about the extent of its involvement. Nor was PTO, parent, or community leadership mentioned in interviews with teachers or the principal. Parent surveys indicate that many parents surveyed never volunteer at the school, nor were any parents observed helping at school. However conversations with the new PTO president revealed that there is a small, but highly involved parent group that takes an active role in trying to contribute. Concerns over dwindling attendance at parent meetings cause the parents to reorganize their meeting formats to provide childcare and dinner at night meetings, making it easier for working parents to attend.
Early indications are that it is working. The newly reorganized group is committed to working with the principal, to get the teachers whatever it is they want. The secretaries at Moss Point screen access to the principal, but are aware of his priorities; simply saying that I was a researcher gave me instant access when others, such as fundraising representatives and parents, were asked to leave a message.

CASE C2 – DIMENSION III: QUALITY OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The SAPI/SAPA classroom observation rubric was developed to assess students’ opportunities for cognitive growth, based on the Learner Centered Psychological Principals (American Psychological Association, 1997) and the principles of Authentic Pedagogy (Newman & Assoc., 1996). The instrument measures the extent to which students 1) are exposed to and engaged in cognitively stimulating learning activities, 2) have opportunities to access and manipulate information, and 3) demonstrate the knowledge they’ve acquired. The percents given in this section are based on random unannounced classroom observations of one-third to one-half of the regular education classes at the school. At Moss Point Primary students in most classes have opportunities to be involved in HOT and exploring knowledge at a deep level (83% of classes observed). In half of the classes observed, most students were highly involved in sustained substantive conversations.

In most classes (66.7% of observations), students were highly engaged and noticeably enthusiastic about learning, and no substantial distractions were present in the environment. However, in 33.3% of observations, student engagement was less than enthusiastic; typically passively compliant, and moderate levels of environmental distractions interfered with the concentration of some students.

Students in 83.3% of classes were involved in organizing information and consideration of alternative solutions or perspectives. Very little evidence was seen of differentiated learning activities based on student needs or interests. In these classes, students were also engaged in inquiry methods central to the discipline. In 66% of classes successful completion of assigned tasks required an understanding of one or more major themes, theories or ideas central to the discipline. While many students shared their work with peers in the class, very few students presented the products of their learning to an audience beyond the class.

In general, the quality of the learning experiences students were involved in at Moss Point were high or moderately high; there was, however, a great deal of variation from teacher to
teacher. In roughly 16% of observations, the quality of students’ learning experiences were considerably below the mode for the rest of the school.

The high overall achievement of students and the recent gains shown are most likely due in some part to the generally high quality of learning experiences available to students on a day-to-day basis.

CASE C2 – DIMENSION IV: STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

Moss Point has a class size reduction teacher, placed in second grade. The school received “some Title 1 funds” which were used to purchase 2 teacher assistants in first grade. They also own a copy of Accelerated Reader software, but the principal readily admitted that it is not really being used by the teachers: “Who has time for that? Our teachers just can’t get to it and cover the regular curriculum like they need to.”

Moss Point does not rely on externally devised programs to meet the needs of their students. The approach here places a very heavy emphasis on human resources. Moss Point looks to Moss Point teachers to identify and meet the very specific individual needs of Moss Point Primary students. Moss Point’s principal oversees this important process very conscientiously. He rigorously and aggressively gets involved in the HSAT process, devised by the school to formally monitor the long-term and short-term progress of each student. But whereas the HSAT plan is the chosen process, the teachers and their judgments about students’ needs, including sources of problems and ways to increase performance, are paramount. The philosophy here is student-centered, individualized and simplistic – “Just figure out what the problem is, brainstorm the best way to solve it, and make it happen for that kid.” Programs then are not permanent fixtures, but current courses of action employed to meet perceived needs in the most meaningful ways; when they cease to work at Moss Point, they cease to exist at Moss Point.

CASE C2 – ARTIFACTS

The most obvious artifact at Moss Point Primary is the elaborate architecture of the building itself. Its importance to the school and surrounding community can be seen in the frequency with which its image or likeness is seen on “stuff” around the school, from the official school letterhead, to multiple artistic renderings, to photos in posted newspaper clippings. School people, including support personnel, are proud to show off their “gorgeous” rotunda to visitors. The beauty of the Moss Point facility is definitely a point of pride.
Other artifacts include the framed certificates of accomplishments in the recent past, which are framed in the office foyer. The halls and classrooms are lined with displays of students work and/or their images (usually photos or student drawings). Teachers’ desk areas contain lots of dog-eared resource books, files or bins of teacher made materials, and other instructional resource “stuff.”

The design of the principal’s office sheds a great deal of light on the function the space serves. Mr. Duplessis’s desk is located in the far left end of a rectangular space. His desk is very organized, but has notebooks, calendar, pens and papers on which he is working. On an adjacent wall is a tall shelf with several large binders, mostly containing district policy type manuals; however, directly behind his desk and within close reach of his chair is a smaller shelf filled with smaller trade books. The titles of these books are quite telling about the thought processes that motivate Mr. Duplessis’s behavior; all of the books have to do with increasing school effectiveness in one form or another. Prominently and conveniently located on the top shelf are two newly released books: *What Great Teachers Do Differently* and *What Great Schools Do Differently: Fourteen Things that Matter Most* (Whitaker, 2003).

The largest part of the principal’s office; however, is filled with a mid-sized table and several chairs. It is here that he holds bimonthly meetings with each grade level to trouble-shoot, follow-up and brainstorm with teams of teachers. It is also here that he meets with parents of “permit” students and those having difficulties. The spatial arrangement of this office speaks volumes about Moss Point’s culture, because here it’s all about sitting around the table and talking it out together, much like a family might gather around the kitchen table.

**CASE C2 – ESPOUSED BELIEFS**

Shared beliefs are found in statements of formal policy which outline the approaches the school faculty and principal endorse. A body of collective written statements such as the SIP, school policy manuals, the student handbook, school website and oral comments of teachers, principal, and others were analyzed for consistent or recurrent themes. These themes are summarized by the researcher into a narrative which attempts to capture the essence of the image the school projects:

The stated mission of Moss Point is to increase academic and social development to promote lifelong learning. While much attention is being given to the student’s academic development, reports from parents and informal comments made by the teachers acknowledge
that little is being done to enhance social or any other type of development. This is something that grieves the principal, but he feels has been an unavoidable consequence of the heavy emphasis student academic achievement. He hopes the PTO will be able to help in this regard.

The SIP lists numerous programs (e.g. 13) the school is participating in, but these were not prominent in interviews and observations. What teachers, the principal and the parents talked about were the high level of teacher dedication and collaboration. Moss Point prides itself in being a good and has gone to a great deal of effort to project that image outward to the district, and the community. In so doing, instead of spending valuable time and energy trying to put into words all the things they really believe about what they are doing and planning to do to affect student achievement, they simply opted to list many of the traditional programs and strategies they utilize. Consequently, their SIP fails to capture the innovative things the school is doing and plans for the future. In general, the principal and teachers may fail to realize the importance of the informal school based innovations that are an integral part of the way they do things.

Spoken informal statements reveal much more about what they believe. For example, the teachers believe that every student’s potential can be reached if he/she is taught in the right way. This comes out in their scheduled discussions about students, where they frequently mentioned the need to try a different strategy or to better assess the student’s learning style. Emphasis in these discussions is always on what they can do differently, not what is wrong with the student. They simply know that if they search hard enough they can find a way to reach each student on an individual level. The main espoused belief that is not written on paper anywhere, but is expressed in a variety of ways is that “when we put our heads together we can figure out what makes this kid tic and then we can make things happen for him.

CASE C2 – BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

The following statements were inferred from norms of behavior observed at Moss Point. Basic assumptions are not usually formally articulated by members of a culture, but together form a set of rules or code of conduct that governs the “right way” to do things at this site. The inferred assumptions at work at Moss Point are listed in no particular order.

- Each student is different; this must be recognized and accommodated for, if need be.
- Well thought out strategies are the keys to success.
- Success is measured by the school SPS.
• Do whatever works, abandon the rest.
• Teamwork benefits everyone.
• Success is hard, but worth it.
• No teacher is an island unto herself.
• We have to think “out of the box” to keep improving.
• Misbehavior is not tolerated at all.
• Student placement is important; one student will not hold back an entire group.
• The primary roles of the principal are disciplinarian, representative to central office, goal-setter, coordinator, and facilitator.
• The harder the teachers work, the better their students will do.
• The answers to our problems are found by looking within the school rather than outside of it.
• Parents need to be held responsible to provide health care and a stable home life.
• Parent involvement at school is more trouble that its worth; if the parents want to be involved they have to organize it and run their own show.
• Everything that is done at school beyond recess or lunch should teach or reinforce skills.
• Neither new ways, nor old ways are always the best ways – curriculum and instruction decisions are best informed by data.
• Those who know how to do special things are expected to share their knowledge with others.
• The professional judgment of the staff outweighs policies regarding decisions about courses of action.

CASE C2 – AN OVERVIEW OF MOSS POINT’S SCHOOL CULTURE

Moss Point’s culture radically changed shortly after the arrival of Mr. Duplessis. The prevailing norm places a very heavy emphasis on collaborative problem solving, facilitated by the principal. He sets the bar high in terms of the level of professional behavior he demands of teachers; they rise to the occasion. Teachers are committed to strategic courses of action because they are highly invested in their development.

Mr. Duplessis is a transformational leader, who relies heavily on inspiring and encouraging teachers. He said more than once, “My teachers want for nothing; if they can prove
the need to me, I make sure they get whatever they want. We find a way to do it.” His leadership has fostered a great deal of innovative behavior in a group of teachers who were once very experienced and set in their ways. Still old habits die hard, and many marginally effective traditional teacher-centered instructional methods were seen in classes.

The unifying characteristic of Moss Point teachers is their dedication and commitment. They have genuine respect for Mr. Duplesis and listen reflectively to their colleagues. Several creative “super-star” teachers have evolved in this culture that fosters experimentation. This is somewhat unnerving to teachers who are more comfortable with less flamboyant methods, but they none-the-less respect those with demonstrated knowledge and skills.

Teachers here readily acknowledge that students have different learning styles, but the journey to true instructional differentiation has just begun here. It was obvious in only a few of the classes observed. Teachers are aware of the need, but in many cases are struggling with how to make it work. Effective classroom management and discipline is considered a basis building block that every teacher must master before moving on to the finer points of a professional practice; this is evident in all classes and was shared as a reason why a mentor teacher goes to such lengths to assist a new teacher with lesson plans and materials – because everyone here agrees that if you can’t manage behavior, little learning occurs.

There is also a single-minded focus on areas of the curriculum tested by standardized test. This means that the arts, if taught at all, must be incorporated into other content areas. Parents do not necessarily like this but are pleased with the school’s focus on academics. The school leadership is not particularly influenced by parental opinion; the faculty proceeds with what they collectively feel is best for students, regardless of what parents think. This leaves many parents “out of the loop,” but the academic success of the school has purchased a pass with the parents who express confidence that the teachers and principal “care about the kids” and “know what they are doing.”

Moss Point is both a highly effective and an improving school. The underlying cause of their success may be the consistently high scores on all dimensions of school culture. While there may be room for improvement within any dimension, there are no glaring areas of weakness where ineffective practices dominate.

Moss Point has a strongly positive culture across all four dimensions. The areas of greatest strength are in Dimension I: Professional Orientation and Dimension II: Organizational
structure. These dimensions describe teacher and principal practices which are not readily seen by parents but impact the way services are delivered. The outstanding element of the Professional Orientation (Dimension I) is the collaborative problem solving that is perpetually practiced here. The strength of Organizational Structure (Dimension II) is the inspirational and facilitative leadership style of the principal, who is a critical thinker, an optimist, and a motivator who sets high standards for all.

In Dimension III, Quality of the Learning Environment, performance was inconsistent and varied greatly from teacher to teacher with students in some classes involved in high quality learning experiences and other less so. In Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus, the stressing that each student is a unique individual is also commendable but leaves room for improvement. At this point this is more of a goal or espoused belief than a behavioral norm. The weakest point of the school culture is the lack of widespread parental involvement; many parents were oblivious to school goals, reported that they never volunteered, and expressed a desire to be more active, but felt the school did not provide enough ways for working parents to fit it into their schedules. Informal comments made by faculty members also expressed doubt in the desirability of greater parental involvement, particularly with onsite help during school hours. Even given this “weakness”; however, it must be pointed out that this issue has come to the attention of a concerned minority of parents who are actively trying to reduce this trend. Though there is room for improvement in the Student-centered Focus, more effective practices were observed in Dimension IV than ineffective practices.

The words of the principal to his teachers sum it up best, “I see a hole in what we’re doing.” The key to Moss Point’s effectiveness and continued improvement is that they continue to look for “holes” and plug them so no students slip through. Their reflective approach means that few aspects of the school’s operations are overlooked completely, resulting in a strong and effective school culture across all dimensions.

VIII. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The six case studies in this chapter illustrate the complexity of the construct of school culture and the importance of thick descriptions of culture. Each school has its very own unique personality and ways of being and doing. Many of the patterns and rhythms which constitute the way the school organization functions seem to be tied to principal leadership, as cases C1, C2, and B1 illustrate; however, numerous norms within a school are perpetuated beyond the tenure
of a single principal, as is seen in cases A1, and B2. In case B1, the source of the internal conflict is the presence of a new principal who is overtly trying to alter several norms which have long been a part of the way the school operates; teachers who have been a part of this culture for an extended period are staunchly resisting cultural change. They are striving for established cultural norms to continue beyond the appointment of a new principal, even if this means that the new principal has to leave to return the school to its status quo.

At this point it is obvious that principal leadership greatly impacts school culture, but many norms and aspects of culture endure despite the actions of the principal. For instance, case study C1 demonstrates the importance of teacher buy-in to the need for change, since they initially resisted change efforts because they didn’t see the necessity, but when the school mission was changed the teachers sprung to action learning everything they could about instructing the new population they were faced with. More research in this area is needed to clarify and describe processes related to changing school culture and resistance to change. This theoretical framework holds the potential for identifying specific norms within each dimension of school culture and discovering how and under what circumstances they can best be changed; however, more focused, less broad based case studies are needed to document this information which could potentially be very instrumental to future school improvement research, policy and practice.

Despite the diverse cultures present at each school, Phase II of the study also demonstrates the ability of the framework developed in Phase I to adequately describe the distinct qualities and attributes present at each separate site. The case studies clearly demonstrate that while the characteristics within each dimension vary greatly from school to school, the presence of the four dimensions and three levels of school culture appear to be consistent between schools. This framework allows for greater specificity and more uniform comparisons and contrasts between schools than similar case studies not guided by a consistent theoretical framework. Chapter 6 uses the data collected for these six case studies to conduct cross-case contrasts between the cultures of matched schools.
CHAPTER SIX
CONTRASTING SCHOOL CULTURES

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to utilize the framework developed in chapter 3 to contrast the cultures of the three pairs of matched schools. Data on four established dimensions of school culture were collected and analyzed in Phase II of this study. These dimensions include: I: Professional Orientation, II: Organizational Structure, III: Quality of the Learning Environment, and IV: Student-centered Focus. Both qualitative and quantitative data sources are used to contrast school performance on these dimensions of school culture. This chapter is organized in the following way:

I. Introduction
II. Quantitative Data
III. Quantitative Results
IV. Exploring Qualitative Data
V. Quantifying Qualitative Results
VI. Points of Contrasts in the Cultures of Matched Schools
VII. Discussion of Patterns and Trends across the Three Pairs
VIII. Chapter Summary

First quantitative data relevant to school culture are presented. This is followed by a description, as well as, the results of the quantification process for the qualitative data. Data from matched pairs will then be examined for points of contrast in school cultures and student achievement. The differences found in each of the three pairs will be discussed. Chapter 7 will conclude this dissertation by summarizing the findings about school culture and discussing the implications of this study in terms possible the relationship between school culture and student achievement.

II. QUANTITATIVE DATA

In this study, participants (teachers and parents) at sample schools were given one or more of four different surveys in an effort to collect data about the four different dimensions of school culture. In addition, an observation guide was used to conduct random focused classroom observations. These instruments provided the quantitative data which was explored in an attempt to find measurable differences in the way schools function within the dimensions of culture. No prior studies were found which had attempted to study culture – primarily an anthropological
concept – in quantitative terms. This study attempted to do so through employing the following measures to inform each dimension:

Dimension I. Professional Orientation

- **MRSCEQ – Modified Revised School Culture Elements Questionnaire;** given randomly to half of the faculty at each school; contains questions about teacher perceptions of shared mission, collegiality & professional commitment.

Dimension II. Organizational Structure

- **LAMSSS – Leadership and Management of Schools Staff Survey;** given randomly to the other half of the faculty that did not take the MRSCEQ; deals with teacher perceptions of principal leadership.
- **SS – Sociometric Survey;** Questionnaire given to all faculty at each school to assess teacher leadership. Teachers identify which of their colleagues they have recently spoken to about instruction and whom they believe would be the most helpful on a school improvement team.

Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences

- **SAPI/SAPA: Sources of Authentic Pedagogy: Instruction & Assessment;** classroom observation rubrics used by researcher to document student learning experiences based on principles of social cognitive constructivism. Roughly 25-40% of regular education classes per school were randomly observed without prior notice.

Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus

- **MSFCP – Measure of School, Family, & Community Partnerships;** a quantitative (& qualitative) survey given to parents in two or three classrooms per school to assess the degree of parental involvement and satisfaction with the support services offered by the school to help their child succeed academically.

For greater detail regarding these instruments see chapter 4, Research Methods: Instrument Selection, or refer to Appendix A for a copy of each instrument. It was hoped that matched schools would score differently on each of these measures; this would lend support to the theory that school culture is composed of the proposed dimensions and that culture is related to student achievement, since pairs are matched on numerous context variables, but have maximum variation in the degree of growth in student achievement.
Sample sizes for each instrument varied from school to school depending on the context in which the instrument was administered, and the amount of faculty compliance with completion of the forms. In some schools principals set aside time in faculty meetings for teachers to actually take and turn in the surveys. In other schools principals allowed the surveys to be given out at a faculty meeting, but asked teachers to complete the surveys on their own time. At other schools, principals agreed to allow teachers to participate, but wanted surveys left in the teachers’ mailboxes and collected by the researcher the next day. In those schools that allowed teacher completion of surveys during scheduled faculty meeting time, teacher response rates were the highest; this accounts for why the participation rate on the Sociometric Survey (SS), consistently given at faculty meetings, was higher than other teacher surveys.

There was also a tremendous difference in the rates of participation of parent surveys (MFSCP) from school to school; teachers at school A1 were so embarrassed they asked the researcher to bring more surveys and offered candy to students who brought back a completed form. This seemed to work until it was later discovered that the reliability of many of these surveys was suspect due to several parents giving the same answer to every question; all such questionnaires were discarded and not included in analyses.

Some data were destroyed in a natural disaster. The following sample size table 6.1 was completed to inventory all remaining data and assess whether it was feasible to complete the study. Schools with sample sizes that were particularly low were revisited in and some of the missing data were made up. Most schools were very cooperative with this process; however, this is not the case in all instances. For example, data for school B2 are low due to internal school events which made teachers less compliant than ordinary; teachers were in shock over the sudden unexpected removal of a beloved principal with 23 year tenure at the school, due to an undisclosed event involving a student.

These circumstances negatively impacted sample size, but were unavoidable. A decision was made to continue the study with the available data due to the large amount of qualitative data present and an a priori decision that though this was by design a mixed method study, the qualitative would be given greater weight since there was no precedent for a quantitative study of culture.

Table 6.1 shows the actual quantitative data that were collected and analyzed for each school and data source. The schools are displayed in matched pairs, denoted by the same letter in
the name code, (Refer to chapter 3 for characteristics upon which schools were matched.) The numbers in the table represent the number of complete surveys or observations that were believed to be reliable and were retained for the study; this number does not include incomplete surveys or those rejected because of suspicious patterns in the responses (i.e. the same response to all questions). The abbreviations heading each column refer to the name of a specific data source.

Table 6.1 Sample Size per Quantitative Data Source

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>Dimension I</th>
<th>Dimension II</th>
<th>Dimension III</th>
<th>Dimension IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LAMSSS</td>
<td>MRSCEQ</td>
<td>SAPI/SAPA</td>
<td>MSFCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
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<td>C2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

All data were entered into the computer and analyzed with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were calculated for each dimension. Then these were added and divided by four (the number of dimensions) to calculate an overall mean for each school. Table 6.2 displays the school wide means calculated for each dimension.

Table 6.2 Quantitative Results - School Means for Each Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>A1</th>
<th>A2</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. MRSCEQ</td>
<td>1.784</td>
<td>2.056</td>
<td>1.842</td>
<td>1.875</td>
<td>1.925</td>
<td>1.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. LAMSSS</td>
<td>3.895</td>
<td>4.177</td>
<td>3.692</td>
<td>4.130</td>
<td>4.315</td>
<td>3.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SAPI/SAPA</td>
<td>1.802</td>
<td>2.660</td>
<td>2.368</td>
<td>2.549</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>3.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. MFSCP</td>
<td>3.642</td>
<td>3.914</td>
<td>3.480</td>
<td>3.573</td>
<td>3.996</td>
<td>3.493</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent T Tests were performed for each of these measures to determine statistical significance. None of these whole battery means were found to be significantly different from their matched at the p<.05 level; nor were significant differences found on subscales of these measures. No further analyses were performed due to the finding of no significant differences.
This finding may be due to extremely small within school samples, or school sampling methods which excluded schools with extreme student achievement scores. It may also be an indication that the construct validity of the instruments is lower than desirable, due to reliance on existing measures. This study highlights the need to develop and validate new measures that are more consistent with this conceptual definition of the construct of school culture.

Although these measurements do not reflect significant differences, an examination of mean scores by matched pair reveals an interesting pattern. In all three pairs, school 2 is the school with greater gains in student achievement. In most instances school 2 has a higher mean score on all four dimensions; the only exception is with Dimensions II and III for pair C. For pairs A and B, School 2 (the one with the most growth in student scores) had a higher mean than did school on all four measures of school culture. For Pair C, School 2 outperformed school 1 in two of the four dimensions. Thus, in 10 of 12 comparisons (3 matched pairs X 4 dimensions of comparison) the improving school had higher scores. This pattern lends indicates that though they did not show up definitively in this study, real differences may exist between the cultures of improving and non-improving schools. Trends in the data lend credibility to the notion that culture can actually be measured quantitatively in future studies, if more sensitive measures can be developed.

The pattern of higher scores on school culture in schools with the most improvement is most pronounced for Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Experiences. Table 6.3 explores this in greater detail for one particular indicator the amount of Higher Order Thinking (HOT) the students were involved in during observed activities. Again, school 1 in each matched pair is the school with the lower growth score; school 2 is the school that has improved student performance the most. Percentages refer to the number of classroom observations at a school that fell into categories defined by the SAPI/SAPA Rubric. The data charted in Table 6.3 only represent one indicator, HOT, on the SAPI/SAPA. Similar results were found across all SAPI/SAPA 13 indicators for Dimension III. Refer to Appendix E1 for these tables.

IV. EXPLORING THE QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative data sources included notes from formal interviews using a priori developed interview guides and protocols; these can be viewed in Appendix B. Each protocol was designed to provide information on all dimensions of culture. Protocols were used for the formal principal interview, the teacher focus group and the student focus group. Roughly 20 hours of random and
focused informal observations and interviews were also done at each school and recorded in an observation log. A variety of participants in different roles at each school were included in informal interviews and observations including, custodians, secretaries, parents, volunteers, teachers, students and the principal; sometimes these opportunities were serendipitous and a result of chance happenings, while other opportunities were intentionally sought out by the researcher to follow up on questions that arose from prior observations (Spradley & McCurdy, 1972).

Table 6.3  Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 1 of Dimension III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAPI/SAPA Indicator</th>
<th>School Code</th>
<th>Rubric Rank #1 Best</th>
<th>Rubric Rank #2</th>
<th>Rubric Rank #3</th>
<th>Rubric Rank #4</th>
<th>Rubric Rank #5 Worst</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOT</td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These field notes and post observation/interview notes provided a wealth of data to inform ways of being and doing things for each dimension of a school’s culture. The first level of data analysis involved reading original notes and highlighting information according to the dimension of culture it best described. After highlighting the original ethnographic notes into dimensional categories, units of information (artifacts, stories, etc…) were sorted by the types of data, and recorded on Types of Data Record Sheets (see Appendix C2) and Data by Dimension of School Culture (Appendix C3) developed for this study. These forms provide an additional means of insuring that the right types of data (i.e., the Symbolic Manifestations of Culture listed by Owens & Steinhoff, 1988) were present. These sheets assisted in formative data analyses that guided focused observations, and also helped with data triangulation in preparation for the data reduction charts.
In addition, any notes given out or flyers present in the office were collected. The school website was accessed and printed, a copy of the most recent SIP was secured, and notes were made of bulletin boards and other displays at the school site, as well as physical elements such as architecture and grounds maintenance (see Appendix B3). These data sources are referred to as artifacts and were collected and included in qualitative analyses. Qualitative data were assimilated into separate case reports for each school (see chapter 5). Following the descriptive write-up for each school is an interpretation of the three levels of culture (Schein, 1992) found at the school based on inferences made from qualitative data. Hence, an attempt was made to interpret the meaning of artifacts, to articulate espoused beliefs, and basic assumptions held by members of each school culture. Inferences made regarding the levels of culture were all based on triangulation of data; all statements made are supported by three or more references across the different data sources.

EXPLORING DIMENSION I: PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION

The data which most succinctly informed descriptions of operations in Dimension I were: 1) the formal principal interview, 2) informal subsequent principal interviews, 3) the teacher focus group, 4) informal conversations with teachers, and when the circumstances permitted, 5) observation of a faculty meeting. All notes were reviewed and highlighted for any information they provided about the professional behavior or attitudes towards professionalism in the faculty. The description of dimension I in the case studies seemed to provide all that was necessary to assess the rigor and robustness with which each faculty pursues acquisition of greater knowledge and skills.

EXPLORING DIMENSION II: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Qualitative data for Dimension II, such as teacher and principal interviews, informal school observations, and information provided on the SS, were analyzed by creating and comparing graphic representations of the Organizational Structure and Leadership patterns found at each school. Figures 6.1 – 6.6 symbolize the degree and type of distributive leadership found at the school. The figures were designed to display approximations of: 1) the numbers and placement of informal leaders, 2) the presence of close knit collaborative teams, 3) the relative number of autonomous or social isolate teachers, and 3) the closeness of the principal to members of the faculty in terms of reported and observed patterns of interaction. These figures emerged as a means of trying to understand and interpret all data regarding the relationships
between the major players or roles in the school and their relationships to each other. These organizational charts were informed by Sociometric Survey results, principal follow-up interviews, and informal observational and interview data. Figures are designed to display the major roles and their relationship to each other. They are not designed to be a one to one plotting of the exact number and placement of teachers. The figures are approximations based on available data and are useful only in discerning and describing the socio organizational structure of the school. These charts are similar to organizational charts used to describe the management structures found in businesses and non-profit organizations.

Figures 6.1 – 6.6 illustrate a range of organizational structures. The figures are arranged so that matched schools are displayed on parallel rows. The left column contains school 1, the non-improving school in each pair. The schools in the right column are the improving schools. A quick glance across the three rows reveals that in all three pairs more teachers are closer to the principal in school 2 than in school 1. This suggests that teachers in improving schools work more closely with the principal than their counterparts in non-improving schools. It also suggests greater unity in the faculty. Teachers in schools A2, B2, and C2 were observed talking more spontaneously with the principals than teachers in their paired schools. They frequently “caught” the principal in the hall or at lunch and shared thoughts or current events and when questioned informally about the principal typically had a higher regard for him/her.

