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This dissertation is a study of how two elementary principals work within their school, assess the culture, and implement change. It is situated within the body of current research on school culture and change, but makes a unique contribution because it gives first hand accounts of leaders at the elementary level as they implement change in particular settings. The experiences of the subjects in this dissertation will assist other administrators as they take on the challenge of school leadership. This study contributes to those seeking to create positive change in settings in which they are in charge by giving concrete examples of principal leaders working within the culture and setting of their respective schools.

My research interest involves how principals understand and work within the school culture. An additional area of interest is the process an effective leader uses as he or she enters a situation, assesses the positive and negative qualities of the setting, and goes about making changes based on his or her leadership behaviors. An elementary school principal in a newly assigned school or an administrator in a long held position must assess the culture of the school, work within and understand the culture, and make appropriate changes related to his or her leadership attributes and vision for the school.

Based on an extensive review of literature and the focus on school culture and change, there are several research questions that this study addresses. The central research questions are: How do principals assess the culture of their school? How do principals plan and implement change? What leadership thoughts and practices aid in leading change conducive to improving teaching and learning? And what forms of community currently exist and are evolving?

The study informs school administrators that value the significance of culture in their school and strive to build a sense of community among their students and staff. Although the subjects and focus of the dissertation are practicing in elementary schools, the concepts of school culture, the change process, and community addressed in the research also apply to administrators at the secondary level. As the nature of school leadership is people centered, concepts in the findings of this study transcend prescribed grade levels and are applicable to many leadership situations.

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL CULTURE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
CASE STUDIES OF TWO PIEDMONT NORTH CAROLINA
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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In Memory of Rebecca Carver

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of the administrator's work is not the technical aspect of management; rather, it involves the establishment of community and a culture within an organization and the development of an organization's self-reflective ability to analyze its purpose and goals. (Foster, 1986, p. 10)

Overview

Effective school leadership is both invigorating and challenging for administrators in the 21st century. Internal expectations from school stakeholders as well as state and federal standards continually evolve, and principals must constantly evaluate their school's programs and performance in order to meet these changing demands. Effective school leadership requires a shared vision for success in which administrators engage their staff and work together to accomplish common goals.

One of the most important challenges which newly-assigned principals must face is finding ways to reconcile their own ideas, goals, and leadership practices with the established traditions and cultures of schools they are appointed to lead. This is a formidable task for any new principal, whether a veteran administrator or one new to the principalship. Newly assigned administrators are often greeted with apprehension, because, instinctively, our society does not embrace change. In order to fully appreciate the changing

dynamics and the delicate balance that emerges between established traditions and visionary leadership, it is helpful to have a better understanding of school culture.

The Research Problem

The topic of school culture and leadership has received much attention in the past twenty years in a variety of research. The language used in educational literature and with practitioners has evolved from a discussion of reading culture in schools to a dialogue of building and sustaining community. However, the impact of leadership on the school culture is an ever-present and evolving issue in education, especially related to the change process.

This dissertation is a study of how two elementary principals worked within their schools, assessed the culture, and implemented change. It is situated within the body of current research on school culture and change; however, it also makes a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge. The experiences of the subjects in this dissertation will assist other administrators as they take on the challenge of school leadership. This study contributes valuable insight to those seeking to create positive change through their administrative roles by giving concrete examples of principal leaders working within the culture and setting of their respective schools.

In previous years, extensive research has been documented which addresses the principal's role as the master teacher, his or her role as the

instructional leader, and various other school management models. In the 1980s, much attention was given to organizational theory and culture as it pertained to the business world as well as the educational arena. As noted in this chapter, change is an inevitable variable in public education, although it is not one that is easily accepted, and change in a school's leadership can be quite unsettling. The role of the principal has evolved over the past few years to reflect new responsibilities and has led to a tendency for principals to share responsibility and decision making with teacher leaders. When a school administrator is introduced to a new setting, there are multiple lenses he or she can utilize to examine and understand the setting.

Bolman and Deal (1991) elaborate on four leadership frames that are potential lenses for school leaders. The leadership frames include: human resource, structural, symbolic and cultural, and political leadership. Each leadership style speaks to different frames or lenses, which leaders use to make decisions. The human resource lens frames the organization around human needs and the potential of man power. The human resource frame places an emphasis on a sense of family in the organization and provides a caring, nurturing, and supportive environment. The symbolic lens frames the organization around rituals and ceremonies that anchor the organization in a culture that creates consistency and routines. Honoring rituals and ceremonies reduces ambiguity in the organization and sometimes resolves conflicting view points. The political lens frames leadership decisions around the allocation of

scarce resources. It presupposes that organizations are coalitions of individuals and interest groups. The political frame focuses on bargaining and negotiation. The cultural lens frames the organizational environment around how members think, feel, and act. The cultural frame brings value to stories that explain the past and anchor the present. Bolman and Deal (1991) describe these frames as multiple perspectives that principals employ as they lead in schools. In this study, the research focuses on the cultural frame and how the leader reads and uses culture in order to begin working within and lead the school.

When considering the culture of a school, one of the first things an administrator must do is get a feel for the existing culture or as Bower (1966) and Brubaker (1994) would ask: "How are things done around here?" This entails interacting within the existing culture, reading the existing culture and making continual assessments of it. Deal and Peterson (1994), in The Leadership Paradox, state:

Reading culture takes several forms: watching, listening, sensing, interpreting, using all five senses, and even employing a sixth or seventh when necessary. The leader must first listen to the echoes of school history in everything that happens. (p. 29)

Much like being an effective leader, reading a school culture is an active, interactive, and intuitive process. Understanding the history of a school helps a principal to know what is valued, what is expected, and what are acceptable, and unacceptable, practices. When properly understood, the past grounds the present and informs the future of an organization. Schein (1985) proposes that

principals entering a leadership position must be able to accurately diagnose the school culture and be able to identify both well adapted elements as well as problematic elements. This must be coupled with the knowledge, skills, and ability to change ineffective practices. Reading the existing culture is essential for principals who value the history of a school and want to function effectively within the current structure.

As change is a prerequisite for continual improvement, maintaining the status quo is a move backward. Even in a high performing school or organization, the members must continually assess their mission, goals, and objectives. One productive way to sustain a thriving school culture is to revisit and revise the mission and vision statements with the staff. Mission and vision are at the heart of school culture as “mission and purpose instill the intangible forces that motivate teachers to teach, school leaders to lead, children to learn, and parents and community to have confidence in their school” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, pp. 23-24). Principals must work with their staff toward a common goal of creating the shared vision and mission for the school. According to Schlechty (1990) in Schools for the Twenty-first Century, participatory leadership is an effective method for shared decision making, engagement of employees, and overall effectiveness and results orientation. Participatory leadership can also strengthen the school culture by creating daily procedures that positively impact the functioning of the school. The constituents must share a vision and mission that is articulated by the leadership and supported by everyone. Articulating a

vision and mission for a school is viewed as one essential component to creating and sustaining a positive school culture and building a sense of community.

Along with the need for a mission and vision for the school, there must also be a sense of connection among staff, students, and parents. People who are connected to each other express caring, compassion, and empathy for one another that go beyond requisites such as delivering the standard course of study and maintaining day-to-day operations of the school. Noddings (1984) extensively researched and reflected on the need for an ethic of care in public schools. Schools that are connected on an emotional level are concerned with children's emotional development, physical care, and family. In addition to a connectedness between staff and students, fulfilling relationships between staff members can create a familial atmosphere in schools. Teachers must not only care for the children in the school, they must also care for each other. A connected school staff celebrates individual accomplishments, rejoices in shared successes, and grieves together in a time of crisis or loss. Community is a valuable concept binding us together, bringing meaning to the workplace, and sustaining educators through personal and professional difficulties. With the high stakes accountability of the No Child Left Behind legislation and the increased expectations for schools to be all things for all people, fostering community is a timely topic in today's educational arena.

This study investigates how a veteran administrator and a newly appointed principal, in two different schools, entered and read the culture, led

and advocated for change within the culture, and described their vision for cultivating a sense of community. Generally, I want to capture firsthand accounts of the experiences, challenges, and successes of these principals as they make sense of their school culture and strive to implement their personal vision while making it a shared vision for the school. Additionally, I want to gain an understanding and help provide insight into how principals at different stages of their career work to create a sense of community within their schools.

As an aspiring principal currently working as an elementary school assistant principal, my research interest involves how principals enter new situations as the school leader, continuously assess the school culture, and implement change. What interests me most is the process of an effective leader to come into a situation, assess the positive and negative qualities of the setting, and go about making changes based on his or her unique leadership practices. An elementary school principal, whether in a newly assigned school or in a long held position, must assess the culture of the school, attempt to understand it, and make appropriate changes related to his or her leadership attributes and vision for the school. Articulating a shared vision and leading a school based on the shared goals is a primary means of building a positive school culture.

School Culture Defined

Some researchers believe that schools have cultures within them (Bower, 1966) and some propose that schools are cultures in themselves (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984; Schein, 1985). All stakeholders in a school including students, parents, teachers, staff members, administrators, volunteers, and community supporters experience school culture. Bolman and Deal (1991) added that every organization develops distinctive beliefs and patterns over time. These beliefs and practices become part of an organization's culture. Deal and Peterson (1999) reported that "culture takes form, over time, as people cope with problems, stumble into routines and rituals, and create traditions and ceremonies to reinforce underlying values and beliefs" (p. 49). The way in which principals identify and work within existing cultures is an essential part of leadership capacity. Before we can analyze how principals assess and engage school culture, a working definition is needed. According to Deal and Peterson (2002), "the term culture best denotes the complex elements of values, traditions, language, and purpose in a given setting" (p. 9). Likewise, in a more succinct definition, Bower (1966), and Brubaker (1994) described school culture as "the way we do things around here." To further understand school culture, it is necessary to see how school culture is defined within the school setting. Schein (1985) proposed that culture is learned by members of an organization, evolves through multiple experiences, and can be altered. Further, Deal and Peterson (2002) submitted that the source of a school's culture lies "beneath the surface of

everyday life...an underground river of feelings, folkways, norms, and values that influence how people go about their daily work” (p. 133). The interpretation of these feelings shape interactions, decision-making, and daily routines within a school.

A Better Learning Environment

How do school principals use their knowledge and leadership skills to advocate for a better learning environment for students, to create an inviting school for constituents, and to foster an environment where teachers want to grow professionally and engage students? According to Firestone and Louis (1999), part of the discourse of culture speaks to the issues of togetherness and community. Moser (1997) framed an entire dissertation around various forms of community that exist in schools based on Sergiovanni's (1994) Building Community in Schools. Moser (1997) proposed that schools must work toward community of a philosophical mind; of value-centered, shared leadership; of effective communication, listening, equality, and democracy; and of kinship and place. These efforts to attain community also strengthen and unify the culture of the school. Sergiovanni (1994) “defines cultural connections as shared purposes, values, traditions, and history that promote harmony and provide a sense of community” (p. 58). Sergiovanni and Senge were two of the first educational researchers to bridge the study of culture in schools and translate it into a discussion of community.

In 1990, with the publication of Peter Senge's The Fifth Discipline and the book's focus on learning organizations, a paradigm shift occurred in which the pendulum swung from Schein's (1985) and others' discussion of organizational culture and wider investigation of culture toward the formation of learning communities and other communities that evolve in schools and organizations. However, Deal and Peterson (2004, 1999, & 1994) continue to research and write about school culture. As one reads literature on school culture and community, many parallels exist between the language educators and researchers use in discussing culture and the language incorporated into the discussion of community.

Educational research and legislative mandate point to the need for quality and equity in our public schools. Oakes (1986) insists that the commodification of public education has created a culture of haves and have-nots. Despite the inequality of education offered in American public schools, "Little attention is paid to rethinking classroom instruction or school organization in such a way as to promote achievement of poor children" (Oakes, 1986, p. 62). Sergiovanni (1994) advocates school communities that seek to unite people together rather than to divide. Sergiovanni (1994) states, "We want the ties that community offers...and bind us to ideas that give meaning to our lives" (p. 39). Further, Sergiovanni (1994) proposed that thinking, language, and practice are intimately related and suggested the practitioners and researchers adopt a metaphor of community in place of the standard organizational structure.

The Research

This dissertation attempts to describe how principals enter a school, assess the culture, and implement change. I situate this inquiry within the context of a wide body of previous research. As an investigation that relates to, but is different from prior studies, it will contribute to the body of educational research by giving first hand accounts of principals at the elementary level as they implement change in particular settings. The dissertation will also contribute practical knowledge, as the experiences of the subjects in this study will provide information for other administrators as they take on the challenge of school leadership. This study will contribute to those seeking to create positive change in settings in which they lead by giving concrete examples of principal leaders working within the culture and setting of their respective schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

Senge (1990) reminds us that the Greek word *metanoia* means ‘a fundamental shift in mind’. This is what we need about the concept of educational change itself. Without such a shift of mind the insurmountable basic problem is the juxtaposition of a continuous change theme with a continuous conservative system. (Fullan, 1993, p. 3)

Overview

A literature review creates the foundation for the analysis of a given topic and creates a springboard for the researcher to add to the existing research. According to Michael Apple (1992), “Not only are we in conversation with past members of the field, but we stand on their shoulders....We see things more clearly only because we have added our insight to theirs” (p. 9). Further, the purpose of the literature review is to create a conceptual framework for the investigation. The review of literature provides information regarding existing empirical studies that are applicable to the current study including identification and analysis of other studies, and notation of methodologies and data gathering techniques.