The spacing of the letters indicates the presence of tight-knit teacher teams. Interviews revealed that the improving schools were more likely to have close alliances between groups of teachers and these groups were more likely to be highly collaborative and productive. Non-improving schools A1 and B1 had a higher degree of teacher autonomy than did the non-improving school with a higher SPS. This indicates that teacher collaboration is associated with greater school effectiveness, which is consistent with the body of literature on effective schools; however, the presence of a highly collaborative, highly effective yet non-improving school suggests that teacher teaming alone is not enough to effect change in student achievement.

The letter L in figures 6.1 - 6.6 represent estimates of the number and placement of teachers who are perceived by their peers as being informal school leaders based on SS data and informal interviews. It was anticipated that improving schools would have a higher number of teacher leaders than non-improving schools; this was not the case. The numbers of teachers
serving in leadership capacities was about the same; however, their interaction patterns with other teachers differed.

Figure 6.1  
School A1  
Sunnyside Elementary  
Baseline SPS 57.0  
Growth -0.3

Figure 6.2  
School A2  
La Fleur Elementary  
Baseline SPS 70.4  
Growth +5.8

Figure 6.3  
School B1  
Huntington Elementary  
Baseline SPS 89.5  
Growth -2.3

Figure 6.4  
School B2  
Shady Oak Elementary  
Baseline SPS 82.9  
Growth +7.0

Figure 6.5  
School C1  
River Bend Primary  
Baseline SPS 102.1  
Growth -3.9

Figure 6.6  
School C2  
Moss Point Elementary  
Baseline SPS 97.5  
Growth +9.3

Codes:  P = principal;  T = teacher;  L = teacher functioning in an informal leadership capacity; Spacing = no space indicates a close and interactive team.

Figure 6.1  Graphic Representations of Dimension II: Organizational Structure
Teacher leaders at improving schools tended to be more evenly distributed throughout the organization and to interact with a greater number of teachers than did leaders at non-improving schools. At non-improving schools these individuals tended to work more independently or to limit collaborations to a small group of other teachers, particularly those they found to be like-minded. A reread of the case reports for these non-improving schools reveals that while these teachers perform many functions in the school, they do not necessarily feel valued by the other faculty members. This may be because of professional jealousy, differences in values/philosophies, or that they just function so differently that they don’t feel comfortable working closely with other teachers that embody the culture better than they do. This isolation of teacher leaders in non-improving schools is a topic that should be explored in greater depth with subsequent research.

Another pattern of contrast within Dimension II was perceptions of principal leadership. Due to the volume of literature associating principal leadership with school effectiveness and leadership in general with organizational change, it was anticipated that instability in the principalship would be associated with a school’s growth status. This seemed to be the case in two of the three pairs studied. Non-improving schools in pair A and pair B had both experienced recent and multiple turnovers in their principalship in the years prior to and including the year of the study. However, the non-improving, but effective school in par C had a stable, well informed principal who was well respected by the faculty. Conversely, the improving school in pair B experienced a traumatic midyear principal turnover, but continued to function effectively. Likewise, the principal in the improving school in pair A had only been on the job for two years at the time of the study. These observations indicate a weak association, at best, between principal stability/tenure and school improvement. Teachers at schools with high SPSs tended to have more favorable views of their principal; the notable exception to this was school B1, where there was a feud over the leadership style of the new principal. Principal leadership style and a combination of other factors within the organizational structure seem to contribute to the school’s improvement status more than principal tenure alone.

One final emergent observation was that the effectiveness of the school secretary seemed to have an impact on the overall efficiency and smooth operations of the school. The two schools with the most dysfunctional cultures, school A1, and B1, also had school secretaries that were
perceived by the principal and the teachers to be marginally competent and reliable. On the other hand, the secretaries at all improving schools and the highly effective non-improving school (C1) executed their work competently with great efficiency and demonstrated the ability to handle diverse situations in a calm and deliberate manner. Teachers, parents, and principals alike expressed positive attitudes towards these secretaries. Secretaries at the two non-improving, less effective schools seemed to embody chaos and teachers and principals expressed reluctance to rely on them for anything of importance. Perhaps clerical administrative support position is more critical to organizational effectiveness than recent the lack of attention it has received in recent decades would suggest, especially in an age when the emphasis of most principal training is on instructional leadership, thus shifting some of the more managerial tasks traditionally performed by principals to clerical staff. Further research is needed to determine whether or not clerical support has any impact on school effectiveness or school culture.

EXPLORING DIMENSION III: THE QUALITY OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Classroom observations were randomly done over a large period of time (several months) and included 25-40% of the regular education classes in the each school. Observations lasted from the beginning of a lesson until its completion, typically from 20 to 45 minutes each. During these observations free style notes were taken which focused on the types of activities students were involved in. Roughly three times during a lesson the room was scanned to ascertain the number of students who appeared to be working on task and the overall interest and enthusiasm of students was documented. Key teacher questions and the amount of student interaction were noted. Student questions and comments were recorded. Notes were made of the assignments given to students & the kinds of tasks they were asked to do. Copies of handouts were collected when possible and pertinent notes on visual aids were copied (overheads, chalkboards, posters). Other factors in the environment which seemed to impact learning, such as innovative lessons or the presence of distractions were also noted. Sometimes it was possible to talk with teachers informally about the lesson observed, but this was not often possible. Immediately following each classroom observation, a SAPI/SAPA observation rubric was completed. Observations about the Quality of the Learning Environment at each school are based on there results of the SAPI/SAPA and contemporaneous notes taken during observations that may or may not have been included in the SAPI/ SAPA rubric.
EXPLORING DIMENSION IV: STUDENT-CENTERED FOCUS

To ascertain what is being done by the school to insure that each student has a good chance of academic success at the school the first source consulted was the SIP, which typically lists all externally created programs in which the school participates. It sometimes also outlines procedures or strategies developed by the school in an attempt to address documented weaknesses. School handbooks and websites were also consulted. However, as is always the case with culture, there are many ways of being and doing that are never formally articulated anywhere. Consequently, the principal was formally interviewed once, and numerous informal conversations in sued in an attempt to not overlook things the school is doing or neglecting to do that impact student success at an individual level. Likewise a teacher focus group was held and followed up with many informal conversations. The student interview protocol contained questions about what teachers or the school does to help them. One very informative qualitative source for dimension IV was the comments made by parents to open-ended questions on the MSFCP. All of these data sources were analyzed to complete the descriptions and data reduction charts for Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus.

V. QUANTIFYING QUALITATIVE RESULTS FOR CROSS CASE COMPARISONS

In chapter 5, six separate case studies were presented which incorporated numerous qualitative data sources. Data analyses from these sources followed content analysis guidelines described by Patton (1990), Miles & Huberman (1994), and Lincoln & Guba (1985). These sources outline processes for unitizing and categorizing qualitative information. In this study raw data were first read, then coded into categories based on content. The category codes used in this study were the four dimensions of school culture: I: Professional Orientation, II: Organizational Structure, III: Quality of the Learning Environment, and IV: Student-centered Focus, which were developed a priori. Categorization involved assigning each dimension a color code and highlighting the original data sources according to the corresponding dimension or dimensions that the information pertains to. This was still a tremendous volume of information that needed to be organized into a more manageable form in order to identify emergent patterns and trends present in the data. For this purpose Data Reduction Charts were developed.

DATA REDUCTION

Miles & Huberman (1994) speak of the importance of data display in qualitative analyses; this involves assembling and organizing data in such a way as to permit the drawing of
conclusions. The need for this became evident in this study after the categorization of data into dimensional codes; the large volume of data coded did not allow for easy interpretation. Hence, for each school data were reduced by breaking large chunks of information into to small phrases or statements which represent substantively distinct units or bits of information or meaning. This process has been referred to as unitizing the data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1995).

Charts were created which list these units of information discovered about each school. The Data Reduction Charts (see Appendix E2 for the charts for all six schools) are organized into the four dimensions of culture. Under each dimension unitized data is listed in a bulleted format. The bulleted indicators of school culture listed on the Data Reduction Charts were triangulated or corroborated by at least two data sources. To further assist in analyzing and interpreting the information, the units of information listed under each dimension were further sorted into positive and negative indicators, depending on whether they contribute to or detract from school effectiveness. The Data Reduction Charts were then used to quantify the observational data. The primary researcher and an independent rater to used these Data Reduction Charts to draw generalizations about the effectiveness of each dimension of the school’s culture.

Quantification of the Data

Data Reduction Charts (see Appendix E2) were used to assist in the quantification of the units of data into summary scores for each dimension. Quantification involves using an outlined method for transforming data in verbal form into a numeric form (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The purpose of this quantification process is to allow for easier cross-case comparisons of school culture and its dimensions.

A quantification process was developed specifically for this study which involved assigning a ranking to each of the four dimensions of a school’s culture. Rankings reflect the effectiveness of the school’s practices for that dimension of school culture (see chapter 3 for school characteristics associated with greater effectiveness). A ten point scale is used to quantify the data. A rank of 1 indicates the weakest possible performance and a rank of 10 the best possible performance. Table 6.4 shows the scale that was used as a guide in converting qualitative observational data into a quantitative form for analysis and comparison.
Table 6.4  **Quantitative Ranking Scale for Converting Qualitative Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Description of Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Extremely low standard of performance in a number of indicators; few if any instances of highly effective behavior observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Generally low performance on most indicators, with a few average or highly effective behaviors observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Primarily low performance, but several instances of more effective behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Slightly below average performance overall, though several observations indicate average or even possibly a few behaviors associated with more effective schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Average performance on most indicators, an equal number of effective versus ineffective behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Slightly above average performance; more effective behavior than ineffective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Good performance on most indicators, though still room for improvement; a small number of ineffective behaviors observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>High performance; primarily effective behavior documented, though still a number of marginally effective behaviors found</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Outstanding performance; most behaviors observed were associated with high levels of school effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Highest possible performance; observations indicate an extremely high level of effective behavior with very little room for improvement in this dimension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Validation of Quantified Data**

*Peer Debriefing*  
Miles & Huberman (1994) state that the final stage of qualitative data analysis is to determine the validity of conclusions. Tashakkori & Teddlie (1998) describe several techniques qualitative researchers frequently use to establish the trustworthiness of their analyses. Many of these measures are discussed in chapter 4 and have been incorporated into the design of this study. At this stage of the data analyses, peer debriefing was used to validate the quantification of data to ultimately be used in cross case comparisons. This was accomplished by identifying a qualified and objective outside source to read case reports (see chapter 5) and Data Reduction Charts (see Appendix E2). The outside rater used in this study was a former principal and is now employed by the state to conduct leadership training for new principals. Both raters
used the table 6.4 to rate each dimension of school culture based on the data. Ratings were completed independently then followed by discussions regarding which rank best fits the conditions observed at the school. All school identities remained anonymous to this individual. Final School Summary Scores were assigned for each dimension of culture based upon a consensus between the primary researcher and the outside expert.

The independent rankings of both individuals and the final consensus ranks are displayed in tables 6.5 through 6.10. Table 6.5 displays ranks for school A1. Both raters independently assigned the same rank for Dimension II and were one point apart in the ranks assigned for the other three dimensions. Rater number 2 consistently assigned the lower rank in each of these dimensions. The mean difference in initial rankings for school A1 is .75 of a point on the 10 point scale displayed in table 6.4.

Table 6.5  School Summary Consensus Scores for School A1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School A1</th>
<th>Rater #1</th>
<th>Rater # 2</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension III. Quality Learning Environments</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent rankings and consensus scores for school A2 are found in Table 6.6. For this school raters differed by two points in initial ranks for Dimension I and one point for Dimension II. Rater number 1 produced the lower ranks in both instances. Rankings for Dimensions III and IV of school A2 were identical. The mean difference in initial rankings is .75 of a point between raters.

Table 6.6  School Summary Consensus Scores for School A2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School A2</th>
<th>Rater #1</th>
<th>Rater # 2</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension III. Quality Learning Environments</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For school B1 (Table 6.7) both raters assigned the same rank for Dimension II. For Dimension I initial ranks are 1 point apart. Dimension III ranks are 2 points apart, and Dimension IV ranks are 3 points apart. The mean difference in the independent rankings for school B1 is 1 point, with rater number 2 consistently providing the lower ranks.
Table 6.7  School Summary Consensus Scores for School B1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School B1</th>
<th>Rater #1</th>
<th>Rater #2</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension III. Quality Learning Environments</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initial ranks for school B2 are the most incongruent with no dimensions ranked consistently between raters. The mean difference in rankings is 2.0 points apart. One point differences were present in Dimension I and 2 point differences were produced in Dimensions II and III. Dimension IV. scores are 3 points apart. Rater number 2 gave lower ratings in all dimensions except Dimension I. Table 6.8 displays this data.

Table 6.8  School Summary Consensus Scores for School B2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School B2</th>
<th>Rater #1</th>
<th>Rater #2</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension III. Quality Learning Environments</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.9 displays initial and consensus rankings for school C1. The mean difference between ranks assigned by different raters is 1.25 points. Rater number two generated lower ranks for Dimensions I (3 point difference) and II. (2 point difference). Rankings for Dimensions III and IV are identical for school C1.

Table 6.9  School Summary Consensus Scores for School C1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School C1</th>
<th>Rater #1</th>
<th>Rater #2</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension III. Quality Learning Environments</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All rankings for school C2 are consistent between both raters. These rankings are displayed in Table 6.10.
Table 6.10  School Summary Consensus Scores for School C2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</th>
<th>Rater #1</th>
<th>Rater # 2</th>
<th>Consensus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dimension II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension III. Quality Learning Environments</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, the ranks assigned by both raters are fairly consistent with each other. No more than a 3 point discrepancy exists in any dimension. Identical rankings were independently generated roughly 40% of the time. Thus, inter rater reliability for school summary scores is high.

After both raters generated independent rankings for each dimension of culture for the six schools, raters met to discuss ranks assigned and rationales. A consensus score was arrived at when both raters had heard each other out and agreed upon a single rank that best reflected the school’s performance on each dimension.

Table 6.11 shows the consensus rankings assigned to the six schools in this study. In reading this and all tables in this section, the reader should be reminded that only schools assigned the same letter in their name have been matched for comparability.

Table 6.11  Cross Case Comparison of Quantitized Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>School A1</th>
<th>School A2</th>
<th>School B1</th>
<th>School B2</th>
<th>School C1</th>
<th>School C2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Quality of Learning Environment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. POINTS OF CONTRAST IN THE CULTURES OF MATCHED SCHOOLS

Chapter 4 outlines the process used for selection of schools to be included in the sample. Much care and attention was given to insuring that each school included in the sample had a comparable school with which to compare its scores on measures of school culture. Refer to chapter 4 for a detailed description of the school characteristics included in the matching process. The original intent was to include four matched pairs, but data from one school were discarded because its matched school declined to complete the study. The final sample size included three matched pairs of schools, all of them at the elementary level.
In this section tables are presented for each matched pair of schools. The tables summarize the pertinent school context data including the dependent variable in this study student achievement. (Refer to chapter 1 for definitions of the student achievement indices). One table is presented for each matched pair of schools. The top portion of each table compares school context variables. The bottom section of each table contains mean school culture scores. Mean school culture scores are derived by adding the quantitized ratings from all of a school’s dimensions (see table 6.4) and dividing by the number of dimensions (i.e. 4). Each table is followed by a discussion of the points of contrast between the cultures of the paired schools with respect to differences in student achievement data.

**PAIR A DATA**

Table 6.12  Contrasting Matched Schools – Pair A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Characteristics</th>
<th>School A1</th>
<th>School A2</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>43 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on Free &amp; Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Qualified Teachers</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline SPS 1999-2001</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth SPS 2001-2003</td>
<td>Growth -.7</td>
<td>Growth + 5.8</td>
<td>6.5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Growth Label for 2004 (based on 2001-2003 growth data)</td>
<td>No Growth (0 to -5ts)</td>
<td>Minimal Growth (&lt;5pts)</td>
<td>1 category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dimensions**  
**School Culture Summary Scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>School Culture Summary Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Quality of Learning Experiences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mean School Culture Score</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*arrived at by adding scores for all dimensions and dividing by 4

Points of Contrast – Pair A

Table 6.12 summarizes the results of school culture data for two matched elementary schools referred to here as school A1 and school A2. Also included are student achievement data for each school (refer to chapters 1 and 3 for more detailed descriptions of the types of data used to summarize student achievement) and two particular school context variables which principals have suggested might account for observed differences – percent of students on free and reduced lunch (a matching characteristic) and percent of students with disabilities.
Data from these schools indicate that school A2 outperformed school A1 in all measures of school culture. The most pronounced difference between these schools lies in Dimension II: Organizational Structure, with a difference of 7 points. The primary differences in Dimension II scores are due to the difference in the stability of the principalship in these schools, the leadership styles of the principals, the amount of distributed leadership in the faculties, and the processes in place for decision making and program evaluation at the schools. Dimensions I: Professional Orientation and III: Quality of the Learning Experiences, both had a 6 point difference. This indicates that the most professionally oriented faculty also utilized the most effective instructional methods. A slightly smaller difference of 5 points also exists in measures of Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus; although an examination of chapter 5 case reports reveals very different emphases between the two schools in this area, with school A1 excelling at fostering a caring environment and school A2 emphasizing use of student level data for decision making.

The data for pair A indicate a within school association between scores in Dimension I: Professional Orientation and Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Experiences. Scores for this pair of schools indicate a positive relationship between the mean school culture score and measures of school effectiveness (i.e. the SPS) and measures of school growth (i.e. gains in SPS).

One interesting and unanticipated possible relationship that emerges from the qualitative data analyses of pair A involves the degree of academic push at the school and positive parental perceptions. Parents at school A1 expressed much more favorable views of the school than did parents at school A2 with the stronger academic push and greater gain in student achievement. Future research is needed to see if this trend is present in other paired schools, and whether there is variation in parental approval across different school contexts, or between schools with differing rates of school improvement.

PAIR B DATA

Points of Contrast – Pair B

Table 6.13 summarizes the results of school culture data for two matched elementary schools referred to here as school B1 and B2. Student achievement data for each school (SPS and growth scores) is also tabled here for easy reference. Data from these schools indicate that school B2 outperformed school B1 in all measures of school culture. The most dramatic difference
between these schools lies in Dimension I. Professional Orientation, with a difference of 6 points. The cause of this spread becomes apparent when we reexamine figure 6.3; and recall (from the case report on school B1 in chapter 5) that school B1 had an on-going faculty feud over the leadership style of the new principal and other philosophical issues. Teachers’ strong views and deeply held differences in beliefs interfered with the establishment of a unified vision, and meaningful collaboration. School B2 by contrast worked cohesively despite a crisis and midyear administrative turnover.

Table 6.13 Contrasting Matched Schools – Pair B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Characteristics</th>
<th>School A1</th>
<th>School A2</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>42 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on Free &amp; Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Qualified Teachers</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline SPS 1999-2000</td>
<td>89.5</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>6.6 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth SPS 2001-2003</td>
<td>Growth -2.3</td>
<td>Growth + 7.0</td>
<td>9.3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Growth Label for 2004 (based on 2001-2003 growth data)</td>
<td>No Growth</td>
<td>Recognized Growth</td>
<td>2 categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>School Culture Summary Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Quality of Learning Experiences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mean School Culture Score</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*arrived at by adding scores for all dimensions and dividing by 4

One interesting observation that emerges from the qualitative data analyses of pair B involves the way the faculty reacted to crises involving principal instability; several teachers at school B1 became increasingly angry and proactively campaigned against what they disagreed with, ultimately splitting the faculty and disrupting smooth operations. When school B2 lost its longtime principal unexpectedly due to a controversial incident, the teachers remained unified and focused. They proceeded with the established SIP and became proactive in helping to find a replacement who would embrace their vision. These cases illustrate the power of a unified vision for school faculties.

The second most pronounced difference between the schools is in Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Experiences, with a 3 point difference. Smaller differences of 2 points each also
exist in Dimension II: Organizational Structure and Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus. One difference observed in Dimension II was that school B1 had less consistency in disciplinary policies across the school; this can also be traced to the lack of cohesiveness in the faculty. In Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus more positive parental perceptions were present at school B2. Although 2 or 3 point differences are present in Dimensions II, III, and IV, the difference in the Dimension I was so stark as to account for the vast majority of the cultural differences between these schools. Both schools have a history of being effective schools, but recent instability in the principalship and growing disunity in the faculty seem to have hindered school B1 from improving at a rate comparable to school B2. Both schools have similar SPS scores, but it is interesting to note that the primary difference in the schools lies in their Professional Orientation and the school with the dramatically better performance in this dimension of school culture, B2, is also the school that has shown the most improvement in student achievement.

PAIR C DATA

Table 6.14 contrasts the schools in pair C. School C1 is an interesting case because its baseline SPS was the highest of all schools studied, but it failed to improve this score, thus it ended up with a low SGL. Both schools in pair C, like those in pairs A and B, were in the same district and received same state and district support for improvement; their percent of free and reduced lunch was very similar and didn’t account for any differences in Title I funding. The only differences in funding, programs or operations were those that emanated from within the school, such as grants written and received.

Table 6.14 summarizes the results of school culture data for C1 and school C2. Also included are student achievement data for each school and two school context variables. Data from these schools indicate that school C2 out performed school C1 in all measures of school culture. The most pronounced difference between these schools lies in Dimension II: Organizational Structure, with a difference of 5 points. The second most pronounced difference is in Dimension I: Professional Orientation, with a 4 point difference. A smaller difference of 3 points exists in Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment and Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus.
Table 6.14  Contrasting Matched Schools – Pair C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Characteristics</th>
<th>School C1</th>
<th>School C2</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>456</td>
<td>167 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students on Free &amp; Reduced Lunch</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly Qualified Teachers</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseline SPS 1999-2000</td>
<td>102.1</td>
<td>82.9</td>
<td>19.2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth SPS 2001-2003</td>
<td>Growth -4.1</td>
<td>Growth + 9.3</td>
<td>13.4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Growth Label for 2004</td>
<td>No Growth</td>
<td>Recognized Growth</td>
<td>2 categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(based on 2001-2003 growth data)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>School Culture Summary Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Quality of Learning Experiences</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mean School Culture Score</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*arrived at by adding scores for all dimensions and dividing by 4

Points of Contrast – Pair C

The data for pair C indicate that school C2, the HGL school, out performed school C1 on all four dimensions of school culture. The greatest contrast between their cultures lies in Dimension II: Organizational Structure, followed closely by Dimension I: Professional Orientation. Lesser differences exist in Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment and Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus. Scores for this pair of schools indicate a positive relationship between the mean school culture score measures of school growth (i.e. gains in SPS).

The heart of the difference between these schools lies in their Organizational Structures. A quick glance at figure 6.6 reveals that school C2 has very different internal communication patterns. The school is unified in taking a strong proactive stance towards problem solving. A strategy is in place in which all teachers routinely meet with the principal in small groups to collaboratively address issues and concerns. C1 is more traditional in its approach with the principal dealing with the entire faculty at once and informally interacting with a smaller number of teachers. In addition, school C1 has no formal strategy for collective problem-solving. These two factors, internal communication and proactive problem solving strategies, are most likely responsible for the difference in growth between these schools.
Observed differences in Dimension I: Professional Orientation are primarily attributable to the use of strategic planning procedures. School C2 has an on-going rigorous process that is consistently used to systematically analyze the progress of individual students. School C1 develops strategies on aggregated data, but does not review multiple data sources and plan for increasing achievement at the level of the individual student, except in identified at-risk students.

Another difference between the two schools is that at school C2, an “out of the box” way of thinking pervades all that is done. One example of this is the parents spontaneously recreating the parent organization to better meet needs, without any preemption or model for how they should function. They simply saw a need and moved to meet it. This mind set accounts for differences found in Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus. The differences found in Dimension III pertain to the use of instructional methods that actively involve and motivate a greater number of students and superior in class informal monitoring of students at school C2.

VII. DISCUSSION OF PATTERNS AND TRENDS ACROSS THE THREE PAIRS

To ascertain where the greatest differences lie between the cultures of improving and non-improving schools, the difference in the summary score for each dimension was examined for all three pairs. Table 6.15 reveals that improving and non-improving schools differ across all four dimensions of school culture. The greatest dimension of observed difference was in Dimension I: Professional Orientation. This was followed by Dimension II: Organizational Structure. Dimensions I and II comprise the top half of the 4X4 graphic representation of school culture (see Figure 3.2); these aspects of school culture involve the behind the scenes work of principals and teachers which may not be readily apparent to parents and students. Hence, these data indicate that the Professional Orientation of the faculty and the Organizational Structure in place at the school are the dimensions of culture that contrast most between improving and non-improving schools.

Table 6.15  Difference in Summary Scores for All Pairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Pair A</th>
<th>Pair B</th>
<th>Pair C</th>
<th>Average Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Professional Orientation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Organizational Structure</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Quality Learning Experiences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Student-centered Focus</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Smaller differences between improving and non-improving schools were also seen in Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Experiences, followed by Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus. The fact that observable differences were present across all dimensions of culture lends support to the assertion that all four dimensions collectively comprise the whole of culture and that school culture is associated with school improvement.

**VIII. CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter has contrasted the performance of three matched pairs of schools on four dimensions of school culture. Data presented indicate that improving schools scored better than non-improving schools on all four dimensions of culture with the greatest difference in Dimension I: Professional Orientation, followed closely by Dimension II: Organizational Structure. Chapter 7 discusses these results in the light of the research questions and hypotheses posed in chapter 1.
CHAPTER SEVEN
CONCLUSION

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation has been to provide in-depth knowledge of school change processes and to ascertain what effect, if any, school culture has upon the success of planned school change. To this end, this study was designed to describe (see chapter 5) and contrast (see chapter 6) the cultures of matched schools exhibiting differential growth in student achievement. To accomplish this it was first necessary to establish a researched based conceptual understanding of the construct of school culture; this was done in chapter 3. This final chapter of the study will revisit the original research questions and hypotheses; each is addressed based on information gleaned from this 15-month study. The last three sections of the chapter discuss and interpret the findings in the context of school improvement research. Chapter 7 is organized in the following way:

I. Introduction
II. Phase I Research Questions Answered
III. Phase II Research Questions Answered
IV. Phase III Research Questions Answered
V. Hypotheses Addressed
VI. Implications
VII. Recommendations
VIII. Future Directions

II. PHASE I RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Chapter 3 of this dissertation is devoted exclusively to answering the research questions for Phase I of the study in depth. Chapter 3 (Phase I) was completed prior to the data collection and analyses for Phases II and III of the study. The following discussion of the Phase I research questions focuses primarily on post hoc observations made following site based observations at the six sample schools.

Phase I Question 1. What is school culture?

While there are many possible answers to this question (see chapter 2), the most direct answer is that school culture is the way of being and doing that prevails at a given school. School culture evolves over time and is the product of a convergence of factors (see chapter 3) both internal and external to the school. Multiple cultures (belief systems and ways of doing things) may exist in a single school. However, in this study, multiple simultaneous cultures were
present only in the non-improving schools with lower performance scores (i.e., schools A1 and B1). All improving schools (A2, B2, and C2) in this study and the one high SPS but non-improving school (i.e., school C1) had a single unified culture in which there were similar values, and an unwritten code of accepted and unaccepted ways of doing things that was widely adhered to by the faculty.

Culture expresses itself in many ways. It can be seen when new members are “inducted” by introducing them to a series of procedural steps aimed at expressing “This is who we are and how we do things.” Many of the values the culture upholds and its self-image can be seen in written statements and verbally espoused beliefs such as school improvement plans, mission statements, school policy manuals, and formal announcements.

Other aspects of culture must be inferred from observations. Artifacts such as displays in prominent places express the school’s identity to outsiders, and affirm it for members. Culture is also perpetuated through norms of behavior which are exhibited by members over time. Norms are the powerful, but unspoken, codes of behavior which exert a strong controlling force on members of the culture. Adherence to these norms determines whether new members feel comfortable or accepted in the school environment. Implicit in the behavioral norms are basic assumptions which are internalized generalizations about the way things are and the way they should be. Those with different norms usually hold substantially different basic assumptions. One observation made in this study was that teachers who have substantially different norms than the rest of the faculty tend to feel like outcasts and frequently seek to a) leave the school, b) kept to themselves and minimize social contact with other members, or c) influence others to adopt their belief system and norms of behavior.

Examples of this can be seen in school A1, Sunnyside Elementary, where first year teachers rarely stay very long and over a third of the faculty did not return the year following this study, or in school B1, Huntington Elementary, where the new principal holds very different basic assumptions than the “old guard” teachers who are actively trying to either influence the principal or run her off. Since these teachers have no intention of changing their ways or leaving and neither does the principal, they are caught up in a never-ending feud that is more over culture (i.e., basic assumptions, beliefs, and values) than any specific program or policy. Still others at school B1 have become social isolates who interact with other faculty members as little as possible.
These two cases highlight the importance of developing a set of shared core beliefs, much like the “guiding principles” that school B2, Shady Oak, developed. These should be discussed and ratified or altered annually by faculty and other stakeholders. If there are factions who hold substantially different ideals, this should not be ignored by the school leadership since this condition has a detrimental impact on the ability of the school to function cohesively as a unified organization and will ultimately have a negative impact on effectiveness. Differences in basic assumptions should be addressed openly and aggressively; otherwise, differing basic assumptions about the way things should be, can drive a wedge into the faculty and render individuals, factions, or the entire faculty ineffective (Slavin, 1992). This is inevitable because conscientious individuals perpetually seek harmony between their perceptions of “the way things are” (i.e., what is done and the way it is done) and internalized assumptions of “the way things should be” (Argyris & Schon, 1976).

A faculty’s failure to genuinely share similar basic assumptions could explain why some very well conceived reform initiatives fail to produce desired results in some schools when they are quite successful in similar schools. Anytime a situation exists where teachers “go along with” new ideas and ways of doing things without really understanding or supporting the underlying principles, compliance will likely be superficial (Fullan, 1993). In such cases, the theory of school culture predicts that over time the faculty, or individual members, will gravitate back to the old ways, simply because those ways are closer to the basic assumptions they hold in their mind’s eye. If one or more individuals hold different basic assumptions than the majority does, especially when these assumptions are in opposition to planned school changes, then there is a high likelihood that those individuals will become disenfranchised. This increases the chances that they will leave the school, develop negative attitudes and become “nay sayers”, or become social isolates and mavericks doing their own thing without regard to the school mission. None of these scenarios are in the best interest of school effectiveness. Effective schools are characterized by stable faculties who possess a shared vision. The lesson here is for school leaders to be vigilant and proactive in facilitating faculty cohesion. It is essential that the school faculty remain united if meaningful and lasting school improvement is to occur.

Communication among faculty members is central to finding common ground among the faculty and building upon it. Faculties undergoing substantial changes which impact the culture (i.e., the ways of being and doing) need time to talk. Principals can facilitate faculty unity and
the establishment or maintenance of a set of shared values by structuring opportunities communication and posing open ended questions that stimulate a reflective dialog among teachers. Two important aspects of effective communication in schools are the 1) content of teacher interactions, and 2) structures that enables or obstructs an open exchange of ideas. Results from this study indicate that when the content of inter-teacher conversation frequently involves instructional issues that students at these school tend to achieve more. An excellent example of this is the contrast between school C1 and school A1. Teachers at both schools reported talking to each other frequently, but observations revealed that the norms of content in teacher conversations were substantially different; with teachers at A1 avoiding issues of content, while teachers at C1 had on-going simultaneous dialogs about several different instructional matters. In other words, there was a much stronger Professional Orientation (Dimension I) at school C1 coupled with structured opportunities to communicate (Organizational Structure – Dimension II); these things were inevitably contributing factors to the high growth in student achievement seen at this school. School A1, by contrast, had correspondingly weak scores in both Dimension I and Dimension II, in part because they rarely spoke about instruction, and there was no format or guidance upon which to build strong professional exchanges between teachers; accordingly, school A1 had both low student achievement and little growth in scores over a two year period.

Time organization is also a critical factor in changing school culture and maintaining a healthy culture. School faculties that are provided numerous formal and informal opportunities to engage in loosely structured dialogue centered on revising goals and developing a common vision for “the way things should be” have an inherent advantage. Structures that provide teachers with the time and the questions upon which to reflect can go a long way towards establishing a strong Professional Orientation (Dimension I) because they stimulate teachers to think deeper about their practices and provide a mechanism by which input from each faculty member is solicited. School cultures in which there are norms of productive inter-teacher communications (i.e. collaborative cultures) frequently have found ways or invented structures to provide teachers with time for both interactive and independent (Fullan, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1990) brainstorming, researching, and exploration (Stoll et. al., 2003). In this study the schools with the most effective school communication patterns were not only the ones with
high growth, but were those whose principals had made deliberate efforts to structure teacher time in ways so as to facilitate a strong Professional Orientation.

School wide strategic planning is one tool available to faculties entering into change initiatives. Strategic planning meetings can provide valuable assistance schools in articulating values, building consensus, and outlining a commonly agreed upon concrete plan for bringing the faculties collective vision to pass. During this process it is essential that all faculty members as well as other stakeholders are present at most meetings and that adequate time is allotted to the discussion of deeply rooted philosophical differences in the faculty. This process can expose differing basic assumptions that may, if not worked out, unwittingly sabotage an otherwise strong plan for change. The importance of consensus cannot be under estimated for it allows faculty members to understand proposed changes and “buy-in” to the initiative, there by decreasing resistance and increasing the likelihood that faculty members are sufficiently in support of the change initiative that they can work in concert toward common goals (Slavin, 1992).

If faculty philosophical positions and the change initiative are completely incongruent, then some decisions need to be made so that the effectiveness of the entire change initiative is not jeopardized. When these negative circumstances exist, three basic options are available to administrators: 1) invest considerable time and energy into convincing one faction of the need for change, 2) offer teachers who are staunchly resistant to change the opportunity to transfer to other schools where they can find a better ideological fit, or 3) abandon this particular change initiative. Option three is the least likely to be effective, because in such cases faculty differences are rarely limited to the execution of a particular program. Thus, abandoning the change initiative treats the symptom, rather than the underlying conditions. The root problem is cultural in nature and must be resolved in order for the school to improve to the point of maximum effectiveness (Deal & Peterson, 1999). The preponderance of evidence in this study indicates that school improvement is highly dependent upon the success of planned cultural change at the school level.

Phase I Question 2. What are the dimensions of school culture?

This study is built upon the concept that there are four dimensions of school culture which encompass almost all important aspects of the school’s culture. These dimensions are:
I. **Professional Orientation** – the activities and attitudes that characterize the degree of professionalism present in the faculty

II. **Organizational Structure** - the style of leadership, communication and processes that characterize the way the school conducts its business

III. **Quality of the Learning Environment** - the intellectual merit of the activities in which students are typically engaged

IV. **Student-centered Focus** – the programs and services offered to support student achievement

These dimensions were used to successfully describe and differentiate among the cultures of six separate schools in chapter 6, thereby confirming their existence as salient components of school culture. Understanding the component parts of school culture is a fundamental step toward being able to successfully alter school culture and increase school effectiveness. Understanding the dimensional structure of school culture allows researchers to provide more specific feedback to practitioners and is thereby generates results which are actionable in nature.

A theoretical framework for culture also provides a roadmap which can help practitioners overcome internal obstacles to change and thereby increases the chances of accomplishing meaningful school improvement. For greater detail, please refer to chapter 3.

**Phase I Question 3. What is the relationship between school culture and school climate?**

This question is addressed in depth in chapter 3. Essentially, this project conceptualizes school climate and school culture as differing levels of the same construct (see Figure 3.12), where climate refers specifically to the espoused beliefs and self perceptions of the school, and is the second level of school culture. Level one of culture contains the artifactual representations of culture, and level three is the essence of culture – the basic assumptions that control norms of behavior in the school.

**Phase I Question 4. How can school cultures be described such that detailed feedback can be provided to practitioners and the cultures of different schools can be compared?**

Figure 3.5 presents a new concept of school culture, as a four dimensional construct, that exists on three levels. Case studies generated with this framework, such as those in chapter 5, provide detailed descriptions of school functions with regard to each of these dimensions.
and levels; this information is useful in diagnosing specific school problems and prescribing more appropriate courses of action.

A model for providing meaningful feedback to schools was developed to assist the schools in this study with their improvement efforts. Following the conclusion of the study, each principal will be provided with detailed reports containing findings with regard to their school’s culture at the time of the study. Future research is planned to ascertain how effective this feedback actually is to the schools in the study. Follow up interviews will be conducted with these principals at six and twelve months after receiving these reports to record their perceptions of the utility of the feedback received. School growth will also be monitored and documented in the two year cycle following the study. It is predicted that this longitudinal follow-up will confirm the practical utility of the theoretical framework for producing actionable feedback to schools and enhancing school improvement efforts.

School level and district reports sent out to participating school administrators were designed to provide them with as much usable information as possible to assist them in understanding existing cultures at their schools, targeting areas that are ineffective, and formulating a plan to eliminate destructive and/or counter-productive beliefs and practices. The principals were offered access to this feedback as an inducement to participate in the study. Reports to practitioners contained only the materials deemed most important in helping with school change efforts. Each school and district received a case report containing the following components:

1. A brief summary statement that this research found a positive relationship between school culture and successful school improvement.
2. An overview of the theoretical framework for school culture, including graphic representations and brief definitions (Figures 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, & 3.5) of the dimensions and levels of culture.
3. A flow chart (see Figure 7.1) of the eight steps in the cultural change process.
4. The bulleted data reduction charts for their school (see Appendix E2)
5. Specific candid comments made to researchers by participants (e.g. parents on open-ended questions on the parent survey, or students in the focus group) which are deemed particularly insightful or may be helpful.
6. School Summary Consensus Scores for their school and a copy of the Quantitative Ranking Scale (Table 6.4) with which to put the summary of their school culture into perspective.

7. A set of commendations recognizing the most effective components of the school’s culture, which should be protected and enhanced.

8. A set of recommendations for specific actions which can be taken that are deemed most likely to transform the school’s culture in positive directions, with the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement.

9. Advisement that the research on school change indicates that it takes 3-5 years for changes to become institutionalized (Fullan, 1993) as an integral part of the culture. Accordingly, the schools will be advised that they should develop a 3-5 year strategic plan for change, which details tasks, responsible parties, timelines and methods and intervals for monitoring progress.

It is deemed that this type of feedback and information will equip administrators with highly usable data that can be instrumental in initiating or furthering cultural change in their particular school. Note that the feedback given to schools provides administrators with:

- A theoretical framework for understanding school culture
- Specific data regarding their school’s performance
- A means of putting data from their school into perspective
- Recognition for accomplishments
- A theoretical overview of the course of successful school change
- Recommendations based on both theory and specific data from their school
- A guide for developing realistic expectations of the amount of time and effort required to successfully accomplish meaningful school change.
Step 1
Identify & describe the need for change

Step 2
Create a new shared vision

Step 3
Develop a Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for the Change Process

Step 4
Identify needed resources & obstacles to change

Step 5
Secure needed resources

Step 6
Formally self-monitor the change process at regular intervals

Step 7 *
Discuss & fine tune SAP semi-annually

Step 8 *
Annually review changes in student achievement at the following levels: school, subgroups, grade level, subject area, teacher, and individual student

*These steps should be iteratively repeated.

Figure 7.1 Eight Steps in the Cultural Change Process

Provision of this kind of feedback to those involved in school improvement efforts represents a step forward in bridging the gap between research and practice. Cross case comparisons of school culture are also useful to practitioners at the school level and broader levels because they can provide information about context specific variations and other finer points of cultural change in schools that may be extremely helpful in difficult or resilient school settings.
III. PHASE II RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Phase II Question 1. What basic assumptions are held by the faculty with regard to the Professional Orientation of faculty members, the Organizational Structure of the school, the Quality of the Learning Environment, and a Student-centered Focus?

In chapter 5, the case study for each school contains a set of inferred basic assumptions which appear to heavily influence the behavior of each school’s faculty. These basic assumptions are suggested by the observed behavior and spoken statements of multiple members of the culture over several months. These lists of inferred basic assumptions together with observed patterns in the school cultures were used to formulate a set of generalized statements about cultural change in schools.

GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT SUCCESSFULLY CHANGING SCHOOL CULTURE

The results of data collected and analyzed for Phase II of this research both confirmed the existence and utility of the four dimensions of school culture, and allowed for the generation of ideas about how the dimensions relate to each other and the sequence of events that can occur during successful school improvement. The longitudinal monitoring of schools over a 15 month period (longer than was originally intended) provided the opportunity for some interesting observations about how changes in one dimension impact functions in other dimensions. In this section information is presented on the relationships between the dimensions when schools are engaged in an on-going school improvement initiative that is not governed by an externally developed model. These generalized observations are based on a limited number of cases, and may not hold true across all instances and contexts, but are none-the-less noteworthy and should be explored in greater depth in subsequent research.

Generalizations which are holistic in nature and involve the entire school include:

- The beliefs and norms of faculty have an effect on the success of change efforts
- Cultural change doesn’t happen overnight, but is a gradual process of evolving into a different way of thinking and doing, which can take years to complete
- Successful planned change requires much effort, and those on the front lines need support in a number of ways

State and District Level Considerations

Much of the school reform literature from the 1990s forward emphasizes programs and plans for restructuring (Fullan, 1998). While this research does not study programs or policies
explicitly, there is a large body of literature that demonstrates that programs can impact student achievement (Stringfield, Ross, & Smith, 1996). Accordingly, school principals often focus on programs, policies and procedures as a means of improving their schools. However, the central lesson from this research is that the beliefs and actions of the people in the schools, who actually implement the programs, can make a real difference in the success of the school improvement initiative regardless of what that initiative may be. The school’s programs, policies, plans, and procedural prescriptions are filtered through the lens of the school’s culture. Therefore, while it is important to have good research based programs, sound policy, and deliberate planning, the importance of the human element in executing these cannot be overlooked. School culture determines the way in which programs, policies, and plans are implemented, and the amount of rigor with which school personnel strive for success. If they really believe in the initiative, it is implemented and followed through with great care and attention to detail, but if school personnel do not genuinely believe in the basic approach, far less energy tends to be expended and follow through is weak. Case study C1 aptly illustrates this. The teachers at River Bend did not see the need for change; therefore, they put little effort into developing and following through with a SIP; however, the amount of effort teachers were willing to expend to implement changes dramatically increased when they saw a need for change. Hence, motivation is an integral part of building commitment to change.

The understanding that it is people who ultimately change schools (through programs, policies and procedures) is enlightening in that it implies that school change is precipitated by collective behavioral changes in the individuals that comprise the whole of the faculty. Behavioral change in people takes time and effort, and is enhanced by a strong motivator such as a deeply held belief, or sense of mission (Bandura, 1977 & 1999; Slavin, 2000) Collective change in established norms of behavior in a specific setting is strengthened when external support is present both at the individual level and the school level (Stevens, 2001; Fullan, 1993 &1998; Argyris, 1964; Senge, et al, 2000). This has several implications for policy makers and educational supervisors. First, when new programs and initiatives are being considered, it is vital to the success of the program that the change initiative allots adequate time for meaningful cultural change to take place inside the schools where the program is to be implemented. This means time for collective and individual professional development, time for discussion and meaningful exchanges for the instructional staff, time for teacher experimentation and reflection,
time to receive and incorporate feedback from others, time for informal and formal decision making at the individual level and for group strategic planning at the school level, and time for program evaluation (Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2003). The provision of adequate external and internal personnel (Stevens, 2001) and resources are also important factors in achieving and sustaining results. This study confirms what others have said prior to this, namely that site level backing for a program, or lack thereof, can support and sustain school change or sabotage it (Fullan, 1993; Schein, 1996). The following recommendations may assist those involved in school improvement initiatives:

1. The personnel at the school, starting with principal on down, should have a concrete understanding of the need for change. This gives them the motivation to engage their hearts and minds in the initiative, which is important to successful change.

2. Time should be provided for several interactive sessions where teachers and administrators meet collectively and in small groups to understand the underlying principles of the change effort, to revise their collective vision, reflect on the changes that they need to make individually, and to collaborate about better ways of doing things.

3. Principals may need training or assistance in scheduling and/or facilitating productive interactive sessions for the faculty. Time management/scheduling and asking the appropriate questions to provoke teacher reflection are important skills for principals implementing school change initiatives.

4. External support personnel, knowledgeable in the specifics of the reform initiative or school improvement in general, can provide valuable supports for schools by assisting with professional development, and providing feedback for teachers and principals.

5. District and state level supervisors should monitor progress during the first few years of implementation. Results in student achievement may not be evident for awhile, but should show up after about 2 years. Lack of increases in student achievement after two years should alert supervisors of a problem.

6. District and/or state monitoring of school progress, and the provision of supports for change, should continue for 5 years beyond the date of initial implementation, since research (Fullan, 1993) indicates that it may take this long to rebuild a culture. School personnel need adequate time to individually and collectively internalize a different
set of basic assumptions, and learn different ways of thinking about and executing their daily activities.

Generalizations about Cultural Change at the School Level

Several generalizations were formulated about change processes within each dimension of culture. These are displayed in Figure 7.2. As the figure depicts, most of the generalized statements about successful school change involve Dimension I: Professional Orientation and Dimension II: Organizational Structure. Observations in Phases II and III of this study indicate that norms in Dimensions I and II are the most strongly associated with school cultures that support successful school improvement. It is possible that these two dimensions have a causal impact on the other two dimensions. Further study is needed to investigate this possibility in greater depth.

Dimension I: Professional Orientation Generalizations

1. Motivated teachers make it happen; passive compliance kills meaningful change.

Teacher support and buy-in is essential for any planned change to be effective, meaningful, and long-lasting. Schooling is an institution in society and as such has established customs and traditions associated with it. Members of institutions typically internalize the norms associated with their institution. One such norm that has a bearing on this research is that schools are typically a part of larger bureaucratic structures. A basic assumption of bureaucratic organization is a system of top down hierarchical command. Labor forces are subordinate to management and lack of compliance with this is typically met with consequences (Ritzer, 2004; Handel, 2002). In school organizations teachers function more or less as a skilled labor force, and principals act as mid level management, consequently, teachers are typically compliant with administrative requests. However, Fullan (1991, 1993, 2001) and others (Murphy, 1991; Murphy & Hallinger, 1993; Lieberman, 1991) have pointed out that half-hearted or passive compliance does not result in meaningful change. Schein’s theory of the levels of organizational culture (1985, 1988, 1992 & 1996) may explain why this is. According to his work and the work of Argyris (1964) and Argyris & Schon (1976) over time, despite directives to change behavior on the job, individuals tend to gravitate back to behaviors that embody their basic assumptions or theories in practice (Weik, 1979; Senge et al. 2000). When applied to educational settings this means that even well intentioned teachers who are not intentionally resisting change will gravitate back to the “old ways”. When this occurs across the majority of the organization the
result is that the new practices associated with the reform initiative fade away and never become norms, or are short-lived (Fullan, 1993). Thus, the change initiative fails because the leadership failed to accomplish an accompanying cultural change.

Passive compliance rarely results in changing teachers’ basic assumptions, or guiding principals about “the right way to do things.” The original set of behavioral norms evolved and was maintained because doing things “that way” was consistent with the unspoken core of beliefs held by teachers (and possibly principals, parents, students, and/or the community). These guiding basic assumptions don’t die easily, and layering on new ideas, programs, or practices will not influence them unless the basic premises of the reform fit with already held basic assumptions. When basic assumptions of the faculty are incongruent with the underlying principles of the reform, the faculty will simply be going through the motions of program implementation and no real change will be realized or maintained over time (Fullan, 1993). Therefore, the real threat to most change initiatives is not active teacher resistance, but rather passive compliance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension I</th>
<th>Dimension II</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Orientation</td>
<td>Organizational Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Motivated teachers make it happen; passive compliance kills meaningful change.</td>
<td>1. The principal is the gatekeeper; school change starts (or ends) with the principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A collective vision is essential.</td>
<td>2. Strong inspirational leadership is needed to motivate teachers &amp; transform cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Change requires increasing professional knowledge &amp; skills.</td>
<td>3. School improvement requires detailed strategic planning and close monitoring of progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers must reflect &amp; personalize what the change means in the way they perform their work.</td>
<td>4. Sometimes change requires restructuring schedules &amp; responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Successful change means self-monitoring &amp; regulating performance.</td>
<td>5. Improving schools have effective within school communication patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Change requires trial &amp; error: experimentation and evaluation should drive decision making.</td>
<td>6. Successful schools find the resources to do what is important</td>
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<th>Dimension III.</th>
<th>Dimension IV.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of the Learning Environment</td>
<td>Student-centered Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Enthusiasm for learning is more common in improving schools.</td>
<td>1. Programs to identify, meaningfully support, &amp; monitor the achievement of subgroups are in place, and in use, at improving schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thinking skills are emphasized across the curriculum in improving schools.</td>
<td>2. Improving schools monitor individual student achievement rigorously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There is more interaction and student inquiry in improving schools.</td>
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Figure 7.2  Generalizations About Cultural Change at the School Level
The importance of teachers’ understanding why change is necessary and developing a new vision cannot be overestimated. Basic assumptions exert a much more powerful controlling force on school personnel than do formal policies or procedures. In fact, principals and teachers can be quite artful in finding ways of bending and shaping policy to fit around their basic assumptions. For example, collaborative planning time observed at school A1, Sunnyside, often amounted to nothing more than teachers telling their cohorts what chapter they were going to cover next week, with virtually no substantive interaction about methods or anything else. On the other hand, observed collaborations in school A2, La Fleur, were highly energized and productive, often resulting in meaningful exchanges about the best ways to accomplish goals. Why is this seeing that teachers at both schools had the opportunity to collaborate? Teachers at A2 actively believed that talking over ideas with their colleagues would help them do a better job, therefore norms of collegiality (Little, 1982; 1990) developed in response to this shared basic assumption; no such belief existed at school A1, teachers there seemed to assume that silence about differences in instructional methods constituted respect for diversity.

Likewise, comparable schools can (and do) comply with the exact same policy in very different ways. Policies and programs consistent with basic assumptions (i.e., those practices that fit with existing norms dictated by the school culture) stick, while those that don’t fit with the culture fade away in time, unless basic assumptions are challenged and evolve to accommodate the new ways of conducting business. An example of this is seen with Huntington’s (case B1) attempts to change disciplinary practices. The principal had to perpetually keep the issue before the teachers because they continued to surreptitiously pursue actions contrary to the new school policy, while complying on the surface. When asked about this, the principal responded that it wasn’t that they were trying to subvert the policy, but it was just “who they are. They can’t help it.” This fits with Senge’s advice that “if you want to improve a school system, before you change the rules, look first to the ways people think and interact” (2000). Hence, administrators wishing to see school change should be prepared to make the necessary investments into developing a culture at the school site that supports the change initiative. The process of cultural change is more complex at some sites than others, depending on the number and nature of behavioral norms that need to be altered.
2. A collective vision is essential.

This observation is not new to this study (see chapter 2), but field observations confirm the importance of this principle. The two most dysfunctional schools in this study were also the only two schools in which there was no real shared vision: case A1, Sunnyside, and B1, Huntington. These schools were unable to move forward and accomplish goals because they lacked the prerequisite common understandings and sense of unified purpose. Conversely, the HGL schools knew what they wanted to accomplish and teachers worked as a team to move the school in that direction.

3. Change requires increasing professional knowledge and skills.

Change leading to improved effectiveness necessitates consistent application of more productive practices. Those schools with strong Professional Orientation scores, especially the ones who emphasized teacher learning relevant to classroom instruction, were the ones with the most growth in student achievement. Thus professional development is vitally important to school improvement (Little, 2001), though as this study illustrates, professional development itself can take on many forms. Regardless of the mechanism through which it occurs, teachers need structured times in which they collectively and individually focus on better ways to perform their work. This can happen when teachers independently branch out on their own and acquire knowledge and skills which they share with others as was the norm at school A2, La Fleur Elementary, which had successful small sized teams that engaged in collaborative projects such as team teaching and writing successful grants. It may take the form of regular reflective and brainstorming sessions, as was the norm at school C2, or jointly reading and reflecting on professional literature as with school, C1.

Professional growth can also be a more collective whole group endeavor, like the staff development practices followed by school B2, Shady Oak, and C1, River Bend. Teachers at these schools tended to rely more heavily on experiences provided to the entire faculty, as the primary vehicle for increasing their knowledge and skills. In all improving schools and in the one effective, non-improving school (C1), professional development was a priority and teachers enthusiastically welcomed opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills. In the non-improving schools, teachers tended to be more complacent about professional development. Individuals took less independent initiative, and school-wide staff development tended to be less focused and was more frequently a series of disjoint one-time presentations. Teachers at schools
A1, Sunnyside, and B1, Huntington, did not express the same enthusiasm for or desire to participate in professional growth as their counterparts in the more effective schools. Focused on-going and interactive professional development relevant to teaching assignment is recommended for producing changes in teachers’ knowledge bases and repertoire of skills (NSCD, 1995).

4. Teachers must reflect and personalize what the change means in terms of the way they perform their work.

Implementing and maintaining change requires that teachers spend time in reflection about their work. Fullan (1993) states that “personal purpose is the route to organizational change”. Numerous researchers have concurred that in order to be successful at the organizational level, corresponding connections and understandings must be developed at the level of the individual (Argyris, 1964; Argyris & Schon, 1976; Schon, 1983; Darling-Hammond, 1990). Therefore, to support desired changes, leaders implementing school change should emphasize individual teacher growth. Teachers need exposure to new ideas, time to reflect on beliefs and personal meanings and frequent opportunities to collaborate with each other and the principal. These sessions need to be regularly scheduled and focused on collective goals. While whole faculty meeting are quite productive for presenting new ideas and strategic planning, the large group format frequently does not allow for the intimate interactions teachers need to internalize new information and “make it their own”. (Senge et. al., 2000). Small group settings are preferable for this purpose because they are less intimidating for teachers and allow for more direct input by all. This focus on individual teacher development is nicely illustrated by case C1, River Bend Primary, where the principal sent teachers off into small groups at regularly scheduled times to informally discuss a shared reading for the purpose of personal growth. Teachers had very positive reactions to these intimate groups and reported feeling comfortable sharing in this format. These sessions were loosely structured around pre-assigned readings; these teachers liked the informality and said they learned more about themselves and their colleagues.

A semi-structured format was used by Moss Point Primary (case C2), where the principal facilitated loosely structured discussions at biweekly grade level meetings. This format was used to readjust the school vision, by frequently and informally discussing progress made, new problems, and reflecting on effectiveness. Here, again, the small group format allowed new ideas
to be shared, and reinforced or rejected. During these regular sessions teachers are frequently asked to reflect on their teaching and comment on how it fits or doesn’t fit with the new initiative. Such formats can allow teachers to become aware of some of the basic assumptions they hold, or at least the resulting behaviors that they routinely engage in that are holding them and their students back. Examples of this were seen at school C2, and to a lesser extent at B2, Shady Oak. Group discussions such as practiced regularly by these improving schools can provide the basis for the establishment of two very effective and well documented professional practices: 1) a reflective practice (Schon, 1983, Darling-Hammond, 1990), and 2) a collaborative culture (Little 1982; & 2001). The presence of both collaboration and self-reflection seem to have a transformative impact on the Professional Orientation of the school, which was the dimension of culture most strongly associated with improving schools in this study.