The review of literature for this study surveyed the landscape of empirical research related to school leadership and the change process. Through the research process, four areas of interest emerged and evolved into themes. In the process of conducting literature searches and reading extensively about the

change process, the topics and related research outlined in this review include: change, culture, learning communities, and school leadership. According to Foster (1986), “the meaning of the administrator’s work is not the technical aspect of management; rather, it involves the establishment of community and a culture within an organization and the development of an organization’s self-reflective ability to analyze its purpose and goals” (p. 10). As evidenced in the review of literature, these topics were rarely isolated one from another and were often inter-related on many levels.

The Change Process

Change has a direct impact on school culture and often results from leadership decisions. Leithwood and Duke (1993) proposed that leadership practices in many case studies are associated with changes in the school's culture, student achievement, attendance, and the teacher’s willingness to change instructional practices. The role of the principal and his or her leadership practices is, therefore, essential to the change process. The centrality of leadership in initiating and sustaining change is a consistent theme in educational literature on change, leadership, and the role of the principal (Hall & Hord, 1987). Fullan (1991) divided the change process into the initiation phase, the implementation phase, and the institutionalization phase. Fullan (1991) also proposed that the way the initiation phase proceeds depends on the relevance of the improvement innovation in terms of need, quality, practicality, clarity, and

complexity. The readiness of staff to commit to the change process and the resources to support and sustain change are also important. Change is usually greeted with apprehension and resistance because an introduction to change is often followed by pressure to conform. Miles and Louis (1994) ascertained that a certain level of discomfort usually exists before change can occur. According to Wincek (1995), “Teachers resist imposed change. Unless they see either greater efficiencies in their work or improved learning for the children, they quickly and quietly abandon the prescribed reform” (p. 10). Change in behavior usually does not occur from simply knowing something different is better.

In the literature on change, there are multiple links between the change process and school culture. Barth (2002) stated, “Probably the most important – and the most difficult – job of an instructional leader is to change the prevailing culture of the school” (p. 6). Changing the culture of an instructional program involves examining and often redefining deeply rooted roles and practices. In another empirical study, Strahan, Carlone, Horn, Dallas, and Ware (2003) propose that school renewal initiatives “document many of the ways that interpersonal and contextual dynamics shape school reform, showing that the visible outcomes of school improvement are often the result of deep-seated changes in school culture” (p. 204). As will be discussed later, changing the culture of the school goes a long way in changing the procedures, practices, and the way stakeholders view the school structure. Change in school culture encompasses a much larger scope than the position or personality of the

principal. Lasting change must be embraced and owned by the constituents.

Sarason (1990) agreed that schools cannot experience cultural change without a commitment of school personnel and students to continual learning and collaboration.

Strahan, Carlone, Horn, Dallas, and Ware (2003) investigated changes in school culture as a means of school reform. Their study was based on the North Carolina Lighthouse Project, initiated by the North Carolina state legislature, which sought to identify characteristics of successful schools and highlight these 'lighthouse' practices. The research of Strahan and others (2003) documented three major changes in school culture at Archer Elementary School as the constituents sought school reform. First, the teachers and principals developed a shared stance toward learning that links common values and beliefs to common practices. Second, the school's instructional norms were strengthened and emphasized student engagement. And finally, school personnel developed stronger commitment for engaging in data driven dialogue and translating their findings toward school reform.

Many empirical research studies (Dwyer, Lee, Rowan, & Bossert, 1983; Firestone & Wilson, 1985; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; and Smith & Andrews, 1989) related to school change and reform identified the principal as a key participant in the change process. Fullan (1991) reported that research has progressed from examining the principal's role in implementing change to his or her role in changing school culture. In a case study on

Broadmoor Junior High School, Murphy and Louis (1994) proposed that the principal resides at the center of a web of relationships in the school and this position affords the opportunity for the principal to notice intricacies in the functionality of the school and needs of the constituents. The vantage point of the principal in this web allowed him or her to be a change agent. Networking ideas and attaining support between external groups and internal teams was important in the change process (Fullan, 1991). Likewise, the principal must be able to build relationships with school personnel in order to catalyze change. According to Murphy and Louis (1994), "Helping to formulate a vision appears as a critical function of principals working to facilitate significant change at their schools" (p. 31). Anafara, Brown, and Mangione (2002) submitted that visionary leaders were future oriented thinkers and they expressed hopes, dreams, and goals for their organizations. Visionary leaders articulate a vision for their school that is worthwhile to and adoptable by all constituents.

Fullan and Miles (1992) distinguished between first order and second order changes. First order changes are generally related to functions of the school, are concrete, and are measurable. Fullan and Miles (1992) classified changes in curriculum and instruction and school organization as well as changes in community involvement, staff development, assessment, reporting, and evaluation as first order changes. Fullan and Miles (1992) characterized second order changes such as changing the school culture, fostering interpersonal relationships, and changing values and expectations as much more

difficult to achieve. Second order changes are salient, emotional, and much more difficult to measure or predict. Senge (1990) asserted,

The new view of leadership in learning organizations centers on...important tasks. In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models – that is, they are responsible for learning. (p. 340)

In Senge's view, leaders and constituents addressed challenges and change by continuing to develop as self-motivated, life-long learners. Fullan and Miles (1992) also reported that effective change must be systematic in order to address system components and system culture. Another way to frame the idea of systems change is to understand the power of collaboration. According to Fullan (1991), effective principals are collaborative leaders focused on continual improvement. Building relationships enhances the leader's ability to foster a collaborative environment. Fullan also distinguished between organizational leadership and principal contact in the classroom. Fullan (1991) stated, "long term institutional development of schools requires that principals help shape the instructional and work climate of the school as an organization, not that they spend large amounts of time on direct classroom observations with individual teachers" (p. 163).