Frequent reflective sessions can also function to prevent new initiatives from being overtaken by strong cultural norms, which can easily happen anytime individuals are trying to break habits and have little time to think about their own behavior and identify adjustments they need to make. Listening to others and sharing in small group settings is a format that has been used successfully by numerous organizations which focus on behavioral change (e.g., breaking chemical dependence, diet groups). Frequent small group interactions allow a type of support group to be formed, which encourages teachers struggling to adopt new ways of thinking and different ways of doing things. Small group collaborative planning sessions should be routinely monitored by the principal, particularly in the early stages, to insure maximum effectiveness and to prevent wasted time, as observed in the unsupervised “collaborative” planning observed at school A1, Sunnyside.

If teachers are uncomfortable with this type of communication (which is common when strong norms of autonomy are present), then a loose structure could be imposed on the gatherings until teachers become familiar with the process and learn to participate in productive teamwork. Implementing a set time for reflection not only enhances program implementation, but also encourages individual teacher reflection, in which teachers critically examine what they are doing with students and why they are doing it. In problem solving schools, such as school C2, Moss Point Primary, teachers perpetually self-monitor their effectiveness and adjust any strategies found to be ineffective. This mechanism allows individual teachers to identify problems in the early stages before they reach catastrophic proportions. The presence of a
collaborative culture facilitates individual growth in two ways. First it stimulates thinking and
self-reflection and secondly it serves as a support system for solving individual problems
encountered. Thus, when a teacher can’t figure something out on his/her own, others are willing
to help because it is the norm. These characteristics were exhibited by the most effective
improving school in this study (C2).


School improvement efforts must be periodically reviewed and progress noted (DuFour
& Eaker, 1998; Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1990a). However, not all schools in
the study were equally adept at self-monitoring their progress. The most successful example
found was the low SES improving school A2, La Fleur. This was the only case in which there
were well developed evaluations for new and existing programs. The principal and teachers
relied on these to give them feedback about effectiveness and inform decisions. While school
C2, Moss Point, did not rely on formalized written evaluations, as school A2 did, it subjected its
programs and policies to a rigorous regimen of oral critique. The principal was heard on
numerous occasions making remarks such as, “Let’s take a look at what we’re doing and how
it’s working.” “Is there anything we are overlooking?” “Is there a better way out there?” “Is
that doing the job for us or do we need to look at changing that?” These leading phrases
provoked informal reflection on perceived effectiveness.

School B2 had the least developed mechanism for self-monitoring of all the improving
schools; however, this school did examine student achievement data rigorously and use that to
inform them of whether their collective efforts were making a difference. Very few self-
monitoring practices, such as the creation of a mechanism for judging the effectiveness of
individual programs, were observed at the non-improving schools (A1, B1, and C1). While most
did annually review student achievement, it was typically aggregated at the grade level and was
not broken down to provide feedback at the level of sub-groups of students or individual
teachers, much less individual students.

6. Change requires trial and error; experimentation and evaluation should drive decision
making.

The schools most adept at self-monitoring were also those in which the faculties were
most innovative and creative in their consideration of alternatives. These teachers appeared
confident in their competence to make good choices. They relied less on externally developed
programs and resources and were more self reliant. Teachers frequently brainstormed together and found or invented ways to solve problems. Flexibility in practices was a norm at schools A2 and C2, where the teachers listened open mindedly to suggestions and were open to trying new things, but critically analyzed the results and adjusted their practices accordingly. LGL schools were more rigid in their adherence to policy and tradition; new innovations were regarded as taboo, especially when they conflicted with current practices. For example, when the principal of school B1 changed the bus loading procedure to something she deemed more efficient; however, for the teachers, unaccustomed to sudden departures from set rituals, this was a major traumatic event. The improving schools were much more willing to alter or abandon ineffective or marginally effective programs, policies or practices. Although more resourceful and flexible, HGL schools also exhibited a higher degree of internal accountability when changes were made. In these schools teachers were very conscious that their actions were not perceived as ineffective by their colleagues in the school. Abandoned programs and practices were generally replaced by “home grown” plans developed in house to address specific problems or perceived deficiencies.

Dimension II: Organizational Structure Generalizations

1. The principal is the gatekeeper; school change starts (or ends) with the principal.

Most successful planned changes emanate from the formal leadership structure (Schien, 1992), and at the school level this means the principal. The norm in most schools, including those in the study, is that new “things” (e.g., policies, procedures, curricula) are typically introduced or endorsed by the principal. Formal support from the principal lends legitimacy to new initiatives. Faculty perception of this support is important to the acceptance of new ideas by the faculty. Ideas generated in house by teachers can become an important part of school operations if they are solicited or encouraged by the principal, schools A2, and B2 exemplify this.

Conversely, teacher perception that externally developed programs are not fully endorsed by the principal impacts a program’s chance of “catching on” and being fully incorporated into the culture. An example of this occurred in this study when the principal of Moss Point Primary, school C2, acknowledged that his school had the Accelerated Reading Program, but asked, “Who has time for that?” Nor were his teachers actively using these materials on a consistent or regular basis. Note that this is the same program around which school B2, Shady Oak had built a successful school improvement initiative. Interviews with the first principal of Shady Oak and
several of its teachers revealed that the principal had strongly endorsed the program in its initial stages. This faculty support for the program persisted even after the principal left the school.

The importance of teacher perceptions of principal backing may be traceable to basic assumptions common to the institution of schooling. In general terms, most teachers respect the organizational and governance structure of the school. Schooling in America was designed around the principles of bureaucratic organization. This top down command structure has persisted throughout the twentieth century and is the norm in most traditional schools. Implicit in this is the assumption that the principal’s opinions supersede those of the teachers (Maxcy, 1995). Consider case B1, Huntington Elementary, where several teachers pushed very hard to change the honor roll and disciplinary policy. They wanted stricter discipline and discipline grades to be included in honor roll calculations. Without principal support, these uprisings accomplished little. At this same school, a teacher went “above” the principal’s head and complained to district leadership. When this teacher was later transferred to another school by district supervisors, this sent a strong social reinforcer to teachers that they were to work within the formal command structure. The result was that the resistance to the principal went underground and was beginning to “lose steam” by the end of the study.

In these instances principal endorsement of the initiative, or lack there of was instrumental in whether the program was adopted into the school norms. The principal is the gatekeeper to change; his/her approval or disapproval influences how well the initiative is received by teachers, parents and students. Even subtle interpretations of body language, vocal inflection and phrasing are focused on by teachers and play an integral role in cuing them as to how hard they should work to incorporate the change into the cultural life of the school. Therefore, in traditional schools, the position of principal is crucial to successful school improvement.

This has implications for district leadership seeking changes at particular schools. It would be prudent to ascertain the extent of congruence between a principal’s (or prospective principal’s) basic assumptions about “running a good school” and the requisite knowledge and skill set needed to accomplish the targeted changes. If the principal’s belief system conflicts with the underlying philosophy of the proposed reform, this could negatively impact the initiative’s chances of success at his/her school. The converse is also true: when principals genuinely believe in the power of a reform initiative, their enthusiasm has a positive impact on the rigor
with which it is implemented. The principal of school C2, Moss Point, exemplifies this contagious enthusiasm for his in-house programs, which were vigorously supported by teachers. The same thing could be said for the principal of school A2, and his enthusiasm for the Accelerated Reader Program, which the teachers there came to love and use effectively.

2. Strong inspirational leadership can motivate teachers and transform cultures.

One of the first prerequisites to changing school culture is making the members of the culture (i.e., teachers and others who perpetuate the existing norms) see and understand the need for change. Changing the culture of a school involves changing the beliefs of the individuals who run the school. Teachers must be persuaded that the existing culture (i.e., their way of doing things) won’t accomplish the desired outcomes, and that there is a better way. An excellent example of this can be seen with case C1 of this study. The River Bend faculty was not convinced of the need for change at the onset of the study; therefore, they exerted little effort toward changing practices. This dramatically changed, however, when the school board voted to convert the school to an academic magnet school. Suddenly, the same teachers who had been complacent and passively compliant months earlier were observed scrambling to find out “the best way to teach these kids,” because they now saw the need to change the way they were doing things.

Changing schools “require skilled effective principals to help outgrow their utter dependence on those principals” (Donahoe, 1993). Consequently, a principal’s skill in motivating teachers and convincing them of the need for change can make or break a reform initiative. This has implications for the skill set necessary for principals charged with overseeing change initiatives. The ability to articulate clearly and persuasively becomes paramount. The greatest chance of successfully altering the culture of the school comes from assuring that the principal is a strong transformational leader, who can motivate teachers and monitor progress in non-threatening ways (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). Thus, the knowledge base and skill set associated with transformational leadership must be emphasized in the preparation of new principals and become part of the on-going professional development of current school leaders.
3. School improvement requires detailed strategic planning and close monitoring of progress.

In addition to small group formats, it is necessary that the school as a whole develop a strategic action plan (SAP) to guide them through the change process. The primary difference in a SAP and a SIP being that a SAP contains a more specific detailed plan of action with accountability features built in. All schools in this study had developed the mandatory SIPS, as required by the state accountability plan, but few of these SIPS provided a specific timetable for actions, a list of steps to implement, or a method of evaluation. However, it was observed that improving schools had markedly better SIPS than did non-improving school in terms of:

- clarity
- containing sufficient detail to actually serve as a guide for specific actions,
- outlining procedures for implementing new practices,
- Teachers’ collaboration involved in the development of the plan,
- containing a method or methods for evaluating each proposed program.

Specific recommendations for developing strong SAPs are outlined in the section of this chapter entitled Recommendations for Implementing Meaningful Change at Schools.

4. Sometimes change requires restructuring schedules and responsibilities.

Discussions with principals in this study revealed that teachers’ schedules are often an obstacle to change. Traditional scheduling allows little time for entire faculty professional development, and even less for small group collaborative planning and reflection. The principal at school B1, Huntington, was preoccupied with brainstorming ways to provide more of these opportunities for her teachers. The principal at the most effective HGL school had implemented numerous unconventional scheduling and funding mechanisms to maximize time for teachers to meet and tend to “school business.” Teachers in school A2, La Fleur, were encouraged to work together to reduce their workload by jointly preparing lesson plans, grading, designing assessments, and securing materials, so as to allow more time for collaboration. School C2, River Bend, also used ancillary staff in creative ways to build in sufficient meeting time for teachers.

5. Improving schools have effective within school communication patterns.

The two non-improving schools with marginal to low SPS scores (A1 and B1) had the least effective communication patterns. At Sunnyside (A1), teachers just didn’t talk much about
school matters. At Huntington (B1), there was more gossip than true communication. Even at school C1, which had a higher SPS but low SGL, teachers didn’t really discuss what they were doing with students much until they were really motivated to change by being assigned a different student population. Then suddenly, according to the principal, they were constantly asking each other questions and seeking information.

Conversely, teachers at all three improving schools spoke informally to each other frequently. The discussions tended to be substantive in nature, and they frequently maintained an open on-going dialogue on certain subjects over many months. Teachers at these schools viewed their colleagues as a resource and squeezed in informal opportunities to talk.

6. Successful schools find the time and the means to do what is important.

It goes without saying that teacher collaboration, reflective practice, problem solving, and strategic planning activities require that teachers have work time in which they are not responsible for students. Most schools already provide teachers with a planning period, but these reflective and collaborative sessions cannot replace lesson planning or time for parent conferences. Providing school time to execute these tasks could improve teacher attitudes toward change initiatives, by decreasing the likelihood that they will resist because they perceive it will result in less time to do the tasks they are already responsible for. This was a concern of teachers at school C1, River Bend and B1, Huntington.

Several schools in this study demonstrated a great deal of resourcefulness in obtaining the things they deemed important to their improvement efforts. For example, at school A2, La Fleur Elementary, teachers routinely wrote and received grants to fund training, materials or other components of their instructional program. At schools B2, (Shady Oak) and C2 (Moss Point) the parent group was mobilized to help acquire what the faculty wanted. Teachers and principals at the improving schools tended to be less constrained by convention and more likely to consider alternate methods for acquiring the resources they needed. All three improving schools in this study were resourceful and creative in seeking out ways to provide for identified needs, including but not limited to, time for teacher collaboration, teacher training, as well as other resources; therefore, it is likely that resourcefulness in meeting identified needs, may increase a school’s chances of success with its change initiative.

Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment Generalizations

1. Enthusiasm for learning is more common in improving schools.
“Good teaching involves emotional work. It is infused with pleasure, passion, creativity, and joy. It is a passionate vocation” (Hargreaves, 1997). Such passion is contagious. In this study students in improving schools demonstrated more excitement about their learning than did students at non-improving schools. The tenor and mood of the HGL schools was more upbeat. Student-teacher rapport tended to be strong and centered on academic content, unlike case A1, where student-teacher interactions were sometimes positive, at other times harsh, but rarely were there extended student-teacher conversations about academics.

2. Thinking skills are emphasized across the curriculum in improving schools.

The most effective schools in this study (C1 and C2) emphasized thinking skills across the curriculum. Teachers were observed asking HOT questions naturally in informal situations such as at recess or lunch. The entire faculties were very aware that students needed multiple opportunities to think through things, and tended to supply students with answers less frequently, opting instead to facilitate the student’s own thought processes or research skills.

At the two low SPS, low SGL schools, A1, Sunnyside, and B1, Huntington, the faculty tended to place far less emphasis on developing thinking skills. Both of the schools had devoted staff development time to more superficial approaches to change such as teaching “test taking skills.” These were the only two schools to do so.

3. There is more interaction and student inquiry in improving schools.

Researcher perceptions are that classroom learning environments at the more effective schools (A2, B2, C1 and C2) had a different “feel” than those in the two low SPS, SGL schools (A1 and B1). Students in more effective schools seemed to spend less time in passive activities. Each HGL school had numerous classes in which there was a great deal of student activity. The cultures at these schools embraced the concept that constructive noise and movement was sometimes integral to the learning process. The majority of the teachers seemed more focused on content and substance, whereas in their matched schools, the culture placed more emphasis on form and format, with students much more likely to be seated quietly in rows completing paperwork or listening to a lecture. Students’ natural curiosity and interests were not allowed to flourish in most classes at LGL schools, whereas many more classroom environments in HGL schools fostered an atmosphere of student inquiry.
Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus Generalizations

1. Programs to identify, meaningfully support, and monitor the achievement of subgroups are in place and in use at improving schools.

Though monitoring processes and mechanisms varied greatly, HGL schools made a conscious effort to track the performance of one or more subgroups of the population. Which groups were tracked varied from school to school, but principals and teachers in these schools displayed an awareness that special care needed to be taken to insure that all groups of students achieve. Discussions with teachers at LGL schools revealed that though they were aware of discrepancies in performance of some subgroups, little was done collectively to follow up on this with active plans or monitoring. The teachers at LGL schools were much more likely to explain away the differential in the performance of subgroups by blaming environmental factors beyond the control of the school. Little attempt was made to mediate or help students transcend these.

2. Improving schools monitor individual student achievement rigorously.

All schools in this study were keenly aware of the results of their student achievement data due to mandatory participation in the state school accountability program; however, differences were observed in the levels of analyses used by schools. School C2, Moss Point Primary, did a much more thorough job of analyzing achievement data at the level of the individual student. Moss Point was also the most effective improving school in the study. The least effective LGL school, Sunnyside (A1), conversely left data aggregated at the grade level. Moss Point had developed special programs for specific individuals not performing to high standards, and the progress of these students was tracked throughout the year and individualized interventions implemented when students were not showing signs of improved achievement. Interventions at most other schools were either non-selective or individual performance was not tracked systematically. It is plausible that cultures with highly effective organizational structures have the greatest capacity for providing individualized assistance to students according to need.

GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT CHANGE PROCESSES

Cultural change involves a complex chain of overlapping events that rarely occur sequentially (Stacey, 1992; Senge, 2000). While the change process looks different at each school, a number of commonalities were observed among the schools studied, which led to the conclusion that the dimensions of culture seem to relate to each other in stable ways. Figure 7.3 uses an input/output model to illustrate the patterns of inter-relationships that emerged between
the dimensions of school culture. These relationships are constant across all cases studied. Arrows denote possible causal relationships. Note that the catalyst for change in all schools studied here was a desire for improved student achievement.

**Need for Change – Low Student Achievement**

![Diagram showing the relationships between the dimensions of school culture](image)

**Figure 7.3 Relationships Between the Dimensions of School Culture**

Observations in this study indicated that change processes typically initiated with the principal in Dimension II: Organizational Structure. Factors in Dimension II, such as leadership and strategic planning in turn have a direct impact on both Dimension I: Professional Orientation, and Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus. The existing behavioral norms in Dimension I: Professional Orientation both impact and are impacted by Dimension II: Organizational Structure. Dimension I: Professional Orientation, also directly impacts Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environments. Dimension III: The Quality of the Learning Environments is impacted by norms and processes in Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus.

The dimension that is impacted by more aspects of the culture than any other is Dimension III: The Quality of the Learning Environments. It is believed that this dimension is the only dimension that directly impacts student achievement. Since Dimension III: The Quality of the Learning Environment is impacted by the other three dimensions and it in turn has the most direct on student achievement, it can be thought of as a mediating effect resulting in large
part from behavioral norms in the other three dimensions of school culture. Therefore, it is advisable that those wishing to improve The Quality of the Learning Environments at their school, should begin by introducing changes into Dimension II: The Organizational Structure, first, followed by changes to Dimension I: The Professional Orientation. This study indicates that this is the natural flow of events in the cultural change process.

**IV. PHASE III RESEARCH QUESTIONS ANSWERED**

Phase III Question 1. What differences exist in the cultures of schools with Higher Growth Labels (HGL) and those with Low Growth Labels (LGL) with regard to Dimension I: Professional Orientation of the school, Dimension II: Organizational Structure of the school, Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment, and Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus?

Phase III Question 2. What major themes, beliefs, stories, myths, hero/heroines, traditions, rituals and other symbolic artifacts characterize HGL schools? Do these differ substantially from those found in LGL schools?

One characteristic of HGL schools in this study was that they all have a strong sense of identity; they are proud of who they are and adamant about how they do things. They are careful to operate within parameters of formal district or state policies, but they definitely have their own agenda. They prioritize school needs based upon their own sense of collective self-identity (i.e., this is who we are and how we do things). Leaders in these schools are very focused on internal affairs and only expressed interest in a broader educational community when it had a direct bearing on their school.

One noticeable commonality in the artifacts of HGL schools is that there are invariably objects near the school entrance which make bold statements about “who we are.” These include things like signs in the schoolyard, flags, bulletin board displays, large or multiple school mascots, or logos prominently displayed for all to see. These schools usually have a strong sense of school pride, and very set ways of doing even mundane things. HGL schools typically make a bigger production over student successes, and have high teacher efficacy coupled with a strong academic push. HGL teachers tend to collaborate more, but be very casual about it; with these teachers it is more of a way of life rather than a thing they do at preset meetings. They simply find ways to fit it in. An example of this was school B1, Shady Oak, where teachers reported talking to each other frequently and collaborating on instruction although they did not have a
common meeting time; rather they just fit it in somehow. Teachers at HGL schools take more initiative and tend to be more deliberate in attempts to problem solve. Principals at HGL schools are more intimately involved in day to day instructional decisions. Communication patterns involve more frequent informal communication between teachers, and with the principal. Parents at HGL schools tend to take more of an active role in furthering the school’s mission and are made to feel welcome by the principal and faculty. A case in point is the spontaneous reorganization of the parent group of Moss Point (C2).

While HGL schools have established rituals and traditions, they do not hesitate to alter these if the need arises. HGL schools, like Moss Point (C2), La Fleur (A2) and Shady Oak (B2), are forward-looking and self-monitoring. They watch for “changes in the horizon,” such as shifts in student populations, new policies/procedures/curricula, and changes in achievement scores. They pride themselves on identifying needs quickly and addressing them boldly. However, internal changes are not made quickly or lightly; these schools tend to collaborate extensively before arriving at a course of action, and secure a high level of teacher buy-in before embarking in new directions. The stories told at HGL schools often begin something like “We used to have a problem with __________, but …”

The individual most frequently discussed in heroic terms at HGL schools was the principal. Stories were related about how the principal handled situations in a manner that enabled and empowered participants. Principals at all HGL schools and also the effective, but LGL school (case C1, River Bend) were highly respected by teachers and parents alike. Stories reflected an appreciation for the principal, especially in instances when the principal provided guidance and direction, without being dictatorial. The personnel at the HGL schools mentioned that their principals take a very hands-on approach towards problem solving. The can-do approach was a consistent theme at the HGL schools in this study, and participants loved to relate tales of how they overcame obstacles in various instances.

LDL schools had less of a definite identity and sense of pride. Like HGL schools, LGL schools have rituals, routines and established ways of doing things; however, these schools seemed to be more locked into these everyday procedures. Small changes were made from time to time; these tended to be less discussed and upset the faculties more than similar routine changes at HGL schools. For example, when the principal of Huntington (B1) changed the bus loading procedure with little warning, teachers were highly upset, anxious and indignant. Rather
than simply adjusting to the change and moving on, the teachers reacted passionately and what
the principal perceived to be a minor procedural adjustment became a major controversial issue
requiring much time and energy to resolve.

LDL schools tended to be more focused on tending to day-to-day problems as they
occurred, but were less proactive in self-analysis of trends. Problem identifying and solving
strategies were less frequently employed. Many of the teachers at the LGL schools were focused
on merely trying to make it through the day or the week.

The heroes/heroines at the LGL schools were sometimes teachers or principals from the
past. The notable exception in this study was the high SPS, low HGL school who looked to their
principal as a hero. In general, teachers at LGL schools were more focused on the past or
present, than the future. A theme of hesitancy toward the new and unknown seemed to pervade
these schools, where teacher efficacy tended to not be especially high. By contrast, the HGL
schools were perpetually forward looking.

V. HYPOTHESES ADDRESSED

The overall hypothesis for this research was that the construct of school culture can
explain differences in the degree of success schools experience in improving student
achievement. Indeed, the construct of school culture, presented in Phase I of this study, produced
comprehensive and detailed descriptions in Phase II, which allowed the researcher to confirm
that there are concrete and describable differences in the cultures of improving and non-
improving schools (Phase III).

The Phase III hypothesis was that schools that score higher on the dimensions of school
culture also show greater improvement in student achievement over a two year period. The data
confirm that the schools with the highest scores across all dimensions of culture are also the
schools with the HGL. Invariably, across the three matched pairs studied, there were substantial
differences on all dimensions of culture between the improving schools and the non-improving
schools. It follows, then, that a strong association exists between school culture and school
improvement. This study affirms the assertion that school culture impacts student achievement.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

There are three major implications of this research. First, research on school culture and
school improvement holds the potential for unlocking the question of why some schools are able
to successfully change and improve student achievement and other seemingly comparable
schools are not. Second, the presence of a dimensional structure for school culture allows researchers to provide more specific feedback to practitioners and policy makers about the differences between improving and non-improving schools. Detailed feedback about school culture could be very valuable in informing decisions and developing more effective school improvement strategies at the school level, the district level, and beyond. Finally, an understanding of the natural progression of change a) informs administrators implementing school improvement initiatives about the most productive areas to begin with, and b) allows for the provision of appropriate support services to schools such as professional development.

This study is one of the first attempts to explicitly use mixed methods research to study a construct that heretofore had only been investigated qualitatively. Chapters 3 and 4 expound upon some of the reasons that warrant the use of multiple sources and types of data in studying school culture, not the least of which is that school culture has long been referred to as “elusive” or difficult to capture methodologically. One of the fundamental assumptions of this study is that school culture is a very complex construct; consequently, there has been much research that has captured a piece or a few pieces of the puzzle, but few studies have approached the construct with the complexity necessary to provide a thorough understanding of the controlling forces in a school’s culture. This study moves the discourse about school culture toward a more intricate and less simplistic treatment of the construct.

While attempts to measure culture quantitatively were only marginally successful, patterns in the data are strong enough to warrant continued efforts to refine measurement instruments, which may eventually lead to the ability to measure culture quantitatively. This study contributes a new framework and a different methodology for the study of school culture and successfully links school culture to school improvement. It is hoped that ultimately this line of inquiry will better equip practitioners for addressing the complex task of improving student achievement in a variety of contexts.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING MEANINGFUL CHANGE AT SCHOOLS

This section contains the following: a) a description of the “layering on effect” that characterizes many school improvement efforts, b) a set of guiding principles for teachers if meaningful change is to occur, c) descriptions of schools from the study demonstrating problems in initiating and sustaining change, and d) the presentation of a plan for meaningful school
improvement through cultural change entitled a “Manifesto for Change.” Collectively these components constitute my recommendations for implementing meaningful and sustainable school reform.

After completion of this study and reflection on the various school cultures and their approaches to change, a commonality was discovered among the six cases. As expected, every school in this study was attempting planned change aimed at improving student achievement. All schools had developed a School Improvement Plan (SIP) per state and/or district regulations. However, in one key regard, all six SIPs (and their accompanying norms) reflected an approach to school improvement that endorsed layering on the new ways (policies, programs, curricula, methods) rather than a concerted effort to examine established practices and change those procedures and programs deemed ineffective.

The schools, in this study never actually acknowledged that they needed to fundamentally recreate themselves with a new vision and different ways of doing things. The only exception to this was the TIS at Sunnyside Elementary (Case A1) who expressed that she saw no hope for improvement unless they just “closed down and started up again with new people.” Although more of the teachers reported speaking to this person about instruction than to the principal, she was not their first choice for inclusion on the SIP team, probably because she did not perpetuate the same basic assumptions as the majority of the faculty. It is interesting to note that although this individual was highly respected by the faculty, she did not feel that she had much influence over the way things were done. She did not return to Sunnyside the following year. This TIS was very perceptive about two things: 1) Sunnyside needed a complete cultural makeover, and 2) Sunnyside’s faculty was not ready to commit to changing their established norms.

While case C1 provides the most dramatic example of the “layering on effect,” it certainly was not the only example. State policy mandating improvement in all schools set the tone that resistance to change is futile. Therefore, in all cases studied, schools developed a SIP that layered new programs or procedures on top of more of the same. The plans reviewed did not indicate a need undertake fundamental organizational changes such as recreating a new vision and reviewing existing programs and procedures. The only exception to this was when the new principal, Mr. Brasseaux, at school B2, brought along a new set of “guiding principles;” however, it is unclear the extent to which the faculty had input into the development or endorsement of these.
In the six cases studied, plans for improvement (SIPs plus informal procedures) were inadequate road maps for successfully changing an established culture, though some were markedly better than others. The TIS of Sunnyside (A1) had been right about the need to start fresh with a new vision and new ways of doing things. The new principal at Shady Oak (B2) was on the right track in understanding that a set of “guiding principles” was needed to navigate the change process, but he failed to recognize the importance of faculty commitment to these principles. This is important because while behavior can be coerced, beliefs cannot; beliefs can only be influenced and this takes time and effort. Planned cultural change has the best chance for success when teachers:

1. Believe in the need to change,
2. Agree on a common vision of the future,
3. Develop a step-by-step, detailed plan for the actions that are needed to get there
4. Identify existing areas, norms, programs, policies, or ways of doing things that need to be changed, eliminated, or revised to accommodate the new vision and plan,
5. Are committed to achieving the vision,
6. Personalize what the impact the initiative will have on their day to day activities
7. Engage in frequent ongoing informal assessments of the program
8. Participate in self-reflection of teaching practices and routinely evaluate their own individual development in terms of growth in professional knowledge and skills
9. Maintain a frequent ongoing informal dialogue about progress toward identified change,
10. Are open minded and flexible in all things,
11. Develop formal assessments for the effectiveness of all programs that are maintained (new and old),
12. Review formal program assessments annually and decide to continue, alter or eliminate each program based on results,
13. Solicit informal and possibly anonymous teacher feedback about supports needed to encourage, enhance or sustain changes,
14. Find ways to secure the resources needed for success, even if in non-conventional ways.