School Culture

As anthropological investigation of people and culture evolved in the twentieth century, organizational theorists began to define organizational culture and redefine how culture impacts organizational life. Barley, Meyer, and Gash (1988) reported that the notion of organizational culture did not gain substantial attention by social scientists until the 1970's. During this time, two early views of organizational culture emerged. First, Barley, Meyer, and Gash (1988) suggested that if "managers would pay more attention to an organization's ideals, norms, and values, as well as heed the symbolic aspects of management, they would discover more powerful tools for enhancing organizational effectiveness" (p. 31). In contrast to the first emergent view of organizational culture, the second view "drew heavily on the work of anthropologists and symbolic interactionists to argue that organizations should be conceived of as having the ontological status of socially constructed systems of meaning" (Barley, Meyer, & Gash, 1988, p. 32). Smircich (1983) outlined many research frameworks related to culture and organizational analysis that document the convergence of several themes related to organizational culture. (See Table 1 on the following page) Figure 1 outlines the themes in organization and management that converge from culture as it relates to anthropology and organizational theory. In one of the frameworks, culture creates a sense of identity for members, facilitates the generation of commitment to something larger than self, and enhances social system stability (Smircich, 1983, p. 346). The view that culture is an internal

variable that can be altered is a powerful metaphor for researchers and practitioners who believe leaders and managers can exert change within the organization.

Table 1. Intersections of Culture Theory and Organization Theory
Taken from Smircich (1983)

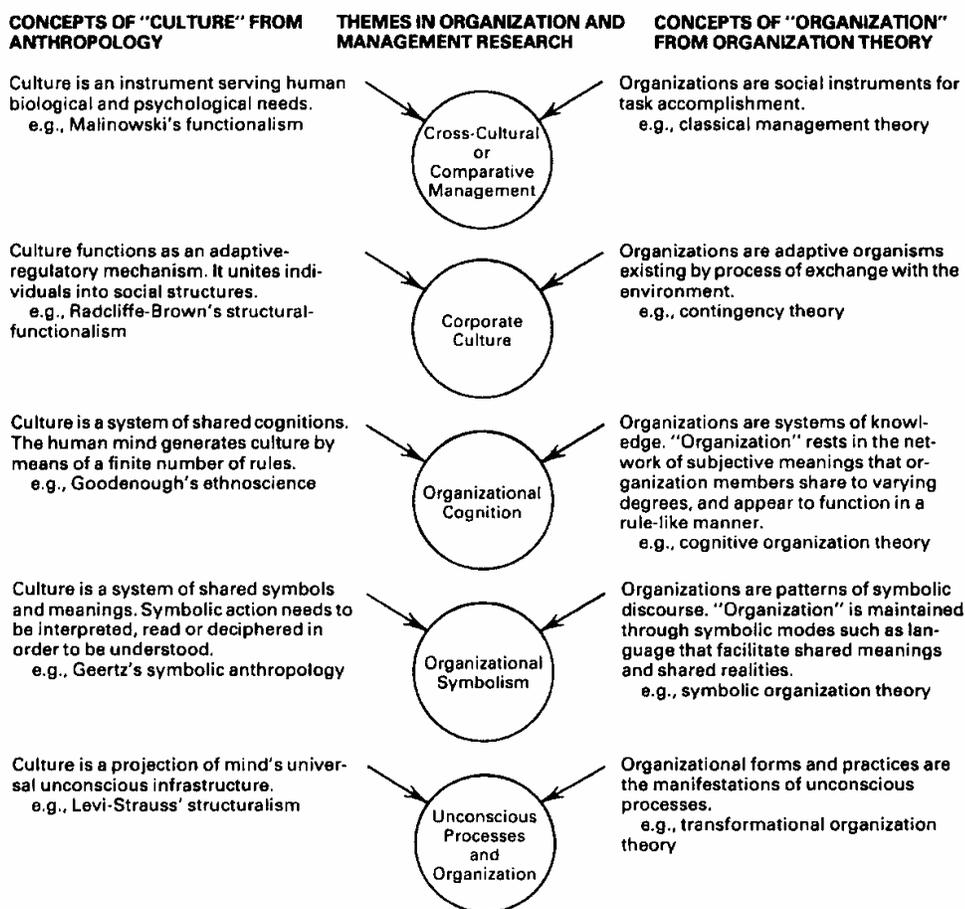


Figure 1. Intersections of culture theory and organization theory.

In another line of research outlined by Smircich (1983), elements of cognitive anthropology continue to inform the study of culture. In the rules-theory or cognitive perspective, “The task of the anthropologist...is to determine what the rules are, to find out how the members of a culture see and describe their world” (Smircich, 1983, p. 348). The rules-theorist attempted to explain cultural phenomena and how members of the observed culture see themselves; further, managers and leaders seek diagnostic information in order to intervene and alter the existing culture. From a symbolic perspective, anthropologists view cultures as systems of shared symbols and meanings. In this instance, the anthropologist’s task is to interpret the themes that emerge in cultures (Smircich, 1983). Some anthropologists perceive culture as patterns of symbolic discourse. In the symbolic analysis of culture, the purpose of research related to the organization is to identify the creation and continuance of an organization through symbolic events. The cognitive and symbolic perspectives frame culture as the study of organization as a form of human expression and a social phenomenon.

Pondy and Mitroff (1979, as cited in Smircich, 1983) proposed that organizational theory move “beyond open systems models of organization” to a “cultural model” (p. 353). This model moved cultural analysis to the higher functioning levels of human behavior and interaction. According to Smircich (1983), “A cultural analysis moves us in a direction of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions, raising issues of context and meaning, and bringing to the

surface underlying values” (p. 355). The cultural analysis that Smircich proposed moves researchers beyond the surface elements of organizational culture such as rituals, symbols, and stories to a deeper understanding that reveals how people make sense of their organization, understand what is valued in the organization, and experience a sense of connectedness.

According to Deal and Peterson (2002), “the term culture best denotes the complex elements of values, traditions, language, and purpose in a given setting” (p. 9). Wincek (1995) further stated, “Culture comprises the intertwining of assumptions, values, and beliefs from which a group’s norms, practices, rituals, and meaning emerge” (p. 32). These elements are interpreted and acted upon by people within the setting. The values, traditions, and rituals are adopted by the majority of the culture and passed on to new members that join the society. To further understand school culture, it is necessary to see how school culture is defined within the school setting. Deal and Peterson (2002) submitted that the source of a school’s culture lies “beneath the surface of everyday life...an underground river of feelings, folkways, norms, and values that influence how people go about their daily work” (p. 133). The underlying expectations of the culture subconsciously, and sometimes overtly, influence life in the school. The interpretation of these feelings shape interactions, decision making, and work within schools. Gonzalez (2004) outlined anthropologist’s impact on research in schools and the evolution of the term ‘culture’ as it relates to research. As outlined previously by Tyler (1871/1958) and Foster, Lewis, and Onafowora

(2003), culture historically was a basic tenet of anthropological studies.