While the schools involved in improvement processes in this study all had SIPs, these SIPS fell short of being comprehensive plans for change. Some included effective components, but very few provided enough detail about how the plan was to be implemented or assessed, and virtually all failed to include informal practices (such as soliciting feedback from others) that affect program success, even when they may actually be doing them. Does this mean that none of the schools accomplished change? No, some did accomplish change, but this change seemed to be to some extent an intuitive process rather than a planned effect. The problem with such
evolutionary school change is that it is random and idiosyncratic in nature (The Consortium on Productivity in the Schools, 1995).

Some of the cultural changes taking place in the six schools observed are the unintended results of evolution over time due to routine changes such as personnel or policy changes made at higher levels. Others are incremental changes deliberately engineered, which are inadequate by themselves to transform the cultures sufficiently to achieve and sustain targeted improvements in student achievement. While, evolutionary changes can be positive, just as they occur with little planning, they can, and often do “mysteriously” disappear when the stimulus (such as a program, funding source, person, or policy) ceases to exist.

Though the HGL schools in this study were hesitant to discard existing programs and practices, and typically layered the new on top of the old, some of the “add-on” components of their improvement process apparently increased their effectiveness. Whether or not these changes are sustainable is unknown, only time will tell. It is possible that those schools that were the most effective to begin with will have a greater chance of sustaining changes because they also have the lowest incidence of ineffective norms in the school culture. It is predicted that the more of these 14 characteristics a school has, the greater its chance of achieving and sustaining planned organizational change. For example, school A2, La Fleur, has a fair chance of sustaining changes because it has strong instructional leadership, a unified vision, formalized program evaluations, and teachers who find ways to fund what they believe in – all important aspects of planned organizational change. School C2, Moss Point Primary, also has a good chance of sustaining its growth because it has a strong instructional and transformational leader, committed teachers, excellent informal communication, good informal assessments, and a flexible “whatever it takes” attitude about adjusting approaches and/or funding to meet needs.

A lack of sustainability is a tell-tale sign that the core culture of the school never really changed, it simply adjusted to accommodate the newest wave of add-ons. School B1, Huntington Elementary, succinctly illustrates the perpetual nature of school culture and the difficulty and deliberation that is sometimes required to meaningfully and purposefully alter the basic assumptions on which the culture is built. Grace Skyler, the new principal, saw the need for change and determined in her “heart and mind” to bring it about. She influenced and won over those she could, but a strong remnant remained who refused to alter their behavioral norms. She correctly identified the crux of the problem and cause of the internal conflict: “We simply
believe different things.” The old guard (resistance) teachers were correct that they were going to have to be willing to change or leave. Some of both happened, and with the principal maintaining a steadfast approach, operational patterns (not yet norms) began to change at the beginning of her third year at Huntington.

Will real cultural change be realized and sustained at Huntington? This depends on how comprehensive their plan for change is and how unified and committed the teachers are to seeing it through. Evidence indicates that the school is moving in a positive direction, with less internal division and more teachers opening up to the idea of a new way of being and doing. However, the existing SIP is woefully inadequate to guide them through the change process, and internal communication patterns are ineffective. Chances of meaningfully transforming the culture and sustaining the growth so that improvements do not “collapse” with routine personnel (especially the principal) or policy changes, are not good without a better plan, which is rigorously adhered to. Otherwise, it is predicted that the fate of this school may be to be caught up in several short lived “improvements” or “growth spurts.” Each subsequent decline will likely elicit another layer of marginally effective add-on programs. Over time the principal and few really committed teachers will more than likely burn out or become frustrated and leave. Huntington is at the starting line for cultural change. They have a knowledgeable, committed principal who sees the need for change, but they desperately need a better road map to help them get where they want to go.

Although Huntington’s case study most aptly illustrates the need for a detailed plan for change, all the other schools could benefit from the same advice. Even the most improved school in the study, Moss Point (C2) had a SIP that featured add-ons and more of the same rather than outlining steps to accomplishing cultural change. Their saving grace was a principal who is a strong motivator who had implemented many informal procedures never mentioned in the SIP or documented in any formal way. Such failure to formalize plans may result in a culture that is more dependent upon a particular personality, in this case a charismatic principal. The danger here is that improvements may not be enduring for long after a change in leadership. The sign of a strong impervious culture is that it is resilient despite routine personnel and policy changes which occur in the life of a school.

River Bend Primary’s (Case C1) prognosis for successful change is fairly good. They are starting out as an effective school, which means fewer old habits will need to be broken. The
addition of a student selection mechanism which alters the student body composition has now provided the missing ingredient – a catalyst to motivate teachers that change is needed. This faculty was well on their way to discovering new ways of functioning. Their sense of commitment and unity may well be enough to perpetuate the changes that are implemented. However, this school could also benefit from a more purposeful plan to guide their change process, streamline their efforts, and maximize productivity. A clarified vision and detailed strategy would also alleviate much of the anxiety that the teachers are now experiencing, due to stepping out into unfamiliar territory.

In an effort to answer questions encountered from practitioners, namely the principals and superintendents (who consented to participate in this study in exchange for feedback about their school cultures), I developed a guide to assist them with accomplishing meaningful school improvement through planning for cultural change. The plan takes the form of a “Manifesto for Change” to be completed by each school. The Manifesto is essentially a “how to” step-by-step guide for strategically planning for change, and incorporating self-monitoring mechanisms. The Manifesto for Change is intended as a guide or tool to be used flexibly by schools to assist and enhance their efforts. It must be stressed that the Manifesto must be collaboratively developed and contain realistic down to earth steps that are faithfully and consistently carried out by all. All too often SIPs are developed by only a few individuals and are never really used on a day-to-day basis. Schools must make this Manifesto their own and really use it as a road map to inform what they do if they are to have success with it.

The following is an outline for a sample Manifesto for Change which can be likened to a Declaration of Independence in that it states a rationale for dissolving the former and lays out a vision for the creation of a new entity based on an agreed upon set of ideals.

SAMPLE MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

A. Declaration of Intent to Change

After careful consideration, we, the faculty of ___________________, find it necessary at this point in time to alter certain aspects of the way our school functions. The purpose of this document is to clarify exactly what we want to accomplish and how we plan to accomplish it.

B. Statement of Professional Competence

This body of individuals is composed of knowledgeable and skilled professional educators who are committed to ensuring that our students receive the best education we can
provide them. To this end we exercise our authority to make informed decisions about the best means to run our school and educate our students.

C. Statement of Core Beliefs

As a body we believe that:

1. We (about the faculty)
2. Our students...

D. Necessity for Change

We believe that fundamental changes in the basic ways that we operate are in order because:

1. 
2. 

E. Statement of Goals

By adopting this Manifesto for Change, we plan to accomplish the following goals that we deem to be of the highest priority:

1. 
2. 

F. Statement of Commitment to Change Process

We are committed to implementing changes which will empower us to meet our stated goals. We plan to:

1. Assess our needs
2. Evaluate current policies, programs, and procedures
3. Identify and eliminate ineffective practices
4. Educate ourselves on ways to maximize school effectiveness and student achievement
5. Collectively implement agreed upon methods of maximizing student achievement
6. Develop and participate in on-going assessments of new and existing methods, programs and practices
7. Alter our practices based upon performance assessments of ourselves and our students
8. Be open-minded, flexible and resourceful in finding solutions to problems encountered

9. Work as a unified team and refuse to accept failure.

The wording of the Manifesto for Change is only intended as an example. The essential component of the plan is that the faculty makes a bold and unified statement declaring their intent to purposefully recreate themselves, rather than layering on the new atop the old, as done by the SIPS evaluated in this study.

The next stage, an equally important part of an effective change process, is the development of a step-by-step SAP (strategic action plan). This plan must be detailed, specific, and practical. It outlines actions that will be used to initiate, sustain, and evaluate important aspects of the change process. An SAP should contain 2-5 goals. These should already be identified in the Manifesto for Change. Each goal should be followed by a rationale which justifies the need for concentration on this aspect of operations. Under each rationale the following components should be detailed:

   a. Names of responsible parties in charge of conducting a Needs Assessment and presenting Recommendations to the faculty
   b. Initiating actions
   c. Date for making recommendations to faculty
   d. Detailed course of actions for implementation of recommendations which includes:
      (1) Proposed timeline for implementation
      (2) Assessment of current policies and programs
      (3) Proposal of new programs or enhancement of existing practices
      (4) Plan for provision of individual in-class supports for faculty
      (5) Recommended budget and possible funding sources
      (6) Recommended provision of external supports
      (7) Plan for formative (informal) and summative (formal) program evaluation
      (8) Schedule of Assessment Reports to faculty.

None of the SIPS (school improvement plans) reviewed in this study were as detailed as this. Not surprisingly many schools even viewed the SIP as just another item layered on, and
few of the teachers were even aware of the contents, much less actively involved in carrying it out. The process of collaboratively developing a Manifesto for Change and a detailed Strategic Action Plan, such as those outlined above, would go a long way towards recreating a school culture that is maximally effective.

It is important that schools pursuing substantial improvements understand what change is and what it is not. Change is not layering on new programs on top of the existing culture and hoping for the best. Change is taking a long hard look at the norms that define the way a school works, questioning why things are the way they are, and taking deliberate steps to bring the reality of the way things are done, into alignment with a unified vision for the future. This means understanding which norms are productive and which are counter-productive. The process of eliminating counter-productive behavior and replacing it with productive behavior is a long, slow process involving a great deal of education, commitment, feedback and support. Changing human behavior is difficult, but with the right plan and much determination, it is entirely possible to transform school culture.

**VIII. FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH**

**CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPROVING PRACTICE**

Longitudinal studies of school culture are needed to document intended and unintended cultural changes occurring in schools over time, using this framework (or other comparably complex frameworks) as a guide. Results from case studies of school culture, such as those generated in chapter 5, or the data reduction charts in appendix E2, should be used by practitioners as a part of their school improvement process. Qualitative monitoring of this process will provide valuable insights regarding the utility of these data for directly informing practice, and help to refine the types of feedback that is most productive for practitioners.

This line of research linking school culture to school improvement should be rigorously pursued in the educational scientific community. Results from this study are encouraging and lay the groundwork for future investigations. This body of work may prove to be instrumental in informing educational practice and may unlock some of the mystery surrounding the enigma of difficult to improve schools.
METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research has been exploratory in nature. The initial goal was to learn as much about school culture as possible, and to devise a way to ascertain whether it impacts school improvement, and if so, how. Phase I linked several complementary bodies of research together to create a rich complex definition of school culture. The theoretical model generated was successfully used to generate thick descriptions of school culture. The dimensional structure and resultant cross-case comparisons could prove to be an important tool for informing school improvement practices. Phases II and II of the study were designed to test the model developed. Descriptions of the school culture found in the case studies are based heavily on the perceptions of the participants and interpretations of observations by the researcher.

The next steps in this line of research will be to engage in intellectual discourse with other researchers regarding the merit of the theoretical framework and the methodologies designed in this study. The study needs to be replicated in a variety of contexts, such as different community types, and school levels. Larger samples of schools and of participants within schools are needed in order to judge the validity of initial findings that: 1) this framework is useful for studying school culture, and 2) that school culture does impact the success of school improvement efforts.

Quantitative results, while not definitive, support continued efforts to develop construct specific instrumentation. Consistent trends in the data indicate that it may be possible to more adequately measure many important aspects of school culture quantitatively. The quantitative measures for each dimension in this study will need to be examined carefully in future studies, and item analyses will need to be completed to ascertain which items were best able to distinguish between HGL and LGL schools. For practical reasons it would be desirable to include a small number of the strongest items for Dimensions I and II into a single brief survey that all teachers at a school could take. This could potentially increase reliability by making the surveys less lengthy and cumbersome. Replacing the MRSSEQ and the LAMSSS with a single two dimensional teacher survey would increase the sample size by eliminating the need to split the faculty and administer one survey to each half. The new survey would be designed to match the specific conceptual definitions of the construct; therefore, it would inherently have higher construct validity than using preexisting surveys designed for other purposes. The further
development of theoretically sound quantitative measures of school culture would allow for more direct comparisons of culture than were possible with this study.

Assuming that suitable quantitative instrumentation can be developed and validated, the findings from this study support the continued use of mixed methods for data collection. Use of a wide array of data, which are then triangulated, provides a much more comprehensive picture of the school, which is important when studying a construct as complex as school culture.

This study of school culture was aimed at uncovering some general principals about the relationship of school culture to school improvement; therefore, true extreme cases were excluded so that findings would be more transferable (refer to chapter 4 Notes on Site Selection – School Sampling Procedure). It may be interesting to do a similar study of school culture in schools with true extreme scores (i.e., positive and negative outlier matched pairs). Studies of extreme cases should reveal major differences in culture, which would serve to complement this work.

It is hoped that future studies of school culture will be executed using the model developed in Phase I of this research and that these studies will address some of the limitations of the current study. One improvement would be the addition of a section on the history of the school to the case study reports. This is consistent with Owens and Steinhoff’s (1988) model for studying organizational culture, presented in chapter 2. Also, this study utilized only one individual to collect data in the field, which may lead to some subjectivity in observations; attempts were made to compensate for this by employing two raters to evaluate the data reduction charts, though it is acknowledged that this alone may not be adequate enough to negate the effects of possible researcher subjectivity. In future studies it would be preferable to train multiple individuals to collect data, and to ensure inter-rater reliability through field tests. This study provides an important first step in the testing of a new model, but the use of multiple observers and interviewers would strengthen the findings in subsequent research in this line. It is also possible that since Phases II and III were developed to test the model developed in Phase I, that some degree of circular reasoning may have been employed across the phases. This often happens when one is developing and testing a theory in the same study. While this is recognized as a possible limitation of the study, it may have been unavoidable in this situation.

One of the most challenging aspects of conducting this research occurred in the selection of the final sample from the pool of possible pairs. In almost all of the 13 possible pairs, one
school was willing to participate, but their matched pair needed much persuasion. A post hoc observation of the schools in the final sample reveals that in these three pairs, it was the improving school that was eager to participate, while the non-improving school was reluctant. Since records of letters sent out and initial phone contacts with prospective schools were lost, there is no way of knowing for sure, but it is possible that most of the declines came from LGL schools. Similar observations were made by Freeman (1997) and Durland (1996). This phenomenon may provide an obstacle to future research involving matched pairs. It may be advisable in future studies involving LGL schools or matched pairs that the researcher persuade the district to require participation. One of the superintendents contacted for initial consent offered to do this because the district wanted access to the information, believing that it may help them understand how to improve the low SGL schools in their district.

This aim of this study has been to generate a better understanding of school improvement processes. Findings here support the claims of prior research (Fullan, 1992; Halsall, 1998; Deal & Peterson, 1999) asserting that school culture is an important and pivotal component in the improvement process. This study has extended prior work by bringing together congruent findings across several fields to create a more complex definition of school culture and to describe ways that culture impacts school improvement efforts. It is hoped that the knowledge generated herein contributes to a better understanding of school improvement processes and ultimately has a positive impact on the success of future school improvement efforts.
REFERENCES


Barth, R.S. (1990). Improving schools from within: Teachers, parents and principals can make a difference. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers


Buckingham, UK, Open University Press; Melbourne, Australia, Australian Council of Educational Administration.


Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (1990a). Effective schooling practices. Portland, OR: NREL.


APPENDIX A
QUANTITATIVE INSTRUMENTS

1. Modified RSCEQ
2. LAMSSS & SS
3. SAPA & SAPI
4. MFSCP
APPENDIX A1A

The Modified

Revised School Culture Elements

Survey

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to describe the way your school functions and the values of the faculty. Your responses will be used to inform our knowledge of school improvement processes. What we learn will be used to help other schools to develop programs and processes that will enhance their effectiveness.

Privacy

Your time is greatly valued and your voluntary participation in providing this information is highly appreciated. Your anonymity is guaranteed. Responses are seen only by researchers and no individuals or individual schools will be identified by name in any research report.

Instructions:

1. Read each item in the survey.
2. Find that number on the response sheet.
3. Answer twice, once for the way things really are, and once for the way you would prefer that they were.
4. Turn the survey in to the folder marked RESEARCH PROJECT in the school office.
**Modified RSCEQ Teacher Survey**

*Directions: Please respond twice to each statement; first for the way you think things actually are, then for the way you would prefer that they were. Mark your response on the answer sheet provided.*

1. Teachers in this school are proud to be teachers.
2. Expressions of the school’s vision reflect staff consensus.
3. We have identified ways to determine if school priorities have been met.
4. Teachers give priority to helping their students develop higher order thinking skills.
5. My professional decisions are supported by my colleagues.
6. Teachers adjust their teaching to fit the needs of individual students.
7. Beginning teachers are adequately mentored and assisted by experienced teachers.
8. Our school improvement plan details strategies for improving student achievement in targeted areas.
9. Teachers here are committed to their own professional growth as a key way to improve teaching and learning.
10. Teachers at this school believe that all students can learn.
11. Teachers incorporate findings from research into their own teaching practices.
12. I am receptive to advice from my colleagues about my teaching.
13. Teachers frequently communicate with each other about the quality of teaching and learning.
14. The progress of new ideas and programs is carefully monitored.
15. We evaluate and discuss the success and/or failure of existing school programs.
16. Teachers make an effort to maintain positive relationships with colleagues.
17. There is good attendance and active participation at professional staff meetings.
18. Teachers recognize/ prize colleagues who have done something special or received awards.
19. Teachers use planning time for instructional matters.
20. Teachers routinely plan lessons together.
21. Collaborations with other teachers at this school have helped me provide better learning experiences for my students.
22. I am involved in professional organizations or associations beyond this school.
23. Teachers here frequently read professional journals, attend conferences, or take classes from time to time to further their professional knowledge or skills.
24. Colleagues acknowledge my efforts and endeavors.
25. The faculty here works to develop new school programs and policies to meet student needs.
26. A vision for the school’s future is clearly understood by all.
27. Student learning takes priority over all other school goals.
28. Teachers here learn from each other.
29. Teachers are unified in their commitment to accomplish the school’s vision.
30. Teachers have sufficient professional autonomy to do their work the way they think best.
31. Teachers have adequate time to meaningfully plan together for instruction.
32. Teachers continuously seek ways to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms.
33. Information is systematically collected to evaluate the success of school programs.
34. Teachers work diligently to implement decisions made at school meetings.
35. Teachers welcome informal observations and feedback about their teaching.
36. Teachers consult others for advice/expertise in dealing with especially difficult situations.
37. Creativity in designing ways to improve student learning is valued.
38. Teachers are willing to help others when problems arise.
39. Teachers question and debate ways to accomplish the school’s vision.
40. Teachers accept the need for support and assistance from their colleagues.
41. Staff development is focused on a few themes and continues beyond one or two meetings.
42. Teachers receive the assistance and resources they need to enhance student learning.
43. Teachers share problems with each other.
44. Teachers spend time informally discussing ways to improve the school, or their teaching.
45. Teachers spend time in professional reflection about their work.
46. I personally believe in the plan the school has for improving student achievement.
47. Teachers are comfortable in expressing their concerns or reservations in faculty meetings.
48. Teachers sometimes choose to team teach.
49. Teachers here pride themselves in staying informed and up to date in their subject area(s).
50. The most knowledgeable and skilled teachers are admired by others.
MODIFIED RSCEQ RESPONSE SHEET

Please use the following scale to respond:
1 = strongly agree
2 = agree
3 = disagree
4 = strongly disagree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTUAL</th>
<th>PREFERED</th>
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APPENDIX A1B
MODIFIED RSCEQ CONSTRUCT DEFINITIONS AND ITEMS

Shared Sense of Mission

The items grouped in this cluster are designed to measure the extent to which the faculty is unified by a common vision for student achievement. This factor also indicates the degree of faculty input or buy-in to school improvement plans and the extent to which teachers are committed to achieving identified goals.

Items

2. Expressions of the school’s vision reflect staff consensus.
3. We have identified ways to determine if school priorities have been met.
8. Our school improvement plan details strategies for improving student achievement in targeted areas.
14. The progress of new ideas and programs is carefully monitored.
15. We evaluate and discuss the success and/or failure of existing school programs.
17. There is good attendance and active participation at professional staff meetings.
25. The faculty here works to develop new school programs and policies to meet student needs.
26. A vision for the school’s future is clearly understood by all.
27. Student learning takes priority over all other school goals.
29. Teachers are unified in their commitment to accomplish the school’s vision.
33. Information is systematically collected to evaluate the success of school programs.
34. Teachers work diligently to implement decisions made at school meetings.
39. Teachers question and debate ways to accomplish the school’s vision.
46. I personally believe in the plan the school has for improving student achievement.
**Collegial Support for Teaching and Learning**

This factor measures perceptions of professional relationships between teachers. Items are designed to assess the extent to which teachers work together toward the goal of improving student achievement.

*Items*

5. My professional decisions are supported by my colleagues.
7. Beginning teachers are adequately mentored and assisted by experienced teachers.
12. I am receptive to advice from my colleagues about my teaching.
13. Teachers frequently communicate with each other about the quality of teaching and learning.
16. Teachers make an effort to maintain positive relationships with colleagues.
18. Teachers recognize/ praise colleagues who have done something special or received awards.
20. Teachers routinely plan lessons together.
21. Collaborations with other teachers at this school have helped me provide better learning experiences for my students.
24. Colleagues acknowledge my efforts and endeavors.
28. Teachers here learn from each other.
31. Teachers have adequate time to meaningfully plan together for instruction.
36. Teachers consult others for advice/expertise in dealing with especially difficult situations.
37. Creativity in designing ways to improve student learning is valued.
38. Teachers are willing to help others when problems arise.
40. Teachers accept the need for support and assistance from their colleagues.
43. Teachers share problems with each other.
44. Teachers spend time informally discussing ways to improve the school, or their teaching.
47. Teachers are comfortable in expressing their concerns or reservations in faculty meetings.
48. Teachers sometimes choose to team teach.
Professional Commitment

This factor measures teachers’ perceptions of the faculty’s commitment to professional development. Items center around teachers’ practices and attitudes towards improving their knowledge or skills pertaining to teaching and learning.

Items

1. Teachers in this school are proud to be teachers.
4. Teachers give priority to helping their students develop higher order thinking skills.
6. Teachers adjust their teaching to fit the needs of individual students.
9. Teachers here are committed to their own professional growth as a key way to improve teaching and learning.
10. Teachers at this school believe that all students can learn.
19. Teachers use planning time for instructional matters.
22. I am involved in professional organizations or associations beyond this school.
23. Teachers here frequently read professional journals, attend conferences, or take classes from time to time to further their professional knowledge or skills.
30. Teachers have sufficient professional autonomy to do their work the way they think best.
32. Teachers continuously seek ways to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms.
35. Teachers welcome informal observations and feedback about their teaching.
41. Staff development is focused on a few themes and continues beyond one or two meetings.
42. Teachers receive the assistance and resources they need to enhance student learning.
45. Teachers spend time in professional reflection about their work.
49. Teachers here pride themselves in staying informed and up to date in their subject area(s).
50. The most knowledgeable and skilled teachers are admired by others.
The purpose of this survey is to describe the leadership and management practices of school administrators. Your responses will be used to help others who are interested in enhancing the effectiveness of leadership as it is practiced in schools.

We appreciate the many demands on your time, including this request for information. But we urge you to complete this survey since only those people actually involved in schools can provide an accurate picture of how schools work. **Your anonymity is guaranteed.** No individuals will be identified in any reports on the research.

Your cooperation in completing this survey is greatly appreciated.

Kenneth Leithwood and Doris Jantzi

Centre for Leadership Development
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
of The University of Toronto

1997
# Section A: Nature of School Leadership

The following statements are descriptions of leadership that may or may not reflect leadership practices in your school. Indicate the extent to which you agree that the statement describes leadership practices in your school by circling the number that best reflects your opinion. The response options range from 1 = Strongly Disagree through 5 = Strongly Agree. Use the "NA" (Not Applicable) response if the item does not apply to you or you don't know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Shows respect for staff by treating us as professionals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Delegates leadership for activities critical for achieving school goals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Takes my opinion into consideration when initiating actions that affect my work.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Is a source of new ideas for my professional learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Has high expectations for us as professionals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gives us a sense of overall purpose.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sets a respectful tone for interaction with students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Distributes leadership broadly among the staff, representing various viewpoints in leadership positions.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Is aware of my unique needs and expertise.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Stimulates me to think about what I am doing for my students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Helps clarify the specific meaning of the school’s mission in terms of its practical implications for programs and instruction.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Demonstrates a willingness to change own practices in light of new understandings.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Ensures that we have adequate involvement in decision making related to programs and instruction.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Encourages me to pursue my own goals for professional learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Holds high expectations for students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Communicates school mission to staff and students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Models problem-solving techniques that I can readily adapt for work with colleagues and students.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Supports an effective committee structure for decision making.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 NA</td>
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</table>
To what extent do you agree that the person(s) providing leadership in your school:

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Is inclusive, does not show favoritism toward individuals or groups.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Encourages us to develop/review individual professional growth goals consistent with school goals and priorities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Encourages the development of school norms supporting openness to change.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Promotes an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Facilitates effective communication among staff.</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Provides moral support by making me feel appreciated for my contribution to the school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Encourages us to evaluate our practices and refine them as needed.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Helps us understand the relationship between our school's mission and district initiatives.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Symbolizes success and accomplishment within our profession.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Provides an appropriate level of autonomy for us in our own decision making.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Encourages me to try new practices consistent with my own interests.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Expects us to be effective innovators.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Works toward whole staff consensus in establishing priorities for school goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Facilitates opportunities for staff to learn from each other.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section B: School Management

The following statements describe various aspects of how operations may be managed within a school. After reading each statement, indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement by circling the number that best reflects your opinion. The response options range from 1 = Strongly Disagree through 5 = Strongly Agree. Use the "NA" (Not Applicable) response if the item does not apply to you or you don’t know.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The teacher's expertise is of paramount importance in staffing.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Our school administrators provide organizational support for teacher interaction on a regular basis.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Our school administrators have a positive presence in the school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Our school administrators are sensitive to the community's aspirations and requests.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The process of staffing is fair and equitable.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Our school administrators involve present staff members in hiring new staff.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Our school administrators attempt to plan and work with community representatives.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Present staff welcome and value new staff members.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The contributions of all staff members, new and established, are valued equally.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Resources and technical assistance are available to help staff improve effectiveness.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Our school administrators are easily accessible to students and staff.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Our school administrators will seek to incorporate the characteristics and values of the community in the operation of the school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The school administrators regularly observe classroom activities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Our school administrators give evidence in their actions of their interest in students' progress.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Our school administrators have established a productive working relationship with the community.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Our school administrators are visible within the school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. After classroom observations, our administrators work with teachers to improve their effectiveness.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Our school administrators frequently review student progress.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Our school administrators have secured a high degree of autonomy for the school within the district.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Our staffing policies recognize the importance of placing staff in areas of competence and expertise.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. The school administrators frequently participate in discussions of educational issues.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A2B

LAMSSS ITEMS BY CONSTRUCT AND RELIABILITY INFORMATION

THE LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS
STAFF SURVEY
Items by Construct & Reliability-- May 1997

A. Nature of School Leadership .978*
Symbolizing Good Professional Practice .932
1. Shows respect for staff by treating us as professionals.
7. Sets a respectful tone for interaction with students.
12. Demonstrates a willingness to change own practices in light of new understandings.
17. Models problem-solving techniques that I can readily adapt for my work.
22. Promotes an atmosphere of caring and trust among staff.
27. Symbolizes success and accomplishment within our profession.

Developing a Collaborative Decision-Making Structure .932
2. Delegates leadership for activities critical for achieving school goals.
8. Distributes leadership broadly among the staff.
13. Ensures that we have adequate involvement in decision making.
18. Supports an effective committee structure for decision making.
23. Facilitates effective communication among staff.
28. Provides an appropriate level of autonomy for us in our own decision making.

Providing Individualized Support .896
3. Takes my opinion into consideration when initiating actions that affect my work.
9. Is aware of my unique needs and expertise.
19. Is inclusive, does not show favoritism toward individuals or groups.
24. Provides moral support by making me feel appreciated for my contribution.

Providing Intellectual Stimulation .938
4. Is a source of new ideas for my professional learning.
10. Stimulates me to think about what I am doing for my students.
14. Encourages me to pursue my own goals for professional learning.
20. Encourages us to develop/review professional goals consistent with school goals.
25. Encourages us to evaluate our practices and refine them as needed.
29. Encourages me to try new practices consistent with my own interests.
32. Facilitates opportunities for staff to learn from each other.

Holding High Performance Expectations .874
5. Has high expectations for us as professionals.
15. Holds high expectations for students.
30. Expects us to be effective innovators.

Fostering Development of Vision and Goals .931
11. Helps clarify the practical implications of the school’s mission.
16. Communicates school mission to staff and students.
21. Encourages the development of school norms supporting openness to change.
26. Helps us understand the relationship between our school's mission and board or Ministry initiatives.
31. Works toward whole staff consensus in establishing priorities for school goals.
B. School Management

Establishing Effective Staffing Practices

1. The teacher's expertise is of paramount importance in staffing.
2. Our school administrators involve present staff members in hiring new staff.
3. Our school administrators place staff in areas of competence and expertise.
4. The process of staffing is fair and equitable.
5. Present staff welcome and value new staff members.
6. The contributions of all staff members, new and established, are valued equally.
7. Our staffing policies place staff in areas of competence and expertise

Providing Instructional Support

2. Our school administrators provide organizational support for teacher interaction.
10. Resources and technical assistance are available to help staff improve effectiveness.
13. The school administrators regularly observe classroom activities.
17. After classroom observations, our administrators work with teachers to improve effectiveness.
21. The school administrators frequently participate in discussions of educational issues.

Monitoring School Activities

3. Our school administrators have a positive presence in the school.
16. Our administrators are visible within the school.
11. Our administrators are easily accessible to students and staff.
14. Our administrators give evidence of their interest in students' progress.
18. Our administrators frequently review student progress.

Providing a Community Focus

4. Our administrators are sensitive to the community's aspirations and requests.
7. Our administrators attempt to plan and work with community representatives.
12. Our administrators seek to incorporate community characteristics and values in school operations.
15. Our administrators have a productive working relationship with the community.
19. Our administrators have secured a high degree of autonomy for the school.

*Cronbach’s Alpha
Dear Faculty Member,

Your school is participating in a study of school culture in improving schools. As a part of this study, I would like to ask you two questions about the communication patterns in your school. Each question contains two parts, a & b. Please answer as honestly as possible.

The information will be used for research purposes only and will not be used by the school, the school district, or the state in any way. The purpose is to gain an understanding of the role of informal communication between faculty members whose schools are implementing a school improvement program.

When you are finished please leave it in the folder marked RESEARCH PROJECT – L. SCHOEN. If you are unsure where it is located please check with the school secretary.

THIS SURVEY WILL BE COLLECTED FROM THE SCHOOL ON__________________________.

If you have any questions, you may contact me at 222-2222.

Thank you for your help.

LaTefy Schoen, M.Ed.
Research director
APPENDIX A2D

Sociometric Survey

Question #1:

Who do you talk to about school related academic matters?

a. Please answer by placing a √ beside the name of each person you’ve spoken to about instruction, assessment, or other aspects related to your role as a teacher at this school during the past week.

b. Then go back and indicate the three persons you communicated with the most about academic matters over the last week by placing a 1, 2 and a 3 beside their names.

Question # 2:

Who are the best people to serve on a school improvement team?

a. Assume that you were on a committee charged with improving instruction and student achievement at your school. Please put a √ beside the names of each person you would like to serve on this committee with you.

b. Now assume that you may only select three people to be on the team, indicate your top three choices by placing a 1, 2, or 3 beside their name.
Standards for Authentic Pedagogy
Classroom Instruction (SAPI) Rating Sheet

School_____________________________  Date_________________________
Teacher____________________________  Lesson type___________________

Standard 1: Higher Order Thinking by Students (application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation)

5  High use of HOT
4  Much HOT – 1 major activity
3  More LOT, but at least 1 hot Question/activity
2  Mostly LOT, but some minor HOT
1  LOT only  (activities involve primarily only fact recall or comprehension)

Standard 2: Deep Knowledge

5  Very deep knowledge exploration by almost all students most of lesson
4  Relatively deep exploration by students; teacher or student keep it focused
3  Uneven; deep at times, shallow at others
2  Knowledge is superficial and fragmented

Knowledge is very thin; simple information meant for memory

Standard 3: Sustained Substantive Topic-centered Classroom Discussion which:
   o has depth
   o involves a reciprocal exchange of ideas
   o leads to a shared collective understanding of the topic

5  All 3 features occur; some sustained conversation; all participate
4  All 3 features occur; some sustained conversation; many participate
3  Features 2 or 3 occur at least once; sustained conversation at least once
   Features 2 or 3 occur briefly; 2 consecutive interchanges at least once
1  Virtually no features of substantive conversation occur
**Standard 4: Connection to the World Beyond the Classroom**

5. Students work on a topic or issue connected to personal or public experience; learning is meaningful & knowledge is used to solve real world problems

4. Learning is connected to experience: students recognize connections between school learning and the real world, but little attempt is made to use the knowledge to influence a larger group

Students study a topic & teacher succeeds in connecting it to their experience or real world situations; implications of knowledge not explored; no effort is made to influence a larger audience

2. Students encounter an issue & teacher tries to explain its importance; however, there is no evidence students make the connection

1. The lesson topic has no clear connection to anything beyond the classroom; teacher offers no justification for why it is important in the real world

**Other Important Aspects of the Learning Environment**

**Standard 5: Intensity of Student Engagement in Learning Activities**

5. Very high levels of student interest, enthusiasm, and motivation for learning are displayed throughout the majority of the lesson.

Most of the students appear interested and involved in learning for the majority of the lesson.

3. Some student interest displayed; most participate; moderate attention levels (20 % or more of students appear inattentive/ disinterested).

2. Student participation is characterized by passive engagement with learning activities. Students are basically compliant with teacher requests, but little student enthusiasm for learning activities is observed.

1. Little student interest, motivation or engagement in learning activities is observed.

**Standard 6: Level of Distraction in the Learning Environment**

5. Distractions are kept to a very minimal level; Nothing significantly interferes with the ability of students to remain focused on learning tasks throughout the entirety of the lesson.
Occasionally a small number of students are distracted from learning activities for brief periods by movement, noise or interruptions external to the lesson.

Moderate distractions exist in the learning environment. Most students are able to remain on task for much of the lesson, but extraneous movement, noise, or interruptions distract some learners repeatedly.

Distractions in the learning environment are problematic. Numerous or repeated elements in the environment distract many students on a continuous basis and make it difficult for sustained learning to occur, but some students are able to participate in learning tasks none-the-less.

Severe distractions exist; interruptions to learning are extensive, obtrusive, and persistent making it difficult for even the most diligent learners to concentrate on the task at hand.

* Classroom observation notes should be attached to the back of this form
Standards for Authentic Pedagogy
Assessment Task (SAPA) Rating Sheet

School_____________________________  Date_________________________
Teacher____________________________  Lesson type___________________

* A copy of the assessment & lesson plan should be attached to the back

Standard 1: Organization of Information
The extent to which students are asked to organize, synthesize, interpret, explain or evaluate is

4 High
2 Moderate
1 Low

Standard 2: Consideration of Alternatives
The extent to which the task asks students to consider alternative solutions, strategies, perspectives or points of view is

3 High
2 Moderate
1 Low

Standard 3: Disciplinary Content
The extent to which the task asks students to understand or use ideas, theories, or perspectives central to an academic discipline or professional field of practice

3 Success on the task requires an understanding of concepts or theories
2 Success requires some understanding of concepts, but the task doesn’t make these explicit
1 Success can be achieved with superficial or no understanding of concepts central to the field
Standard 4: Disciplinary Process
The extent to which students are asked to use methods of inquiry, research, or communication characteristic of an academic discipline or field of professional practice

3 Success on the task requires the use of methods of inquiry or discourse important to that field
2 Success requires the use of some form of inquiry, though not those central to the field
1 Success can be achieved without any form of inquiry or discourse

Standard 5: Elaborated Written Communication
The extent to which the task asks students to elaborate on their understanding

4 The task asks students to explain or justify their answer or processes used; some use of analysis, persuasion or theory is made
3 The task requires that students organize and display how they arrived at the answer, but students are not asked to justify (Show your work)
2 Short answer exercises. Little explanation or detail is expected
1 Multiple choice and fill in the blank exercises

Standard 6: Problem Connected to the Real World Beyond School
3 The question, problem is clearly relevant to one the student is likely to encounter in life; no teacher explanation of the connection between classroom learning and the real world is needed for most of the students to see the relevance to their life.
2 The question bears some resemblance to the real world experiences of students, but connections may not be immediately apparent
1 The problem has virtually no resemblance to questions or problems students are likely to encounter in life beyond school

Standard 7: Audience Beyond the School
4 Final product is presented to an audience beyond the school
3 The final product is presented to an audience beyond the class, but within the school
2 The final product is presented to peers in the classroom
1 The final product is presented only to the teacher
Measure of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

Karen Clark Salinas, Joyce L. Epstein, and Mavis G. Sanders, Johns Hopkins University; and Deborah Davis and Inge Aldersebae, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

This instrument is designed to measure how your school is reaching out to involve parents, community members, and students in a meaningful manner. The measure is based on the framework of six types of involvement developed by Epstein (1995). At this time, your school may conduct all, some, or none of the activities or approaches listed. Not every activity is appropriate at every grade level. The selected items show that your school is meeting challenges to involve all families in many different ways that will improve the school climate, strengthen families, and increase student success in school. Your school may be conducting other activities for each type of involvement. These may be added and rated to account for all major partnership practices that your school presently conducts.

Directions: Carefully examine the scoring rubric below before rating your school on the six types of involvement. As you review each item, please circle the response that comes closest to describing your school. A score of 4 or 5 indicates that the activity or approach is strongly and prominent. A score of 1, 2, or 3 indicates that the activity is not yet part of the school’s program, or needs improvement. The results provide information on the strength of current practices of partnership, and insights about possible future directions or needed improvements in your school’s partnership program.

Scoring Rubric
1 – Not Occurring: Strategy does not happen at our school.

2 – Rarely: Occurs in only one or two classes. Receives isolated use or little time. Clearly not emphasized in this school’s parental involvement plan.

3 – Occasionally: Occurs in some classes. Receives minimal or modest time or emphasis across grades. Not a prevalent component of this school’s parental involvement plan.

4 – Frequently: Occurs in many but not all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A prevalent component of this school’s parental involvement plan.

5 – Extensively: Occurs in most or all classes/grade levels. Receives substantive time and emphasis. A highly prevalent component of this school’s parental involvement plan.
I. PARENTING: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conducts workshops or provides information for parents on child development.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provides information, training, and assistance to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Produces information for families that is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Asks families for information about children's goals, strengths and talents.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sponsors home visiting programs or neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools to understand families.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Provides families with information/training on developing home conditions or environments that support learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Respects the different cultures represented in our student population.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities:</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. COMMUNICATIONS: Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reviews the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develops communication for parents, who do not speak English well, do not read well, or need large type.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Establishes clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.</td>
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<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Conducts a formal conference with every parent at least once a year.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conducts an annual survey for families to share information and concerns about student needs and reactions to school programs, and their satisfaction with their involvement in school.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Conducts an orientation for new parents.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sends home folders of student work weekly or monthly for parent review and comment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Provides clear information about the curriculum, assessments, and achievement levels and report cards.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Contacts families of students having academic or behavior problems.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develops school’s plan and program of family and community involvement with input from educators, parents, and others.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Trains teachers, staff, and principals on the value and utility of contributions of parents and ways to build ties between school and home.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1   2   3   4   5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our School:</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12. Builds policies that encourage all teachers to communicate frequently with parents about their curriculum plans, expectations for homework, and how parents can help.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. Produces a regular school newsletter with up-to-date information about the school, special events, organizations, meetings, and parenting tips.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. Provides written communication in the language of the parents.</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### III. VOLUNTEERING: Recruit and organize parent help and support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Conducts an annual survey to identify interests, talents, and availability of parent volunteers, in order to match their skills/talents with school and classroom needs.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Provides a parent/family room for volunteers and family members to work, meet, and access resources about parenting, childcare, tutoring, and other things that affect their children.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Creates flexible volunteering and school events schedules, enabling parents who work to participate.</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Trains volunteers so they use their time productively.</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Recognizes volunteers for their time and efforts.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6. Schedules school events at different times during the day and evening so that all families can attend some throughout the year.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Our School:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. Reduces barriers to parent participation by providing transportation, childcare, flexible schedules, and addresses the needs of English-language learners.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. Encourages families and the community to be involved with the school in a variety of ways (assisting in classrooms, giving talks, monitoring halls, leading activities, etc.)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Other types of activities:**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
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### IV. LEARNING AT HOME:

Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.

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<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
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1. Provides information to families on how to monitor and discuss schoolwork at home.  

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<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
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</table>

2. Provides ongoing and specific information to parents on how to assist students with skills that they need to improve.  

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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
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</table>

3. Makes parents aware of the importance of reading at home, and asks parents to listen to their child read or read aloud with their child.  

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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
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</table>

4. Assists families in helping students set academic goals, select courses, and programs.  

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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
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</table>

5. Schedules regular interactive homework that requires students to demonstrate and discuss what they are learning with a family member.  

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<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Not Occurring</th>
<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
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</table>

**Other types of activities**  

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<th>Rating</th>
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<th>Rarely Occurring</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Extensively</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
V. DECISIONMAKING: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Has active PTA, PTO, or other parent organizations.</td>
<td>Not Occurring Rarely Occasionally Frequently Extensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Includes parent representatives on the school's advisory council,</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improvement team, or other committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Has parents represented on district-level advisory council and</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Involves parents in an organized, ongoing, and timely way in the</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planning, review, and improvement of programs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Involves parents in revising the school/district curricula.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Includes parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>other groups in the school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Develops formal networks to link all families with their parent</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>representatives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Includes students (along with parents) in decisionmaking groups.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Deals with conflict openly and respectfully.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Asks involved parents to make contact with parents who are less</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involved to solicit their ideas, and report back to them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
VI. COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Our School:</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Occurring Rarely Occasionally Frequently Extensively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Provides a community resource directory for parents and students with information on community services, programs, and agencies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Involves families in locating and utilizing community resources.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Works with local businesses, industries, and community organizations on programs to enhance student skills and learning.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provides “one-stop” shopping for family services through partnership of school, counseling, health, recreation, job training, and other agencies.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Opens its building for use by the community after school hours.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Offers after-school programs for students with support from community businesses, agencies, and volunteers.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Solves turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities to occur.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Utilizes community resources, such as businesses, libraries, parks, and museums to enhance the learning environment.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other types of activities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. What major factors have contributed to the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?

B. What major factors have limited the success of your school’s family and community involvement efforts?

C. What is one of your school’s major goals for improving its program of school, family, and community partnerships over the next three years?

References:


Note: For information on the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, visit the Network’s web site: www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000. For information about NWREL’s services, call 1-800-547-6339 ext. 676, or access the web site: www.nwrel.org.
Family Opinion Sheet

Please take a few minutes to share your opinions about our school and how we can develop strong partnerships between families and the school. Thanks!

In general, what are three ways the school is doing a very good job?
1.
2.
3.

What are three ways you think the school could make improvements?
1.
2.
3.

Does your family usually feel “up-to-date” and well informed about events and special dates?
   Often (weekly or monthly)  Sometimes (once or twice)  Never

Does someone in your family volunteer at the school?
   Often (weekly or monthly)  Sometimes (once or twice)  Never

Have you received enough information to help with homework or other school projects?
   Always  Most of the time  Usually  Sometimes  Never

Are there opportunities for the adults in your family to offer their opinions by serving on school committees or in other ways that seem important? If no, why?
   Yes  No

What advice do you have for school staff on how to get more families involved?

Your name (optional)__________________________ phone__________________________

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
APPENDIX B
QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION GUIDES
1. School Culture Faculty Interview Protocol
2. Student Interview Protocol
3. School Observation Checklist
4. Sociometric Survey Follow-up Interview with Principal
**School Culture Faculty Interview Protocol**

School____________________________  Individual or Focus Group

Date ____________________________  Time ________________

*General Information:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Faculty Member</th>
<th>Position held</th>
<th>New to this job?</th>
<th>Years at school</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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**Faculty Morale**

1. Describe the overall morale at your school.

   a. Can you tell me about a time when morale was particularly high?

   Why do you think everyone was feeling encouraged at this time?

   b. Describe a time when morale was low & tell why you think everyone was feeling down.
Dimension I. Professional Orientation

**Collaboration**

1. Do teachers have regular opportunities to work together?
   
   a. When given the option do most teachers opt to work with peers in planning instruction or do teachers seem to prefer to work alone?
   
   b. Can you give an example of teachers working together on a project?
   
   c. Can you tell me about a teacher who prefers to work alone?
   
   d. Is adequate time provided for routine collaborative planning?

2. Do teachers here work well together?
   
   a. Can you tell me about a successful professional partnership at this school?
   
   b. Can you give me an example of a conflict between teachers and how it was resolved?

3. Do teachers work together on school related activities on their own time?
   
   a. Can you provide a specific example?

**Instructional Planning**

1. How do teachers typically plan for instruction?
   
   a. Do they work together or individually?
   
   b. Do they use a standardized format?
   
   c. What is required of lesson plans?
   
   d. Are plans turned in to someone?

2. What measures are taken to insure that instruction meets state standards?
   
   a. How much emphasis is placed on adapting instruction to meet state standards? Can you give an example?
   
   b. What is the attitude of the faculty in dealing with issues of state standards, benchmarks, or accountability?
3. What efforts are made school wide to meet students’ individual needs & learning styles?
   a. Are there instances when the need to adhere to state standards conflicts with the need to adapt instruction to the needs of the individual learner? Please describe.
   b. How is this handled? Can you give a specific example of how these two demands were balanced?

4. Rate the availability & use of instructional resources from 1 to 10, where 1 is scarce, 5 is adequate, and 10 is abundant.
   a. A wealth of materials are available to teachers
   b. Teachers actually make regular use of the resources that are available

Professional Development
1. Describe the types of on site professional development the teachers have participated in the past 2 years.
   a. What is typically covered at the monthly professional development days?

2. About what percentage of your teachers would you describe as being actively and enthusiastically engaged in pursuing greater professional knowledge or skills on their own? (i.e. going to conferences, reading professional literature, asking questions, trying out new things, sharing ideas)
   a. Can you name one or two specific people that come to mind and tell what you’ve noticed they do?
   b. Name the three most innovative teachers at your school

3. What do the teachers here collectively believe about teaching and learning?

4. On a personal level, what is most important about your work to you?
   a. What is the key to being a good teacher or insuring that every child is learning?

Dimension II. Leadership & Communication

Socialization
1. How many first year teachers are on faculty this year?
   a. Is this typical?
   b. What is the typical number teacher positions that are filled each year?
2. What is done to help new teachers understand the way things are done around here?
   a. students?
   b. parents?

**Leadership Style**
1. Describe yourself as a leader.

2. What is your philosophy in dealing with
   a. Teachers?
   b. Students?
   c. Parents?
   d. Support staff?
   e. Central office/ state department

3. What is your personal mission at this school-what would you most like to accomplish?

**Communication**
1. When you need to communicate something to the teachers what do you do?
   a. Do you rely more on announcements, memos, or word of mouth?

2. If you wanted to get the message out about something, but didn’t want to make a big deal about it in a public format (announcement or memo) which teacher or teachers would you go to & why?

3. If something happened while you were out and you wanted to find out what was going on, who would you ask first & why?

4. Is there a schoolwide communication plan?
   a. What communiqués go home from the office on a regular basis from classrooms and from the office?
   b. What are the typical practices of teachers with regard to communicating with parents?
Leadership Density
1. How often do you delegate responsibilities?
   a. What types of activities do you assign to others to do for you?
   b. Give a specific example
2. Do you find yourself calling on the same individuals repeatedly?
   a. Who are your ‘right hand men’? (i.e. The ones you know you can count on.)
3. How often do teachers approach you with new ways of doing things?
   a. Can you give a specific example?
4. How would you respond if a teacher suggested a new
   a. Instructional approach?
   b. School procedure or policy?
   c. Organizational structure? (multilevel classes, teacher looping, block scheduling)
   d. Restructuring school expenditures?

Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment

Stories
1. Tell me about a teacher (past or present) you remember as being a shining example of what a good teacher should do.
   a. What struck you most about this person?

2. What is the greatest success story you can recall about a student here?

3. Tell me about the worst incident involving a student you remember.
4. Describe the characteristics of “the ideal teacher” in your opinion.

5. Who are the most innovative teachers here? Why do you think this?

6. Who are the most dedicated teachers here? How do you know?

Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus

Parental Involvement
1. Describe the relationship between parents and teachers at this school.
   
   a. Do parents tend to take passive roles as followers or are they more active as leaders in asserting what they want?

   b. How vocal are parents here?

   c. Are they typically critical or supportive?

   d. Give a specific example

2. How active is the PTO?
   
   a. Name specific projects in which parents take an active role.

Support Services
1. What programs exist here to help struggling students?

2. What support is provided to teachers in helping to
   
   a. identify special needs?

   b. meet individual needs in the classroom?
3. What programs/ supports are provided to parents?

**Student Recognition**
1. What does the school do to encourage student achievement?

2. How is student achievement recognized?

Is recognition  
   a. Formal or informal?

   b. In front of their peers?

   c. How often are students recognized?

**Disciplinary Policies**
1. Is there a school wide disciplinary policy? Please explain.

   a. How strictly is it followed?

   b. Are there consistent consequences?

   c. Is good/improvement behavior rewarded?

   d. What is done to reform, instruct, or make a learning experience out of misbehavior?

3. To what extent is student discipline a problem here? Rate it from 1 to 10, where 1 is none and 10 is a major concern.
Overview/Change

1. What is the best thing about this school for the
   a. Students
   b. parents
   c. teachers
   d. support staff
   e. community
   f. administrators

2. If you could change one thing about the school what would it be?

3. What is the teachers’ attitude toward changing the way they do things?

4. What has changed most in the school over the past two years?
# Student Interview Protocol

**School**___________________________  **Date**___________________________

**Notes on Context of Interview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Student Participants</th>
<th>sex</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Teacher’s name</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1.</td>
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</table>

1. **How long have you been a student at this school?**
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 
   f.  
   g. 

What do you like best about your school?
Dimension II: Student Leadership Questions

2. Name your favorite teacher at this school and tell me why you picked that teacher.
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.
   f.
   g.
   h.

3. Are there lots of ways you can get involved in doing special things and helping out at this school? Give me some examples of things students do to help out here.

4. Do the grown ups around the school listen to the kids’ ideas?

Dimension III: Quality of the Learning Environment Questions

1. How interesting are the things you learn about in your classes?  (VERY interesting, a little interesting, not very interesting)
   a. Describe the most interesting thing you have learned about recently.

2. Think about a time when you had trouble learning something in school. Did you tell your teacher about the problems you were having? Why or why not? When you told a teacher you were having trouble, what happened? How did your teacher try to help you? Did the teacher make you feel bad for asking for help?

3. Tell me something you did as part of a school project that you are really proud of.
**Dimension IV: Student-centered Focus**

1. Have you or anyone you know ever gotten help with a problem from someone other than their own teacher? Tell me about what the problem was, who helped them and how.

2. Do lots of parents help out at this school?

3. Do your parents ever come to the school? What do they come for?

4. Are the teachers and principals fair at this school? Have you ever had a problem with something other than learning at this school? What happened?

**Conclusion Questions**

1. Is this a good school? How do you know?

Do you like coming to this school? Why or why not?

   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.
   f.
   g.
   h.

2. If there was one thing you could change about this school what would it be?

4. Is there anything you want to tell me about your school that I haven’t asked about?
APPENDIX B3

School Effectiveness and Assistance Pilot (SEAP)

SCHOOL OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

School: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Observer: ___________________________

Note: Not all items on this checklist will be appropriate to all schools. Every team member should complete sections 1-3.

Sections 4-10 should be divided among the team members. Any notable observations relevant to unassigned sections should be recorded.

Section I. Teacher

1. Note number/percent of teachers arriving:
   a. early (__________) _________ %
   b. at school starting time (__________) _________ %
   c. late (__________) _________ %

   Comments: _______________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

2. Number of breaks allowed per day: _________________________________
3. Length of breaks allowed: _________________________________________
4. Number of teachers leaving the lounge after break has ended: _________
5. Number of teachers taking breaks in lounge: ___________________________

   Comment: _______________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
6. Note type(s) of information posted on lounge bulletin board:

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

7. Note comments, statements, and conversations of faculty, reflecting their attitudes and perceptions of their school in general, students, principal, local school district personnel, etc.: __________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

8. Based on observations of teachers, do they appear to be satisfied with their jobs as:
   a. Professional educators: ____________________________________________
      ___________________________________________________________________
      ___________________________________________________________________
   b. Teachers with this particular school: _________________________________
      ___________________________________________________________________
      ___________________________________________________________________

Further Comments: ______________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
Section II. Principal Involvement

1. How often is the principal seen in the hallways during the day? 

2. In the classrooms?

3. Comments:

4. Describe the principal’s rapport with the students (as indicated through observations).

5. Describe the principal’s rapport with the faculty (as indicated through observations).

6. Are there visible signs of the principal’s implementation of policies on personnel matters, student discipline, student achievement, in-service, safety and health, behavior codes, etc.?
Section III. Assistant Principal(s) Involvement

1. How often is the assistant principal(s) seen in the hallways during the day?

2. In the classrooms?

3. Comments:

4. Describe the assistant principal’s rapport with the students (as indicated through observations).

5. Describe the assistant principal’s rapport with the faculty (as indicated through observations).

6. Are there visible signs of the assistant principal’s implementation of policies on personnel matters, student discipline, student achievement, in-service, safety and health, behavior codes, etc.?
Section V. Playground/School Grounds

1. Number of recess periods: _______________ Length: _______________

2. Monitoring of playground equipment/school grounds; number of duty teachers.

3. Note amounts, types, and condition of playground equipment.

4. Are there specific rules (formal or informal) regarding where students can congregate during recess? (e.g., students can/cannot go in their classroom(s) early; males gather near gym, girls near auditorium; playgrounds segregated by grade)

5. Is there scheduled use of playground equipment, organized play, etc.? To what degree are the students independent in their playground activities?

6. Are there specific playground rules and discipline policies in place? Describe each? If so, describe them.
Section IV. School Arrival

1. Note the proportion of students (a few, some, many, most, all) who arrive:
   a. early (___________ __________%)
   b. at school starting time (___________ __________%)
   c. late (___________ __________%)

2. Note the number of duty teachers when students arrive at school:____

3. Do there appear to be regimens or constraints placed on students' behavior? (e.g., strict structure placed on before-school behavior; students appear somewhat independent, with a few rules governing activities; students' activities are unrestricted.)