However, over the past 20 years, the meaning and relevance of culture in anthropology and educational research experienced deconstruction. (Gonzalez, 2004) According to Stoltzberg (2001):

The concept of culture serves the basic need of naming such ineffable and inexplicable features of human existence as 'meaning' and 'spirit' and living together with others. Stop thinking of it as a name for a thing, and come to view it instead as a placeholder for a set of inquiries—inquiries which may be destined never to be resolved. (p. 444)

Stoltzberg reminds us that the change process is not an end in itself, but rather a continual process of questioning, analyzing, learning, and refining. Gonzalez (2004) was a proponent of moving away from cultural inquiry as a means of investigation toward issues such as: "How can we become a community of learners, dialogically creating knowledge through our discursive practices and articulating linkages to multiple knowledge bases?" (p. 21). This avenue of research advocated moving beyond a discussion or analysis of culture, toward inquiry focused on addressing problems that exists within the cultural context.

It is evident that researchers and practitioners define and redefine culture based on their knowledge base and research interests. The purpose of early anthropological cultural studies was to observe and learn from existing cultures. However, organizational theorists investigate culture with the assumption that it can be observed, experienced, and altered by administrators and teachers. The

meaning of culture and defining how culture is applicable to schools is difficult to articulate in one succinct, all encompassing definition.

In the educational realm, Deal and Peterson (1994, 1998, 1999, 2002) wrote extensive research outlining effective ways to assess existing school cultures and methods to influence school culture. Deal and Peterson articulated many formulas, procedures, and methods related to changing culture in organizations. Within academia, there exists much debate as to what school culture is and how it should be defined. Some researchers argue that schools have cultures within them (Bower, 1966) while others propose that schools are cultures in themselves (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Schein, 1985; Sergiovanni & Corbally, 1984). School culture is experienced by all stakeholders in a school including students, parents, teachers, staff members, administrators, volunteers, and community supporters. Bolman and Deal (1991) proposed that every organization develops distinctive beliefs and patterns over time. These beliefs and practices become part of an organization's culture. Deal and Peterson (1999) proposed that "culture takes form, over time, as people cope with problems, stumble into routines and rituals, and create traditions and ceremonies to reinforce underlying values and beliefs" (p. 49).

Foster (1986) and Bates (1984) presented an additional view that manipulation of culture directly impacts the organization. Foster and Bates also proposed that influencing school culture could result in positive or negative orientation depending on the agenda of the leader. Reitzug and Reeves (1992)

present an additional observation that culture is often manipulated. Reitzug and Reeves (1992) cite that “symbolic leadership’s influence on organizational culture has focused on the use of slogans, stories, rituals, and ceremonies” (p.212). However, these overt activities revealed a partial approach to symbolic leadership. Reitzug and Reeves submitted that the embedded routines of the leader further legitimized the overt practices. They also cited the fact that the embedded or internalized routines of the leader are difficult to quantify.

In a case study, Bulach (2001) reported his experiences as a principal and the process he followed as he attempted to understand and work within the culture of his school. Two key characteristics for reading a school’s culture are listening and gathering information. Listening to constituents within a school reveals what people value and believe as well as what are acceptable norms within the culture. In the process which Bulach (2001) called an expectations diagnosis, the principal collects information regarding expectations of the staff for him or her. Likewise, the faculty shares their expectations of each other early in the course of the school year. This diagnostic process goes a long way in transferring power from being centered on the position of the principal to one of shared responsibility among the teachers. Schein (1985) supported Deal and Peterson’s proclamation that school culture can be altered by the members within the organization. Schein (1985) proposed that culture is learned by members of an organization, evolves through multiple experiences, and can be altered. Deal and Peterson (1994, 1999) and Schein (1985) clearly articulated

how leaders work within cultures and advocate for change within schools. Deal and Peterson (1994) proposed that a principal's presence in the school and what he or she attends to in the building indicates attitudes, beliefs, and what is valued. In turn, the principal's regular presence in the school and interactions with the staff allows him or her to learn first hand about the values and beliefs held by the staff and to assess their expectations for the principal's leadership.

Culture is passed on and shared by members within organizations.

Culture is not static; rather it continuously evolves and changes. Even though culture is a shared experience, it is also negotiated by those within it. Culture as a negotiated experience speaks to the fact that leaders cannot only work within culture but also work to influence it. As Gonzalez (2004) advocates, I believe that cultural analysis must be a point of inquiry for the improvement of schools, the availability of equity, and the development of instructional practices.

Learning Communities

In addition to reviewing the literature on school culture, I also reviewed community as it relates to schools. Researchers studying school communities have identified a number of values that serve to unify students, teachers and administrators. Effective schools research by Edmonds (1979, 1986) suggested that commitment to order, discipline, and academic rigor were common themes in urban schools that served low-income children. Other researchers (Little, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993; McLaughlin, Talbert, & Phelan, 1990) suggested that

when teachers collaborate and support each other, elements of community emerge. Little (1993) cited teachers building professional communities as they problem solve in their work environment. Likewise, Grant (1988) described schools with a positive culture that create time to foster dialogue between teachers, student, and others about the ideology and commitment of the school. Bryk and Driscoll (1988) also suggested that schools that have a sense of community within them thrive on interaction and communication between all constituents in the school.

Inquiry concerning learning communities relates to how practitioners use their knowledge and skills to advocate for a better learning environment for students, create an inviting school for constituents, and foster an environment where teachers want to grow professionally and engage students. According to Firestone and Louis (1999), part of the discourse of culture speaks to the issues of togetherness and community. As noted earlier, Moser (1997) framed an entire dissertation around various forms of community that exist in schools based on Sergiovanni's (1994) Building Community in Schools. Efforts to attain community also strengthen and unify the culture of the school. According to Fullan (1993):

The development of a sense of community and the habits and skills of collaboration among students is also a central tenet of all proposals to develop schools as learning organizations from Gardner's 'apprenticeships' and 'children's museums' to Sizer's maxim that teams of teachers should have direct responsibilities for developing a community of learners with given groups of students. (pp. 44-45)

Many experts in the field of education value the importance of developing a community of learners. Sergiovanni (1994) “defines cultural connections as shared purposes, values, traditions, and history that promote harmony and provide a sense of community” (p. 58). Sergiovanni was one of the first researchers to bridge the study of culture in schools and translate it into a discussion of community.