4. Are there any security devices/regimens? (e.g., metal detectors, student ID badges, security officers)

5. How are rules and regimens implemented? (e.g., teachers and/or staff use authoritative control; some guidance from staff, but students are self-disciplined)

6. How do students respond to the rules and regimens? Describe their general before-school behavior.

Further Comments:____
7. Do the students respond quickly to the school bell at the end of the recess period?

Further Comments:
Section VI. Custodial Staff and Physical Appearance of School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>School grounds, playground(s)</th>
<th>Somewhat Clean</th>
<th>Clean</th>
<th>Very Clean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hallways, offices, bathroom(s)</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Classrooms</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>c</td>
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</table>

4. How much interaction is there between faculty and/or students and custodial staff?

5. What is the general attitude of faculty toward custodial staff?
   - Negative
   - Indifferent
   - Positive

6. What is the general attitude of students toward custodial staff?
   - Negative
   - Indifferent
   - Positive

7. Are some school buildings and facilities in need of repair, replacement, maintenance, etc.?
   - walls
   - building structure
   - windows
   - fences
   - faculty desks, chairs
   - student desks, chairs
   - air conditioning system
   - bathroom facilities
   - water fountain(s)

Further Comments:

366
Section VII. Cafeteria

1. What is the general demeanor of the cafeteria staff?
   
   
   
   
   

2. How do students treat the cafeteria staff?
   
   
   
   
   

3. Are the students allowed to talk during lunch?
   
   
   
   
   

4. What other rules and regulations govern student behavior at lunch time (e.g., clean plate, disposal of trays, etc.)
   
   
   
   
   

5. Describe the behavior of students at lunchtime.
   
   
   
   
   

6. Are teachers required to eat lunch with their students?
   
   
   
   
   

7. Are there cafeteria monitors?
   
   
   
   
   

8. [Applies to secondary schools] Are students allowed to leave campus at lunchtime? What rules govern student behavior after they finish lunch and before class resumes? (e.g., students must remain in cafeteria, students are restricted to a particular spot on campus, bathrooms are accessible/locked, etc.)
Section VIII. Auxiliary Classes

1. Are the P.E. classes organized with physical fitness in focus, organized play/exercise, or independent?

2. Who teaches P.E. classes:

3. What amount and type of P.E. equipment and resources are available?

4. Who teaches music classes?

5. What amount and type of music class equipment/resources are available?

6. Who teaches art classes?

7. What type of art is taught? What type of art materials are available?
8. Who teaches vocational classes? [Applies to secondary schools] 

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

9. What amount and type of vocational equipment and resources are available? [Applies to secondary schools] 

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

10. Does the guidance counselor come into the classroom regularly to lead discussion, provide information, etc. How often? What is discussed?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

11. What type of special education services/resources are available? (e.g., autistic classes, signing for the hearing impaired, resource/remediation, etc.)

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

12. Describe the attitudes of teachers and students of special education classes. Do they appear to be an integral part of the school culture?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

13. Are there scheduled visits and/or classes for students with the:

a. social welfare worker _________________________________________________________________

b. school psychologist ________________________________________________________________

c. dietitian __________________________________________________________________________

d. foreign language teachers _____________________________________________________________

e. safety instructors _________________________________________________________________

f. health professional ________________________________________________________________

g. others _____________________________________________________________________________
f. health professional ________________________________
g. others ________________________________

14. Do these visits appear to interfere with the regular class routine?


15. What appears to be the attitude of the regular classroom teacher(s) toward these visits?


16. In what other classes, extracurricular functions, activities, etc. are students involved? (e.g., plays, field trips, clubs/organizations, etc.)


Further Comments: ________________________________


371
Section IX. Hallways and Bulletin Boards

1. What is displayed on walls of hallways? (e.g., artwork of students, awards, posters, banners, announcements, etc.)

2. What is displayed on bulletin boards in hallways?

3. What are the subject matters of displays around the school?

4. Do the displays have specific themes?

5. How often do displays change?

6. Who is responsible for displays on walls and bulletin boards?

Further Comments:
Section X. Library

1. Is there a school library? __________________________

2. Describe its physical attributes.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3. Is there a librarian? __________________________
   If yes, is he/she ________ full-time?
   ________ halftime?
   ________ less than halftime?

4. If the librarian is less than full-time, what are his/her other duties?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. How are the students scheduled to visit the library?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

6. What is the general behavior of students in the library?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. Does the librarian have structured classes for students in library science?
   ________
   In general knowledge/various subjects ________
   If not, how is library time used?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

8. What resources are available in the library (furniture, books, AV equipment, periodicals, professional materials for faculty)?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
9. Note the number and availability of
   a. library aids ________________________________
   b. student helpers ________________________________
   c. parental volunteers ________________________________

10. As indicated through observation, what is the general rapport of the librarian with students?

    ________________________________________________

    ________________________________________________

    ________________________________________________

    With faculty?

    ________________________________________________

    ________________________________________________
Section X. Other Observations


School: ___________________________________ Date: ___________________________
Observer: ____________________________________________________
APPENDIX B4
Sociometric Survey Follow-up Interview with Principal

School__________________________ date______________

General notes:

TEACHER BACKGROUND INFO:

NAME______________________________

POSITION___________________

Why a person of interest?

DEGREES:

CERTIFICATION: (traditional / alternate)

YEARS EXPERIENCE:

YEARS AT THE SCHOOL:

PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES:

SPECIAL TALENTS, ABILITIES:
APPENDIX C
DATA MANAGEMENT & ANALYSIS AIDS

1. Sampling Worksheets:
   a. School Sampling – Possible Matched Pairs
   b. Within School Sampling Worksheet

2. Types of Data Record Sheet

3. Data by Dimensions of School Culture
# APPENDIX C1
## SAMPLING WORKSHEETS
### Sampling Worksheet – Possible Matched Pairs
#### Region 1 locale 01-Large City

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#### Region 1 Locale 03 – Urban Fringe of Large City

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Region 2 Locale 02 – Mid Size City

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Region 2 Locale 04 – Urban Fringe of Mid Size City

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APPENDIX C1
Comparative Case Study
School Sampling Matrix

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<th>School level (E, MS, HS)</th>
<th>Community type (rural, suburb, urban)</th>
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<th>School name</th>
<th>School Growth Label (SGL)</th>
<th>School Perform. Score (SPS)</th>
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<th>Principal Tenure At site</th>
<th>Enrollment SY2002-3</th>
<th>Title I Y/N</th>
<th>Magnet or *SSM? Y/N</th>
<th>LINCS School? Y/N</th>
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*Student Screening/selection Mechanism (e.g. required GPA)
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<th>RSCEQ</th>
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<th>SAPI/SAPA</th>
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### APPENDIX C2

**TYPES OF DATA RECORD SHEET**

(Based on the Symbolic Manifestations of Culture by Owens & Steinhoff, 1988)

**School**

Directions: List examples of each of these categories from primary sources in as much detail as possible. Be sure to note source of information.

### 1. Stories & Myths

<table>
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<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Tale told by</th>
<th>A Brief Retelling of the Original Version of the Story</th>
<th>Researcher Codes/Comments</th>
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APPENDIX C2
TYPES OF DATA RECORD SHEET
(Based on the Symbolic Manifestations of Culture by Owens & Steinhoff, 1988)

School ____________________________
Directions: List examples of each of these categories from primary sources in as much detail as possible. Be sure to note source of information.

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School ________________________________

Directions: List examples of each of these categories from primary sources in as much detail as possible. Be sure to note source of information.

### 3. *Heroes & Heroines*

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<th>Tale told by</th>
<th>A Brief Retelling of the details of the Story, Incident, or Observation</th>
<th>Researcher Codes/Comments</th>
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APPENDIX C2
TYPES OF DATA RECORD SHEET
(Based on the Symbolic Manifestations of Culture by Owens & Steinhoff, 1988)

**School**
Directions: List examples of each of these categories from primary sources in as much detail as possible. Be sure to note source of information.

### 4. Traditions & Rituals

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<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Told/observed by</th>
<th>A Brief Retelling of the Details Describing the Event and Surrounding Circumstances</th>
<th>Researcher Codes/Comments</th>
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TYPES OF DATA RECORD SHEET
(Based on the Symbolic Manifestations of Culture by Owens & Steinhoff, 1988)

School __________________________________
Directions: List examples of each of these categories from primary sources in as much detail as possible. Be sure to note source of information.

5. Behavioral Norms

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<tr>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Observed by</th>
<th>A Brief Description of Observed Behavior, or member comments about behavior patterns &amp; Surrounding Circumstances</th>
<th>Researcher Codes/Comments</th>
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Directions: List examples of each of these categories from primary sources in as much detail as possible. Be sure to note source of information.

### 6. Values & Beliefs

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<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Observed by</th>
<th>A Brief Description of Observed Behavior, or member comments about beliefs &amp; values that are important at the school</th>
<th>Researcher Codes/Comments</th>
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## APPENDIX C3
DATA BY DIMENSION OF SCHOOL CULTURE

### I. Dimension I Professional Orientation

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## II. Dimension II Organizational Structure

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APPENDIX C3
DATA BY DIMENSION OF SCHOOL CULTURE

III. Dimension III Quality of the Learning Environment  School____________________

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## APPENDIX C3
DATA BY DIMENSION OF SCHOOL CULTURE

IV. Dimension IV Student-centered Focus

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APPENDIX D
CORRESPONDENCE & MISCELLANEOUS

1. Superintendent Letter
2. Principal Letter
3. Principal Follow up Letter
4. Parental Permission Letter
5. Teacher Informed Consent Page
6. Teacher Focus Group Letter
Dear Superintendent (name),

I am contacting you to request permission to contact several principals in your district in order to ask them to participate in a research study which is part of my doctoral dissertation at Louisiana State University. The study involves studying and comparing the school cultures of matched schools involved in improvement programs. I would like to distribute surveys in the spring of this year and to conduct interviews and observations in the fall of 2004.

The particular schools I would like to study include:
1. Harmony Elementary
2. Belfry Elementary
3. Rumfield Middle
4. Janice Bunkie Middle
5. Southend High
6. Sprawling Oaks High

These schools were selected for a number of reasons including their state growth label, size, Chapter I status, and grade levels served.

If your permission is granted, I will mail each principal a letter indicating your approval to contact them. The letter will request their cooperation in collecting information and will assure them that I will be sensitive to not disrupt the normal functions of the school. I will also explain that all data will be aggregated at the school level, and that the school will be assigned a pseudonym in the research report to protect their anonymity.

I would greatly appreciate your permission to conduct this study in your district. I hope to gain valuable information about what components of a school’s culture are associated with increased capacity to improve student achievement. I will be contacting you in a few days to discuss this request with you further. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at 225-222-2222.

Sincerely,

La Tefy Schoen, M. Ed.
Dear Principal (name),

I am contacting you because your superintendent has given me permission to ask for your school’s participation in a research project which is part of my doctoral dissertation at LSU. The project is designed to study the school culture of schools that are participating in school improvement programs.

The study will involve collecting survey data from teachers in the spring of this year, and observations and interviews in the fall of next year. I will contact you shortly to discuss your school’s involvement in this project with you; this can be done via phone or in person. At that time, I will be happy to address any of your questions including how data would be collected at your school, the amount of time involved, and privacy issues.

For now, I can assure that I have gone to great lengths to design the project so that it is as unobtrusive as possible, and shouldn’t interfere with instruction or other school business in any substantial ways.

I look forward to discussing this matter with you. If you have any questions or want to contact me, I can be reached at 225-222-2222.

Thank you for your interest in this study; what I hope to gain from this project is some concrete information about how specific elements of a school’s culture can affect success in improvement efforts. Your participation may eventually help many other school leaders, such as yourself, make schools better places for kids to learn and teachers to teach.

Sincerely,

La Tefy Schoen, M. Ed.
Dear Principal,

Thank you for allowing me into your school to collect data for my study of school improvement processes. While the anonymity of your teachers and school will be maintained, the results may prove useful in assisting schools encountering difficulty in improving student performance. Let me assure you once again that while a great deal of data will be collected at your school, the core mission of the school- the instruction of students will be respected. I will make every effort to be as unobtrusive as possible. **Teachers will not be asked to participate in any more than two components of the study, and they will not be asked to do any extra work other than answering a few questions in either an interview or a survey form.**

**Request for Information**

If the school has the following documentation on file, it would be very helpful to me if I could get a copy of each for my files:

- School Improvement Plan
- School Faculty Policy Manual
- Number of National Board Certified teachers
- Notation of any honors received by faculty members
- Notation of any competitive grants received by the school or its faculty

Your help in this project is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

La Tefy G. Schoen
September 3, 2003

Dear Parents,

Our school is participating in a research project through LSU. As a part of this project several students in grades 3-5 will be interviewed in a group setting to discuss their experiences at our school. One student will also be “shadowed” by a researcher to observe what a typical day is like for a student here. All research will be done during school hours and on school property. At no time will minors be alone with a researcher.

In order for your child to be eligible to participate in either of these activities you must grant permission by signing this note and making sure it is returned to your child’s teacher tomorrow. Please be aware that participation is strictly voluntary and that declining to participate does not impact your child’s grade or anything else at school in any way. Nor will participation earn any extra credit or other benefits; this is strictly independent research aimed at describing the culture or “ways of doing things” at our school. All statements made by participants will remain confidential and the students or their parents are free to discontinue participation at any time.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this project you can contact La Tefy Schoen at 225-222-2222.

Thank you,

Principal

La Tefy Schoen M. Ed.
Researcher
Louisiana State University

______ Yes, my child has permission to participate in a focus group discussion at school.

______ Yes, my child has permission to be considered for participation in the “A Day in the Life of a Student” study.

Child ____________________________ sex: M F (circle one)
Grade _________________ Teacher__________________________

PARENT SIGNATURE ________________________________________________

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APPENDIX D5
TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF THE STUDY

Conceptualizing, Describing and Contrasting School Cultures: A Comparative Case Study of School Improvement Processes

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:
This study seeks to find a way to define and study the culture of the school. Many researchers believe that school culture has a tremendous impact on the ability of the school to improve student achievement at their school, but this is a difficult thing to study because school culture is hard to define and measure. The first phase of the study involved reviewing the professional research literature across several fields, defining school culture, and outlining how it could be studied.

That is where you come in. The framework designed in phase I will be used to study several schools, including yours. Information including observations, surveys and interviews will be used to find out about several aspects of the way your school does things including: The Professional Orientation of Teachers, The Leadership, The typical kind of classroom instruction, and support services and programs for students and parents. This information can only be obtained by people involved in the school telling us about their experiences. The last part of the study involves comparing the information from your school with information gained from other schools similar to yours. School report card information will also be used to determine whether the culture of the school seems to have any impact on improving student achievement.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
This study is part of a doctoral dissertation study at LSU department of Education Leadership, Research, and Counseling. The study is being overseen by a committee of professors. All information at your school site will be collected by:
La Tefy Schoen, M. Ed
Former teacher, current doctoral student
Phone 225-222-2222
Email xxxxxx.xxx

PRIVACY PROTECTED:
Anything told to researchers or seen by researchers will remain confidential. The research report will only talk about findings for the school as a whole; individual teachers or others will not be mentioned. The school will also be given a fictitious name in the final report to insure the privacy of all participants.

PARTICIPATION IS VOLUNTARY:
You do not have to participate in the study if you don’t want to. If you choose to participate, you may change your mind at any time.

MISSION OF THE SCHOOL PROTECTED:
This project seeks to pull teachers and students away from their teaching and learning activities as little as possible.
SELECTION CRITERIA:
  All schools were selected based on:
  Community type
  District
  Level of the school
  School report card information
  Percent of students on free or reduced lunch
  Number of students enrolled
PARTICIPANTS WITHIN A SCHOOL ARE CHOSEN AT RANDOM

DURATION OF THE STUDY:  3 Weeks of data collection, over the course of a year

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY:
  1. To Society: You are helping policy makers and educators understand how to improve student achievement in all school types. This study will help us begin to understand why it is so difficult to improve achievement at some schools and when similar schools are making large gains.
  2. To Teachers: teachers are paid $ 5.00 in thanks for their completion of a survey

REMOVAL OF PARTICIPANTS FROM THE STUDY:
  If the researcher has reasonable cause to think that a participant has been untruthful in reporting information, then this data will be excluded from further analyses.

PRIOR DISTRICT AND SCHOOL APPROVAL:
  Consent to conduct this study in your school was previously obtained from the school district superintendent and the building principal. You are welcome to contact them for assurances to this effect.

INFORMED CONSENT
  The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding the specifics of the study to the researcher. If I have questions about subjects’ rights or other concerns I can contact Robert C. Mathews, Chairman, LSU Institutional Review Board. (225) 578-8692.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT
  I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researchers’ obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

PARTICIPANT

DATE

ROLE IN SCHOOL (administrator, teacher, parent, *student)
APPENDIX D6
TEACHER FOCUS GROUP LETTER

Wednesday, November 12, 2003
Memo: To **Focus group Participants**
From: Ms. (principal) & Ms. Schoen, director of the LSU study on school improvement processes
Re: Focus Group - **Monday Nov. 18, 2003** after school

The following teachers have been randomly selected to participate in a focus group discussion as part of the LSU study of school improvement processes that our school is participating in:

- Mrs. Braud
- Ms. Kraimer
- Mr. Falcon
- Mrs. Smith
- Mrs. Ross
- Ms. Walton
- Mrs. Haney
- Ms. Trueman
- Coach Potifer
- Ms. Thomlin

*The group will meet Monday afternoon directly after school in the library.* If you could possibly make arrangements to attend it would be greatly appreciated. The discussion will be interesting and will last about an hour; refreshments will be served. All participating teachers will receive a $20.00 stipend for their time investment.

Thank You,

La Tefy Schoen M. Ed.
Researcher
Louisiana State University
APPENDIX E
ADDITIONAL DATA

1. SAPI/SAPA Results: Pairwise Comparison Tables
2. Data Reduction Charts
APPENDIX E1
SAPI/SAPA RESULTS: PAIRWISE COMPARISONS
Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences

SAPI/SAPA Classroom Observation Results

Pairwise Comparison Tables - Indicators 1-13.

The following tables E.1 through E.13 presents the results of SAPI/SAPI observations. The percentages refer to the number of classes described by each rank of the rubric. The scale for the number of categories in each rubric is not the same for all indicators. For each school percentages are displayed as a continuum from best to worst. An N/A indicates that the scale for this indicator did not include that ranking; the worst possible rank is the farthest percentage number to the right in all cases.

Table E.1  Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 1 of Dimension III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAPI/SAPA Indicator 1</th>
<th>School Code</th>
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<th>Rubric Rank #3</th>
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<th>Rubric Rank #5 Worst</th>
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Table E.4  Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 4 of Dimension III

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Table E.5  Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 5 of Dimension III

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### Table E.8  Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 8 of Dimension III

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Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 9 of Dimension III

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Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 10 of Dimension III

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Table E.13  Pairwise Comparisons - Indicator 13 of Dimension III

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E2
DATA REDUCTION CHARTS

Due to the wealth of information collected at each school and the length of the resulting case studies (see chapter 5), the information for each school was reduced to individual units and categorized by content. This method of content analysis is recommended by Patton (1990 pp 381-389). A color coding system was used to organize and chart numerous units of information according to the dimension that they pertain to. Each important unit of information was further and categorized as a school strength or a weakness in terms of whether it contributed to or detracted from overall school effectiveness. Data Reduction Charts summarize key elements of each dimension of the school’s culture. The units of information roughly correspond to the expanded list of indicators of school culture (see table 3.1). At least two different data sources were present for each unit of information on the chart. These charts are utilized in chapter 6 to quantitize the data into summary scores for each dimension allowing for easier cross-case comparisons. The Data Reduction Charts for each school are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School A1</th>
<th>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A formal school improvement plan (SIP) was developed based on data</td>
<td>Few teachers aware of SIP content except that Reading and Math scores were low &amp; the school needs to pull them up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional support s available through the TIS</td>
<td>No in-depth on-going programs, interventions, plans or strategies are being implemented to address documented achievement deficits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some teachers are independently involved in professional communities beyond the school</td>
<td>Strong norms of teacher autonomy exist and interfere with meaningful teacher collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some teachers try to identify students needs on their own and modify their instruction accordingly</td>
<td>Teacher efficacy to change student achievement is low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is a sense of academic futility among teachers; some feel the difficult home lives of students override anything that happens at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The academic push for students to perform to higher standards is weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Veteran teachers are skeptical that new comers have what it takes to make it here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faculty meetings deal more with business, not professional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff development is not focused and on going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers not engaged in self-reflection about instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School A1 Dimension II. Organizational Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Principal perceived as a strong disciplinarian</td>
<td>• Principal leadership style is somewhat laissez-fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal is accessible to some students at recess</td>
<td>• No indication that the principal has detailed plans for addressing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional support is provided to teachers through the TIS</td>
<td>documented achievement deficits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some teacher leadership is present</td>
<td>• Little visibility of the principal in the classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Several routines and traditions are present which have a calming</td>
<td>• TIS is perceived as the instructional leader rather than the principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effect on students</td>
<td>• The TIS shows signs of impending burnout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers feel that working at this school is “a calling”</td>
<td>• A small group of teachers assume leadership roles and take initiative to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The school campus is safe, but not necessarily orderly</td>
<td>implement improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Group rewards for acceptable behavior are frequent</td>
<td>• Teachers with greater professional knowledge and skills have little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Few conflicts among faculty seem to exist – a “live &amp; let live”</td>
<td>impact on others due to the “don’t ask – don’t tell” norms that exist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>philosophy prevails</td>
<td>• Communication patterns within school are weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Little consensus exists regarding what constitutes “good teaching”,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>especially between newer &amp; more experienced teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outsiders including new teachers viewed with suspicion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student discipline is inconsistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student motivation not addressed; an attitude of complacency &amp; academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>futility pervades the students and teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No evidence of significant student or parent leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More recognition is given to students on the basis of behavior than on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Active involvement of parents not sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No formal strategy for problem solving or conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School A1 Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional Resources</td>
<td>Higher Order Thinking (HOT) vs. Lower Order Thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classes were well equipped with a wide range of instructional</td>
<td>• In classes observed 57.2% engaged students in mostly or only LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resources</td>
<td>• 42.9% engaged students in more LOT than HOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional resources were in use by students in most of the classes</td>
<td>• No classes observed engaged students in only or mostly HOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classes are bright and cheerful with informational and motivational</td>
<td>Deep Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>displays</td>
<td>• In 85.8% of classes knowledge exploration was very thin, superficial,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student lessons in the computer lab are coordinated with content in</td>
<td>or fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the regular classroom</td>
<td>• In 14.3% of observations knowledge exploration was uneven, shallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• TIS assists with instruction in some classes resulting in more teacher</td>
<td>at times and deep at others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attention for some students</td>
<td>• In none of the observations was there sustained deep exploration of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>knowledge by most students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real World Relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In 80% of observations few or weak connections were made between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>class activities and relevance in the real world beyond school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In 20% of observations connections between class activities and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the importance of the content or skills in the real world were made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clear to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In 85.7% of observations student engagement in learning was passive;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>students were compliant, but displayed little enthusiasm, interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In 14% of the classes observed most students participated and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>remained on-task with moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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amounts of interest and enthusiasm

- In none of the classes were students enthusiastically engrossed in their learning activities, displaying high levels of interest and motivation

Distractions

- In 14.3% of classrooms severe distractions persisted and visibly interfered with student learning
- In 71.5% of classes observed small to moderate numbers of students were distracted by elements in the learning environment
- In none of the classrooms observed were distractions kept to such a minimal level as to have no impact on students’ ability to focus on learning

Disciplinary Content

- In 57.2% of classes observed students could successfully complete the assigned task with little or no understanding of related major concepts, or theories central to the discipline

Disciplinary Processes & Inquiry

- In none of the classes observed were students engaged in high to moderate amounts of inquiry to discover new information relevant to topics studied

Audience Beyond School

- In none of the classes observed were the products of learning presented to an audience beyond the class
- In 71.4% of classes students presented the products of their learning to the teacher only
- In 28.6% of classes students presented the products of their learning to another student within the class

School A1

IV. Student-centered Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- School communiqués keep parents informed</td>
<td>- Student level data from the Compass Learning Program which students work with in the computer lab are not used effectively to modify instruction based on individual student needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Students feel cared for by their teachers</td>
<td>- Student achievement data are not broken down to the level of the individual student and used in any meaningful way to strengthen the instructional program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parent satisfaction with the school is high</td>
<td>- The only program that exists for systematically reviewing student progress is the standard SBLC process needed to identify students in need of special education services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Community involvement provides students with needed supplies and clothing</td>
<td>- Parental involvement is low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Parents feel comfortable coming to school to address problems</td>
<td>- Few innovative programs exist to encourage greater parental involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A high number of volunteer hours are logged at the school</td>
<td>- Volunteer program is not organized or structured well to provide training or direction to volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Little fan fare is made over student academic achievements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School A2  Dimension I. Professional Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A formal school improvement plan (SIP) was developed based on data</td>
<td>• Teachers are aware of SIP content; several programs are based on it including the focused on-going staff development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional supports for change are available to teacher through the principal and outside consultant</td>
<td>• Strong norms of teacher autonomy exist and interfere with meaningful teacher collaborations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many teachers are independently involved in professional communities beyond the school</td>
<td>• Teachers not engaged in structured self-reflection about instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers frequently engage in voluntary professional growth activities together</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers frequently share new ideas and instructional methods with each other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Schoolwide strategies are in place to identify students needs at the school, grade, teacher &amp; student levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student achievement data are used modify instructional programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many programs, interventions, plans &amp; strategies are being implemented to address documented achievement deficits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A high level of teacher collaboration exists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff development is focused on a central theme identified through student achievement data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The focus of staff development is continuous for at least a year</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers have written and received numerous competitive grants to improve instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong academic push for students to perform to higher standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School A2  Dimension II. Organizational Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Principal perceived as a strong disciplinarian</td>
<td>• Outsiders including new teachers viewed with suspicion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The principal plays an active role in instructional leadership</td>
<td>• Student discipline is inconsistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Principal is accessible to teachers</td>
<td>• Student motivation addressed through improved methodology only; an attitude of academic futility in students not addressed directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional support is provided to teachers by the principal &amp; through other teachers</td>
<td>• No evidence of significant student or parent leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Much teacher leadership is present</td>
<td>• Active involvement of parents not rigorously sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Several routines and traditions are present which have a calming effect on students</td>
<td>• No organized or structured program for training &amp; effective utilization of volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher turnover is low</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers place a high value on academic achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The campus is safe &amp; orderly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students face strong consequences for misbehavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A strong emphasis is placed on problem solving based on the specifics of each individual case</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher commitment is high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School A2  
**Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HOT vs. LOT (Lower Order Thinking)</strong></td>
<td><strong>HOT vs. LOT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 66% of classes observed students were involved in moderate to high amounts of HOT</td>
<td>• In 33.4% of classes observed engaged students were engaged in mostly or only LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantive Conversation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deep Knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 66% of observations students were involved in moderately substantive conversation</td>
<td>• In 50% of classes observed knowledge exploration was very thin, superficial, or fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional Resources</strong></td>
<td><strong>Substantive Conversation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classes were well equipped with a wide range of instructional resources</td>
<td>• None of the classes observed engaged all of the students in highly substantive conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Instructional resources were in use by students in most of the classes</td>
<td>• In 33% of classes observed students were engaged in very little substantive conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classes are bright &amp; cheerful with informational &amp; motivational displays</td>
<td><strong>Real World Relevance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Engagement</strong></td>
<td>• In 50% of classes observed class activities were highly relevant to real world beyond the school &amp; students made the connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 83.3% of observations student engagement, interest &amp; enthusiasm for learning activities was high or moderately high</td>
<td><strong>Student Engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Distractions</strong></td>
<td>• In 16.7% of the classes observed most students participated and remained on-task with moderate amounts of interest and enthusiasm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 50% of classes observed distractions were kept to a minimal level</td>
<td><strong>Distractions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Organization of Information</strong></td>
<td>• In 16.7% of classrooms distractions were problematic &amp; interfered with student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 83.3% of classes observed the extent to which students were asked to organize synthesize, interpret, explain or evaluate in their assignments/assessments was high</td>
<td><strong>Student Organization of Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Processes &amp; Inquiry</strong></td>
<td>• In none of the classes observed were the products of learning presented to an audience beyond the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 66.7% of classes observed students participated in some form of inquiry process, though not necessarily those central to the field of study</td>
<td>• In 16.7% of classes students presented the products of their learning to the teacher only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience Beyond School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 66.7% of classes students presented products of their learning to students within the class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School A2  
**IV. Student-centered Focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School communiqué keep parents informed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parental involvement is low</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is evidence of some community involvement in the school</strong></td>
<td><strong>Few innovative programs exist to encourage greater parental involvement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student achievement data are broken down to the level of the individual student and used meaningful ways to strengthen the instructional program</strong></td>
<td><strong>Volunteer program is not organized or structured well to provide training or direction to volunteers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is a strong academic push</strong></td>
<td><strong>Parent satisfaction with the school is low</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A program that exists for systematically reviewing student progress beyond the standard SBLG process needed to identify students in need of special education services</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students are not excited about coming to school because they feel they have few opportunities to socialize</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Students and parents feel like the school is out of touch or insensitive to what life is like for them due to circumstances of high poverty &amp; crime</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Students and parents feel like school people don’t listen to them</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A formal SIP has been developed</td>
<td>Teachers do not have a unifying vision for the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers desire greater instructional support</td>
<td>Teachers are not getting the instructional support they need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers desire to have more productive collaboration</td>
<td>Teachers are not feeling recognized, respected, or appreciated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher commitment and dedication to their field is high</td>
<td>Teachers do not have common planning time with others that teach similar content or levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many teachers are engaged in independent professional development</td>
<td>Teachers plan and execute their work in isolation from each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many teachers have advanced degrees</td>
<td>Teacher efficacy to affect student achievement is low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are competent &amp; knowledgeable</td>
<td>Staff development is not focused on a single area of need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers demonstrate great determination &amp; resolve</td>
<td>Staff development is comprised of one shot presentations rather than being continuous over an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>extended period of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff development does not include in class supports for desired changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers not involved in any structured self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major philosophical differences divide the faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is no mechanism for systematic review of program effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data are not systematically reviewed at the level of the individual teacher and used to plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professional growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher workload is high which could contribute to burnout; teaming is needed so teachers can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>share mutual responsibilities (lesson plans, materials, team teaching)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School B1