In 1990, with the publication of Peter Senge’s The Fifth Discipline and the book’s focus on learning organizations, a paradigm shift occurred in which the pendulum swung from Schein (1985) and others’ discussion of organizational culture and wider investigation of culture toward learning communities and other communities that evolve in schools and organizations. However, Deal and Peterson (1999, 1994) continued to research and write about school culture. As one reads literature on school culture and community, many parallels exist between the language educators and researchers use in discussing culture and the language used in the discussion of community.

Educational research and legislative mandate point to the need for quality and equity in our public schools. Oakes (1986) insisted that the commodification of public education has created a culture of haves and have nots. Despite the inequality of education offered in American public schools, “Little attention is paid to rethinking classroom instruction or school organization in such a way as to promote achievement of poor children” (Oakes, 1986, p. 75). Sergiovanni (1994) advocated school communities that sought to unite people together rather than to

divide. Sergiovanni (1994) stated, "We want the ties that community offers, ties that bond us to others and bind us to ideas that give meaning to our lives" (p. 35). Further, Sergiovanni (1994) proposed that thinking, language, and practice are intimately related and suggests the practitioners and researchers adopt a metaphor of community in place of the organization. There are multiple citations of research and discussion of learning communities, caring communities, and professional learning communities.

Perhaps the most all-encompassing category for community is that of the learning community. Discourse on the learning community includes professional learning communities (Burnette, 2002; Kruse, Louis, & Byrk, 1994; LaFee, 2003), the ethic of care (Noddings, 1988, 1992), the small schools movement (Supovitz, 2002), collaborative sense making (Lee, 1991), and other movements that currently exist promoting the "community metaphor encouraging researchers to examine the contribution of shared values and commitments" (Firestone & Louis, 1999, p. 297). By analyzing educational research and practice related to community, the findings speak to school improvement efforts directed toward improving teaching and learning.

Westheimer (1999) examined the professional learning community of two middle schools using ethnographic techniques. According to Westheimer (1999), "In accordance with the social theory of teacher communities, teachers in a teacher professional community share beliefs, traditions, and forums in which anyone can participate" (p. 86). Further, teacher communities consist of

multidimensional relationships as well as individual concern and sympathy. Westheimer found two very different stories of professional learning communities in the two schools in the study. In one school Westheimer found that a 'liberal' community existed where teachers maintained individual goals and expectations. The teachers functioned autonomously and came together on an infrequent basis with a support network that was lacking. In the other school, Westheimer discovered a collective community where teachers maintained shared goals. The teachers also valued participation by their colleagues in a communal effort toward the shared goals.

The small schools movement is a reform effort attempting to build small learning communities and teacher collaboration on a smaller, more effective scale. This model relies on team-based schooling similar to the middle school team teaching concept. Along with the concept of smaller schools, Supovitz (2002) advocated a kindergarten through eighth grade structure as opposed to a kindergarten through fifth grade and sixth grade through eighth grade structure that is most common in schools today. Supovitz believed that continuity within a Kindergarten through eighth grade structure created stability and consistency for children. He also promoted looping, a practice where teachers change grade levels with their students each year for several consecutive grades. In his article, "Developing Communities of Instructional Practice," Supovitz (2002) told the story of one district's effort to implement small, team-based schools, and

proposed that creating communities of instructional practice would restructure schools to become learning organizations for teachers and children.

Another school improvement effort relates to sense-making within the educational setting. Lee (1991) discussed the importance of the school administrator and his or her role in providing leadership for improvement at the school level. A critical role of the school principal is facilitating an understanding of sense-making within the school staff. According to Lee (1991),

A sense making approach focuses on developing a supporting of the capacity of the members of the school community to examine the meanings they give their experiences and to consider how these meanings influence the way in which they carry out their work. (p. 85)

Sense-making is linked to an administrator's ability to sculpt the school culture by influencing the ways that teachers shape meanings concerning their daily routines and interactions. If empowered to do so, teachers can critique and make sense of instructional issues, strategies, challenges, successes, and failures, all of which are means of improving their individual and collective capacity to teach children. The principal's role in sense making is to create regular opportunities for teachers to engage in conversation concerning their work, focusing on interpretive events and how their interpretations influence instruction.

Other research studies show the emergence of learning communities in public schools. Phillips (2003) described a case study of a regular, non-magnet middle school and the principal's and teachers' focus on high-quality staff

development in order to improve student learning. Within the reform effort, the teachers agreed to investigate current teaching practices, collaborate with each other, and tailor teaching to meet the educational needs of students. In the case of this middle school, as in others cited, collaboration is important in the process of fostering a sense of community in schools. Sergiovanni (1994) advocated a “community of mind” in which students are workers and teachers are coaches. The coaching metaphor is another teaching technique that effectively changes the relationship between the pupil and teacher.

In another empirical study, Horsch, Chen, and Nelson (1999) documented the implementation of the Responsive Classroom approach at John B. Murphy Elementary School in Chicago. The school contained a multiethnic and socio-economically diverse population serving pre-kindergarten through sixth grade students. Murphy Elementary was structurally transformed via the 1988 Illinois school reform legislation. Likewise, the learning environment of the classrooms was transformed. According to Horsch, Chen, and Nelson (1999), “Today a caring atmosphere and an effective style of classroom management foster children’s development and guide them to respect other people, their environment, and their own learning” (p. 223). The creation of a learning community is a result of the Responsive Classroom approach which is a social curriculum. The change in how the staff approaches students, teaching, and learning at Murphy Elementary evolved as a result of leadership from the

principal, engagement in the change process by the teachers, and ongoing training and evaluation.

The key to learning communities seems to be instruction based on meeting the needs of the whole child. Schaps and Solomon (1990) surmised that social responsibility is equally important as academic competence to instill in children. This social responsibility evolves from the “development of deeply personal commitments to such core social values as justice, tolerance, and concern for others” (Schaps & Solomon, 1990, p. 38). A sense of community is fostered through student collaboration and cooperative learning, not competitive and individualistic assignments. Splittgerber and Allen (1996) concurred that while academics are a primary focus in schools, social and personal development need to assume complementary roles. Schaps and Solomon (1990) as well as Splittgerber and Allen (1996) both advocated social and moral instruction along with traditional academics.

In another line of research, Nell Noddings (1988, 1992) and others advocated an ethic of care as a necessary ingredient in cultivating community in schools. Since the release of Noddings’ work related to the ethic of care in the late 1980s and early 1990s, many researchers and practitioners have incorporated the ethic of care in school reform efforts as a way of meeting the needs of the whole child in schools. Other researchers have studied how schools themselves cultivate caring communities within classrooms. In an empirical case study, Kratzer (1997) proposed that caring communities are

essential to meet the needs of low-income urban students. In the schools studied, there was “a sense that formal roles and structures were less critical and influential than were relationships and informal interactions” (Kratzer, 1997, p. 354). In Kratzer’s study, instead of acting within assigned roles of teachers, administrators, and support staff, all staff members centered their interactions on an ethic of caring.