#### Dimension II. Organizational Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weaknesses</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many teachers are proactive &amp; take initiative</td>
<td>Long term stability in the principalship is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are resourceful</td>
<td>New or transfer teachers not getting the moral or instructional support needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal is dedicated</td>
<td>There is no strategic planning process to build consensus, define problems, and implement actionable plans to address school needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is evidence of some (minor) parent &amp; student leadership</td>
<td>Principal makes and implements changes with little or no prior notice for teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many teachers want to help the school improve its growth label</td>
<td>There is no system for monitoring the effectiveness of new and existing programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The principal supports distributive leadership</td>
<td>Timelines need to be developed for the accomplishment of the tasks laid out in the SIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The campus is safe &amp; orderly</td>
<td>More effective principal-teacher communication patterns are needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Long term stability in the principalship is needed
- New or transfer teachers not getting the moral or instructional support needed
- There is no strategic planning process to build consensus, define problems, and implement actionable plans to address school needs
- Principal makes and implements changes with little or no prior notice for teachers
- There is no system for monitoring the effectiveness of new and existing programs
- Timelines need to be developed for the accomplishment of the tasks laid out in the SIP
- More effective principal-teacher communication patterns are needed
- A structured format is needed to deal with conflict resolution
- There is no conscious effort to coordinate support services for ancillary and non-instructional staff, aides, buss drivers, janitors, cafeteria workers, secretary, substitutes, & parent volunteers so that the school runs efficiently and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
- Scheduling needs to be restructured to allow time for collaborative planning
- Principal needs to monitor grade level or subject area meetings and provide structure for teachers
- Much competition and professional jealousy exists among teachers
- Teacher morale is low
- Increased funding is needed for key programs & external support to sustain planned improvements
- Inconsistent disciplinary practices & procedures followed by the office; a formal schoolwide discipline plan that teachers & parents “buy into” is needed.
### School B1: Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers set high expectations for students/academic push is moderately high</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instructional resources are not equally distributed from teacher to teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classrooms are attractive &amp; inviting</strong></td>
<td><strong>Some instructional time is wasted waiting in lines due to limited capacity of cafeteria &amp; bathrooms</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classes are orderly &amp; have established routines</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instructional methods are predominantly traditional teacher directed didactic presentations requiring little student input beyond independent pencil &amp; paper assignments</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H.O.T vs. L.O.T</strong></td>
<td><strong>H.O.T vs. L.O.T</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 28.6% of classes observed students were involved in high levels of H.O.T</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 71.5% of classes observed students were involved in mostly or only L.O.T</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deep Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Deep Knowledge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 28.6% of classes observed knowledge exploration by students was deep or relatively deep</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 28.6% of classes knowledge exploration by students was uneven; deep at times, shallow at others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Substantive Conversation</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 42.9% of classes observed students are only exposed to thin simple information meant for memory; knowledge exploration is superficial &amp; information is fragmented</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 14.3% of classes observed substantive conversation was integral to the lesson with many students engaged to student to student or student to teacher interactions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Substantive Conversation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization of Information</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 71.5% of classes observed students were involved in limited or no substantive conversation with each other or the teacher</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 33.3% of classes observed students were engaged in organizing, evaluating, synthesizing or applying information</strong></td>
<td><strong>Organization of Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consideration of Alternatives</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 50% of classes observed students were not asked to consider or generate alternate strategies, solutions or points of view</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 33.3% of classes students were involved in a moderate amount of consideration of alternate strategies, solutions, or points of view</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Content</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 16.7% of classes observed students were highly engaged in the consideration of alternative strategies, solutions, or points of view</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 66.6% of classes observed students could successfully complete tasks assigned with moderate to no comprehension of major themes, theories, or concepts central to discipline</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Process</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disciplinary Process</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 33.3% of classes observed students were involved in discovery of information through inquiry processes relevant to the field of study</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 66.7% of classes observed students were not involved in inquiry or disciplinary processes central to exploration or advancement of knowledge in the field.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Engagement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Engagement</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 14.3% of classes observed were highly interested enthusiastic and motivated to participate in their learning activities; most or all of students remained on-task for most or all of the lesson</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 42.9% of classes observed little student interest or enthusiasm was displayed and student participation was characterized by compliance and passive engagement.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real World Relevance</strong></td>
<td><strong>Real World Relevance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 28.6% of classes observed student work was clearly relevant to real life experiences &amp; students understood connection between class activities and life beyond the school</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 28.6% of observations students displayed moderate amounts of interest and enthusiasm for the learning activities they were involved in; all students in the room not equally interested or on-task; participation was characterized by passive compliance</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience Beyond the School</strong></td>
<td><strong>Audience Beyond the School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 83.3% of classes observed students presented the products of their learning to peers within the class, but not to an audience beyond the class</strong></td>
<td><strong>In 57.1% of classes observed the activities the students were engaged in were pertinent to real-life skills, but there was no indication students made the connection</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In 16.7% of classes students presented the products of their learning only to the teacher</strong></td>
<td><strong>Audience Beyond the School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In none of the observed classes did students present or plan to present their learning to anyone beyond the classroom or the school.</strong></td>
<td><strong>In none of the observed classes did students present or plan to present their learning to anyone beyond the classroom or the school.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School B1  
**IV. Student-centered Focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers &amp; principal genuinely care about the students</td>
<td>• Efforts to individualize are inconsistent, not widely executed and not systematically tracked for effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is some form of parental involvement through the PTO</td>
<td>• Little instructional differentiation based on student needs, abilities, Experiences, or interests is occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is some public recognition of students</td>
<td>• There is no systematic plan for analyzing achievement and other data at the level of the individual student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers believe in parent education</td>
<td>• Student academic recognition is infrequent and deemphasized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers do a good job of preparing for parent education</td>
<td>• Parental involvement is low; little day to day participation, less input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers recognize the need to individualize instruction for some students</td>
<td>• No innovative or out of the ordinary efforts are being made to involve more parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Volunteer program needs more structure – training for volunteers, development of a schedule of routine tasks, establishment of routine work schedules, public recognition of parent/community volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greater community &amp; corporate sponsorship is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased funding is needed for staff development, class aides, instructional resources &amp; other projects which will directly increase students’ chances of success; grant writing or other alternative funding sources should be explored</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School B2  
**Dimension I. Professional Orientation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A formal SIP has been developed</td>
<td>• Staff development does not include in class supports for desired changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers share a common sense of mission</td>
<td>• Teachers not involved in any structured self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The SIP is well developed and provides a detailed actionable guide for coordinating improvement efforts</td>
<td>• There is no mechanism for systematic review of program effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are knowledgeable about the contents of the SIP &amp; believe that it will empower them to raise student achievement Teachers engage in frequent &amp; productive collaboration</td>
<td>• Data are not systematically reviewed at the level of the individual teacher and used to plan professional growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher professional development is a priority of the school &amp; is listed as a strategy for improving student achievement on the SIP</td>
<td>• Teachers do not exhibit enthusiasm for what they are teaching; possibly due to distractions with principalship turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Professional development is focused on a particular area identified on the SIP based on student achievement data, and is on-going in nature</td>
<td>• Little innovation or creativity in instructional methods observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher commitment &amp; dedication to their field is high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many teachers are engaged in independent professional development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many teachers have advanced degrees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are competent &amp; knowledgeable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers remain focused on their work regardless of circumstances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers demonstrate high levels of professional behavior, courtesy and restraint through trying times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School B2  
**Dimension II. Organizational Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Many teachers are proactive and take initiative</td>
<td>• Stability in the principalship is needed again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers work well together</td>
<td>• There is no system for monitoring the effectiveness of new &amp; existing programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers consult one another about curriculum &amp; instruction</td>
<td>• Timelines need to be developed for the accomplishment of the tasks laid out in the SIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are committed to the school vision</td>
<td>• Increased funding is needed for key programs and external support to sustain planned improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The principal is well trained &amp; ambitious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The school secretary is knowledgeable and efficient in managing affairs in the office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is evidence of increasing parent leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many teachers want to help the school improve its growth label</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The former principal supported distributive leadership, so a number of teachers are accustomed to taking on additional responsibility for school functions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A new schoolwide assertive discipline plan seems to be working well</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The campus is safe and orderly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School B2  
**Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers set high expectations for students/ academic push is moderately high</td>
<td>• Instructional methods are predominantly traditional teacher directed didactic presentations followed by independent pencil &amp; paper assignments HOT vs. LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classrooms are attractive &amp; inviting</td>
<td>• In 40% of classes observed students were involved in mostly or only LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classes are orderly &amp; have established routines</td>
<td>• Even in classes that had some HOT, it was not sustained throughout most of the lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOT vs. LOT</td>
<td>Deep Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 60% of classes observed students were involved in at least one major activity requiring HOT</td>
<td>• In 20% of classes observed students was uneven; deep at times, shallow at others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep Knowledge</td>
<td>Disciplinary Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 40% of classes observed knowledge exploration by students was deep or relatively deep Substantive Conversation</td>
<td>• In 40% of classes observed students are only exposed to thin simple information meant for memory; knowledge exploration is superficial &amp; information is fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive Conversation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 20% of classes observed substantive conversation was integral to the lesson with many students engaged to student to student or student to teacher interactions Organization of Information</td>
<td>In 30% of classes observed students were involved in limited or no substantive conversation with each other or the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of Information</td>
<td>Disciplinary Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 50% of classes observed students were asked to engage in moderate amounts of organizing, interpreting, applying , or evaluating</td>
<td>• In 60% of classes observed students could successfully complete tasks assigned with moderate to no comprehension of major themes, theories, or concepts central to discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration of Alternatives</td>
<td>Disciplinary Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 10% of classes observed students were engaged in a high amount of organizing, evaluating, synthesizing or applying information</td>
<td>• In 40% of classes observed students were not involved in any form of inquiry or disciplinary process central to exploration or advancement of knowledge in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration of Alternatives</td>
<td>Student Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 30% of classes observed students were involved in a moderate amount of consideration of alternate strategies, solutions, or points of view</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Content</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 40% of classes observed students were asked to consider alternative strategies, solutions, or points of view to a moderate amount; was not a major part of the lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 30% of classes observed students were involved in discovery of information through inquiry processes relevant to the field of study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Student Engagement**
- In 50% of observations students displayed moderate amounts of interest and enthusiasm for the learning activities they were involved in; all students in the room not equally interested or on-task; participation was uneven some students interested, others were passive but compliant

**Real World Relevance**
- In 40% of classes observed student work was clearly relevant to real life experiences & students understood connection between class activities and life beyond the school

**Audience Beyond the School**
- In 70% of classes observed students presented the products of their learning to peers within the class, but not to an audience beyond the class
- In 20% of the observed classes students presented their learning to someone beyond the classroom

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**School B2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IV. Student-centered Focus</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There is some form of parental involvement through the PTO</td>
<td>- Efforts to individualize are inconsistent, not widely executed and not systematically tracked for effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There is some public recognition of students</td>
<td>- Little instructional differentiation based on student needs, abilities. Experiences, or interests is occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers believe in parent education</td>
<td>- There is no systematic plan for analyzing comprehensive student achievement data; teachers rely almost exclusively on reports from software packages (such as Star Reading reports) and grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teachers recognize the need to individualize instruction for some students</td>
<td>- Student academic recognition is infrequent and deemphasized</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Parental involvement is low; little day to day participation, less input
- No innovative or out of the ordinary efforts are being made to involve more parents
- Volunteer program needs more structure – training for volunteers, development of a schedule of routine tasks, establishment of routine work schedules, public recognition of parent/community volunteers
- Greater community & corporate sponsorship is needed
- Increased funding is needed for staff development, class aides, instructional resources & other projects which will directly increase students’ chances of success; grant writing or other alternative funding sources should be explored
### School C1  
**Dimension I. Professional Orientation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• A formal SIP has been developed</td>
<td>• The school is evolving &amp; the faculty does not have a unifying vision for the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• School completed a self-study &amp; was reaccredited by Southern Association</td>
<td>• Teachers need additional instructional support to successfully change the way they teach to fit the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Colleges &amp; Schools in</td>
<td>needs of a new student population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teacher commitment &amp; dedication to their field is high</td>
<td>• The faculty is accustomed to success &amp; is unsure how to change their practice to increase student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are willing to participate in additional professional</td>
<td>achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development if they see the benefit</td>
<td>• Teacher efficacy to affect student achievement is uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers care about the students</td>
<td>• Staff development does not include in class supports for desired changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are conscientious about the school’s reputation in the</td>
<td>• Teachers not involved in any structured self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td>• There is no mechanism for systematic review of program effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are competent &amp; knowledgeable</td>
<td>• Data are not systematically reviewed at the level of the individual teacher and used to plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are not comfortable with the school’s failure to demonstrate</td>
<td>professional growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student growth</td>
<td>• Teacher workload is high which could contribute to burnout; teaming is needed so teachers can share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff development is focused on a single area of need</td>
<td>mutual responsibilities (lesson plans, materials, team teaching)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### School C1  
**Dimension II. Organizational Structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The teachers are pleased with the leadership provided by the principal</td>
<td>• More sharing time is needed between new or transfer teachers knowledgeable about gifted education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers work well together &amp; respect each other</td>
<td>&amp; regular education teachers facing a new student population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many teachers are proactive and take initiative, though others are</td>
<td>• There is no strategic planning process to build consensus on a vision, develop a plan for the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more complacent</td>
<td>future, define problems that arise, and implement actionable plans to address day to day school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers are experienced &amp; resourceful</td>
<td>needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The principal is dedicated &amp; knowledgeable</td>
<td>• There is no system for monitoring the effectiveness of new and existing programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is evidence of some (minor) parent &amp; community involvement</td>
<td>• Timelines need to be developed for the accomplishment of tasks laid out in the SIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many teachers want to help the school improve its growth label</td>
<td>• There is a need to improve receptive communications with parents; more avenues for meaningful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The campus is safe and orderly</td>
<td>parental input &amp; assistance are needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Effective school parent communication exists in terms of</td>
<td>• Scheduling needs to be continually examined to maximize time for collaborative planning &amp; student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disseminating information to parents</td>
<td>access to enrichment classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal needs to monitor grade level or subject area meetings &amp; provide structure for teachers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&amp; regular ongoing communication &amp; consistency between the grades/subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increased funding is needed to implement top notch key programs &amp; to provide the external support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to sustain planned improvements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**School C1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers set high expectations for students/academic push is moderately high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classroom learning environments are attractive and inviting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Classes are orderly &amp; have established routines HOT vs. LOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 16.7% of classes observed students were involved in high levels of HOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In all classes observed students were exposed to at least some minor opportunity for HOT Deep Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 16.7% of classes observed knowledge exploration by students was deep or relatively deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There were no classes observed in which students were only exposed to very thin simple information meant for memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive Conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some degree of substantive conversation was present in every class observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 66.7% of classes observed, some elements of substantive conversation, integral to the lesson, were present &amp; students engaged in some student to student or student to teacher interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 25% of classes observed students were engaged in organizing, evaluating, synthesizing or applying information Consideration of Alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 66.7% of classes observed, students displayed moderate amounts of organization of information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 25% of classes observed students were not involved in any form of inquiry or disciplinary process central to exploration or advancement of knowledge in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 50% of classes observed students were not involved in any form of inquiry or disciplinary process central to exploration or advancement of knowledge in the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 16.7% of classes observed little student interest or enthusiasm was displayed and student participation was characterized by compliance and passive engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 16.7% of observations students displayed moderate amounts of interest and enthusiasm for the learning activities they were involved in; all students in the room not equally interested or on-task; participation was characterized by passive compliance Real World Relevance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 50% of classes observed activities the students were engaged in were pertinent to real-life skills, but there was no indication students made the connection Audience Beyond the School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In 50% of classes observed the products of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

419
products of their learning to peers within the class, but not to an audience beyond the class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>School C1</strong></th>
<th><strong>IV. Student-centered Focus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teachers &amp; principal genuinely care about the students</td>
<td>* Efforts to individualize are inconsistent, not widely executed and not systematically tracked for effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teachers are conscientious &amp; willing to adapt to the needs of a changed student population</td>
<td>* Little instructional differentiation based on student needs, abilities, experiences, or interests is occurring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teachers recognize the need to individualize instruction for some students</td>
<td>* There is no systematic plan for analyzing achievement and other data at the level of the individual student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Student academic recognition is frequent and emphasized</td>
<td>* Parental involvement is low; little day to day participation, less input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Recent increases in community &amp; corporate &amp; interest sponsorship</td>
<td>* No innovative or out of the ordinary efforts are being made to involve more parents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>School C2</strong></th>
<th><strong>Dimension I. Professional Orientation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* The school has a very strong teamwork approach</td>
<td>* The evaluation procedures for actions in the SIP are weak &amp; provide little feedback as to the extent to which actions were followed thru nor their effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* A detailed SIP has been developed based on student achievement data</td>
<td>* There is no formal or written mechanism for systematic review of program effectiveness, in general teacher discussion seems to be the primary tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teachers share a common vision</td>
<td>* Staff development includes only rudimentary in class supports for desired changes (5 min. walk thru &amp; model lessons) little focused teacher observation with informal feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* The SIP is well developed and provides a detailed actionable guide for coordinating improvement efforts</td>
<td>* Teachers not involved in any structured self-reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teachers are knowledgeable about the contents of the SIP &amp; believe that it will empower them to raise student achievement</td>
<td>* Data are not systematically reviewed at the level of the individual teacher and used to plan professional growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teachers engage in frequent &amp; productive collaboration</td>
<td>* Staff Development focus (Strategies for Growing Gifted Kids) is not included in the SIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teacher professional development is a priority of the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Professional development is focused on a particular area identified, and is on-going in nature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Teacher commitment and dedication to their field is high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Many teachers are engaged in independent professional development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Many teachers are willing to share ideas &amp; resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Teachers are competent &amp; knowledgeable</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Teachers remain focused on their work regardless of circumstances</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Teachers demonstrate high levels of professional behavior, courtesy &amp; respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Teacher efficacy for change is high</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School C2: Dimension II. Organizational Structure

#### Strengths
- The principal is well trained & ambitious
- Principal efficacy for change is high
- Strong within school communication patterns exist
- A strong informal problem solving approach permeates all that is done
- The faculty & principal are proactive & take initiative; potential problem areas are targeted & dealt with before actual problems emerge
- Teachers work well together
- Teachers consult one another about curriculum & instruction
- Teachers are committed to the school vision
- There is evidence of increasing parent leadership
- Teachers want to contribute to the entire school’s success
- The principal supports distributive leadership
- Teachers are accustomed to taking on additional responsibility for improving school functions
- Innovation is encouraged
- The campus is safe & orderly

#### Weaknesses
- There is no system for monitoring the effectiveness of new and existing programs
- More specific timelines & assessment strategies need to be developed for the actions laid out in the SIP
- Increased funding is needed for key programs
- External support in the are of professional development & in class supports are needed to sustain planned improvements

### School C2: Dimension III. Quality of the Learning Experiences

#### Strengths
- Teachers set high expectations for students
- Classrooms are attractive & inviting
- Classes are orderly & have established routines
- In 83.3% of classes observed students were involved in at least one major HOT activity
- In 83.3% of classes observed knowledge exploration by students was deep relatively deep
- In 50% of classes observed substantive conversation was integral to the lesson with many students engaged to student to student or student to teacher interactions
- In 83.3% of classes observed students were engaged in a high amount of organizing, evaluating, synthesizing or applying information
- In 83.3% of classes observed students were involved in a moderate amount of consideration of alternate strategies, solutions, or points of view
- In 66.7% of observations students displayed obvious interest & enthusiasm for the learning activities they were involved in; most or all students in the room

#### Weaknesses
- Instructional methods are predominantly traditional teacher directed didactic presentations followed by independent pencil & paper assignments
- In 16.7% of classes observed students were involved in mostly or only LOT
- In 16.7% of classes observed students were only exposed to thin simple information meant for memory; knowledge exploration is superficial & information is fragmented
- In 50% of classes observed students were involved in limited substantive conversation with each other or the teacher
- In 16.7% of classes observed students were not asked to organize, classify, evaluate or apply information; organization of information was typically provided by the teacher
- In 16.7% of classes observed students were not asked to consider or generate alternate strategies, solutions or points of view
- In 33.3% of classes observed students could successfully complete tasks assigned with moderate to no comprehension of major themes, theories, or concepts central to discipline
- In 16.7% of classes observed students were not involved in any form of inquiry or disciplinary process central to exploration or advancement of knowledge in
remained focused on activities and participated eagerly for the duration of the lesson

Real World Relevance
- In 66.7% of classes observed student work was clearly relevant to real life experiences & students understood connection between class activities and life beyond the school

Audience Beyond the School
- In 66.7% of classes observed students presented the products of their learning to peers within the class, but not to an audience beyond the class
- In 33.3% of the observed classes students presented their learning to someone beyond the classroom

Student Engagement
- In none of classes observed were students obviously disinterested or failing to participate in their learning activities
- In 33.3% of classes observed moderate student interest or enthusiasm was displayed; student participation was characterized by compliance & passive engagement.

Real World Relevance
- In 33.3% of classes observed the activities the students were engaged in were pertinent to real-life skills, but there was no indication students made the connection

### School C2 IV. Student-centered Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The reorganization of the parents, teachers, &amp; friends club offers a genuine opportunity for more meaningful &amp; substantial parental involvement</td>
<td>- Efforts to individualize are inconsistent &amp; not systematically tracked for effectiveness</td>
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<td>- PTF plans to offer paid childcare &amp; meals for night meetings hold promise for increasing parent attendance</td>
<td>- Increased instructional differentiation based on student needs, abilities, experiences, or interests is needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Students, their work, &amp; their accomplishments are displayed thru out the school</td>
<td>- Parents need more venues for input</td>
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<td>- Students are publicly recognized on a routine basis; this could be emphasized even more</td>
<td>- Parent education needs to be offered more frequently &amp; at times that allow working parents to participate</td>
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<td>- Teachers believe in &amp; provide parent education</td>
<td>- Volunteer program needs more structure – training for volunteers, development of a schedule of routine tasks, establishment of routine work schedules, public recognition of parent/community volunteers</td>
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<td>- Teachers recognize the need to individualize instruction</td>
<td>- Greater community &amp; corporate sponsorship is needed</td>
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<td>- The school HSAT process allows teachers &amp; principal to focus on insuring the individual needs of struggling students are met</td>
<td>- Increased funding is needed for staff development &amp; planned enhancements</td>
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<td>- The school faculty has a strong commitment to making sure the child’s life circumstances support his chances for academic success (i.e. all children receive medical care, supervision, etc…)</td>
<td>- HSAT process could be expanded to assess the extent to which average &amp; high students are being challenged to reach their potential</td>
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<td>- Opportunities for meaningful student leadership need to be expanded</td>
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</table>
VITA

LaTefy Schoen was born in 1963 in Natchez, Mississippi. She completed high school in three years and graduated in 1980 from Baton Rouge High School, an academic and performing arts magnet. As an undergraduate she received The East Baton Rouge Parish Teachers’ Endowment Scholarship. Throughout college and beyond, LaTefy worked as a preschool teacher and administrative assistant.

She graduated from Louisiana State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education in 1984. Upon graduation she was hired to teach elementary school at a SACS accredited Louisiana public school, where she continued to be employed for 16 years. Mrs. Schoen received a master’s degree from LSU in K-12 administration in 1991. During her career as a school teacher, Mrs. Schoen supervised several student teachers, mentored a first year teacher, served as grade level chairman, served on and chaired various committees, piloted new curricula, wrote and received grants, was involved in staff development and participated in a school restructuring program sponsored by Tulane University in New Orleans and local business and industry.

In 2000 Mrs. Schoen resigned her position as an elementary school teacher to complete a doctorate in educational leadership and research at Louisiana State University. While a doctoral student at LSU, she worked for three years as a research assistant in the department of Educational Leadership, Research and Counseling, where she participated in several research projects, including designing instruments for and piloting a state assistance model for non-improving schools, in conjunction with the Louisiana Department of Education. In 2004 she completed a contract with the Governor’s Office and Board of Regents where she helped design a study of teacher retention for the state.

LaTefy Schoen works as an independent consultant conducting research and providing professional development. A draft of the theory portion of this study was presented at the American Sociological association and was subsequently considered for student paper of the year in the Sociology of Education division. Findings from Phases II and III of this study will be presented at the American Educational Research Association in 2005. Mrs. Schoen is currently involved in providing leadership training, and assisting schools to improve student achievement. Mrs. Schoen resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, with her husband and four children.