Parallel to Kratzer’s findings, Baker and Bridger (1997) cited four basic ways schools can be constructed around an ethic of care to transmit caring to students. These schools, founded on an ethic of care, model caring relationships among all individuals; taught children about core values such as responsibility, respect, and caring; encouraged students to serve others; and confirmed a commitment to caring by reinforcing it at all levels in the school. Relationships are essential in high performing schools. Baker and Bridger (1997) described caring schools as relationally oriented schools. Teachers in relationally oriented schools exhibit greater warmth and supportiveness toward students and colleagues. A caring community has much more than an academic focus. In addition to delivering the standardized curriculum, caring schools address social, ethical, and civic behavior as part of their planned curriculum (Baker & Bridger, 1997). Effective schools are actually effective communities that share norms and values about the educational process. According to Baker and Bridger (1997):

Relationally oriented school reform efforts are those that practice equal emphasis on children’s social, emotional, and intellectual development. They foster children’s interest in school and academic attainment by

developing authentic communities in which children feel psychologically safe, responsibly connected to others, and practice ethical decision making and self-governance in the microcosm of the classroom. (p. 591)

In another study, Doyle and Doyle (2003) also affirmed that caring schools go beyond concern for academic performance to caring for the psychological and social well-being of their students. A caring community truly creates an environment that concerns itself with educating the whole child.

In her article “Principals Who Care: A Personal Reflection,” Joanne Rooney reflected on a career of caring in public school administration. Her article was a compelling personal account of how caring principals can make a difference. According to Rooney (2003):

As all principals do, I spend much time on little things: greeting students by name; accepting birthday cupcakes as though each was the first; walking new students personally to classrooms; and inquiring about the health of a teacher’s parent, spouse or child. I helped celebrate pregnancies and births, rushed students and teachers to the emergency room, and insisted that teachers take much needed mental health days. Through these multiple connections, every principal has the power to weave an environment in which people care for one another—and thereby to foster excellent teaching and learning. (p. 77)

From Rooney’s account, the key elements of her interactions within the school were the connections that she created with the students and teachers. These connections formed a web of support and care for all constituents in her school. Rooney modeled a caring commitment in her interactions and reinforced her commitment to caring on a daily basis.

Professional learning communities are created and sustained among educators in individual schools and school districts. The professional learning community concept emerged from ineffective models of teacher in-service and staff development models. Researchers and practitioners now understand that there must be a connection between professional development and the daily work of teachers and administrators. Sergiovanni (1994) succinctly describes the role of institutions, or schools, as providing the social context in which individuals can develop morally and emotionally. In this same tradition, the professional learning community concept engages all aspects of the professional educator, his or her learning style, learning that is revisited and updated over time, and a value placed on professional development.

In a case study of her personal experience, Burnette (2002) attempted to create a professional learning community in order to sustain a high performing status in a school where she became principal in the summer of 2000. Burnette (2002) blended Peter Senge's (1990) model of learning organization with "the call for a collaborative culture espoused by such leading educational researchers as Michael Fullan, Milbrey McLaughlin, Karen Seashore Louis, Fred Newmann, and Gary Wehlage" (p.51). Kruse, Louis, and Byrk (1994) promoted the cultivation of professional communities as a way of creating a sense of collegial support. According to Kruse, Louis, and Byrk (1994), strong professional communities are evident when the following criteria exist: reflective dialogue, de-privatization of practice, collective focus on student learning, collaboration, and shared norms

and values. Burnette (2002) effectively created a professional learning community in her school by encouraging open dialogue and providing a purpose and guiding vision. While making a school wide commitment to change, Burnette also supported open communication, built on existing successes, and maintained a continual focus on results. Burnette discovered that creating a collaborative environment where teachers take risks was the key to creating a professional learning community.

In another empirical research study, Scott LaFee (2003) described the experiences of school district superintendents from various parts of the United States and their personal accounts of creating professional learning communities in their school districts. In the first instance, Les Omonati, superintendent of West Des Moines School District in Iowa, fostered professional community in his school district from the inception of his tenure there. Omonati defined a learning community as “a collection of people who genuinely care about one another, who are committed to strengthening relationships and families through learning and the practice of certain guiding principals” (LaFee, 2003, p. 7). Learning communities struggle with and answer questions such as: What are our core values and beliefs? What are we trying to create? How do we honor our children? What matters most of all? (Lafee, 2003) Professional learning communities are places of reflection and action. According to Omonati:

Members of a learning community take positive action because they are truly committed to the mission, purpose, and growth of the system. Shared visioning is a process that honors the hopes, dreams, and

aspirations of all members. It encourages members to openly share their thoughts, beliefs, desires, and feelings. (Lafee, 2003, p. 7)

Although Omonati's view of community flows with eloquent rhetoric, he admits that developing a professional learning community is much more than simply being nice to each other; rather, it involves honest dialogue where disagreement and diversity are respected.

In a similar effort to build professional community in the Grantsburg School District in Wisconsin, Joni Burgin attempted to restructure working relationships in the school district. Just as Omonati previously, Burgin describes learning communities in the following quote:

The way I see it, a learning community is teachers, professional staff being learners themselves. It's about how we keep up to date with standards, research, how we don't become stagnant, entrenched. We learn and grow. We problem solve. We work together. (Lafee, 2003, p. 11)

Burgin wished to build a professional learning community by focusing on the current strengths of the district leaders and employees. She had everyone in the organization complete the Strengths Finder program which is a 180 question test measuring how people work with others, influence others, work harder, and work smarter. The Strengths Finder instrument helps employees to identify and develop the strengths they have to offer. Burgin found the instrument to be effective in creating a positive culture for change and in formulating a constructive dialogue among employees.

School Leadership

Multiple quantitative studies link student achievement to principal leadership (e.g. Andrews and Soder, 1987; Bossert et al., 1982; Greenfield, 1995; Hallinger, 1992). One example of research on how school outcomes are related to principal leadership is Heck and Marcoulides' (1995) study, "Principal Leadership Behaviors and School Achievement." This quantitative study correlated principals' leadership behaviors and student achievement in 32 elementary and secondary schools. According to the findings, the leadership characteristics that increased student achievement were the visible presence of principals in the school, his or her ability to secure resources, instructional and organizational skill, and the principal's role as communicator (Heck & Marcoulides, 1995). These characteristics confirm the need to foster interpersonal relationships (Fullan & Miles, 1992) and the need for collaboration (Fullan, 1991) in effectively leading the change process. However, there are fewer qualitative studies that investigate how principals make sense of the school context and create a social construct for his or her constituents (Heck, 1998). As evidenced from the literature, the interaction between principal leadership and school culture has received researcher attention on varying levels.

Based on prior research, Kenneth Leithwood (1994) articulated the transformational model of school leadership. Leithwood proposed that school administrators need to be attuned to individual needs of staff members and attend to these needs. Effective school principals must also view old problems in

new ways. Transformational leaders do not shy away from problems, but rather see them as their friends. Likewise, transformational leaders must communicate high expectations for constituents and model effective behavioral practices for teachers. Leithwood summarizes these practices as the four I's of leadership: individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. (Marzano, Walters & McNulty, 2005)

Transformational Leadership: Principals, Leadership Teams, and School Culture (2002), by Stephen E. Lucas and Jerry W. Valentine, evolved from Project ASSIST (Achieving Success through School Improvement Site Teams) which was funded by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the University of Missouri-Columbia. Lucas and Valentine's research participants included twelve middle schools that completed Project ASSIST. The schools were located across Missouri and represented urban, suburban, and rural settings as well as a variety of socio-economic configurations. The population of the study from the twelve schools included 475 faculty members and 47 school leadership team members. The researchers incorporated a mixed method research design of quantitative and qualitative research. For the quantitative portion, Lucas and Valentine used three questionnaires that were conducted at the twelve sites. The first questionnaire is a Principal Leadership Questionnaire which was adapted from Jantzi and Leithwood (1996). The second questionnaire is the Team Leadership Questionnaire that was also adapted from Jantzi and Leithwood (1996). Lucas

and Valentine also used the School Culture Survey adapted from Grunert (1998). The subjects of the surveys and interviews were principals and teachers involved in the school leadership teams at the twelve sites. The first two questionnaires measured perceptions of six factors: (1) identifying and articulating a vision, (2) providing an appropriate model, (3) fostering the acceptance of group goals, (4) providing individualized support, (5) providing intellectual stimulation, and (6) holding high performance expectations. The school culture questionnaire asked respondents about (1) collaborative leadership, (2) teacher collaboration, (3) unity of purpose, (4) professional development, (5) collegial support, and (6) learning partnerships. The quantitative survey data was used to analyze relationships between the principal, leadership team, and school culture. Qualitative interview data was also incorporated to enrich the findings of the quantitative research.

Lucas and Valentine's research was framed around the state funded Project ASSIST. The findings were presented as descriptive results with correlation and regression analysis followed by a summary of quantitative data and qualitative data for each of the six sections of the culture survey. The researchers provided detailed description and analysis of the survey results and interview data. They used qualitative data to construct a model depicting the relationships between the six leadership traits and the six school culture areas to determine whether the relationship was influenced by the principal, the teacher leadership, or neither. Lucas and Valentine proposed that teacher leadership

and school leadership teams, including the administration, interact within school leadership scenarios to strengthen the school culture.

In the dissertation Leadership in the Elementary School: The Principal's Role in Building Community (1997), Moser analyzed how four elementary principals in a school district work within their school's culture and build community among the staff, parents, and students. In his methodological approach, Moser discussed his role in the research, interviews and case studies of the three other participants, and describes how his dissertation evolves to be a personal narrative. Moser's research focused on the lived experiences and practical actions of principals in their schools (Moser, 1997). Within a research design to understand and expand his practice as a school leader, Moser saw himself as the beneficiary of his research because his research correlated to his aspirations as leader. While utilizing detailed descriptions to weave emerging themes, Moser's research spoke to elementary administrators that attempted to transform their schools and build relationships that foster growth, acceptance, and learning. Moser proposed that school culture was a vital component of building a community of learners.

In a meta-analysis, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) "examined the 69 studies...looking for specific behaviors related to principal leadership" (p. 41). The meta-analysis revealed 21 responsibilities of school principals: (1) Affirmation: the leader recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments—and acknowledges failures. (2) Change agent: the leader's disposition to challenge

the status quo. (3) Contingent rewards: the school leader recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments. (4) Communication: the school leader establishes strong lines of communication with and between students and teachers. (5) Culture: the school leader fosters a school culture that indirectly affects student achievement. (6) Discipline: the duty of the principal to protect the staff from undue distractions. (7) Flexibility: the extent to which the leaders adapt their leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and are comfortable with dissent. (8) Focus: the extent to which the leader establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention. (9) Ideals/Beliefs: subtle yet powerful forces used by principals to effect change. (10) Input: the extent to which the school leader involves teachers in the design and implementation of decisions and policies. (11) Intellectual Stimulation: the extent to which the school leader ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices regarding effective schooling. (12) Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: the principal is directly involved in these areas at the classroom level. (13) Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: the extent to which the leader is aware of the best practices in these areas. (14) Monitoring/Evaluating: the extent to which the leader monitors the effectiveness of school practices in terms of their impact on student achievement. (15) Optimizer: the extent to which the principal sets the emotional tone of the school. (16) Order: the extent to which the principal contributes to maintaining order in the school. (17) Outreach: the extent to

which the leader is an advocate and a spokesman for the school to all stakeholders. (18) Relationships: the extent to which the school leader demonstrates an awareness of the personal lives of teachers and staff. (19) Resources: the extent to which the leader provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their duties. (20) Situational Awareness: the leaders' awareness of details and undercurrents of the school and his or her ability to use this information to address current or potential problems. (21) Visibility: the extent to which the school leader has contact and interacts with teachers, students, and parents. (Marzano, Waters, and McNulty, 2005)

Summary

As evidenced in this review of literature, there is extensive research about the school principal and adequate research on school culture and community. However, there is less qualitative research about how principals attempt to understand the school culture and go about working within the culture to implement their vision for the school. What is lacking in the research are first hand accounts of administrators in school settings as they go about reading the culture and implementing change within the existing culture. While focusing on the change process and principal leadership, this study attempts to fill the void in the literature by providing case studies of elementary principals that understand the culture of their schools, work within the culture, and attempt to create a sense

of community with staff and students.

After an extensive review of the existent literature of change, culture, learning communities, and school leadership, it is apparent that there are gaps in what we understand about school leadership and the change process. It is unclear whether culture is valued by all participants in schools. Likewise, learning communities are but one byproduct of evolving practices in schools. Primarily, the research study of two elementary schools outlines what leadership thoughts and practices best correlate with leading the change process in public schools. I also want to discover specific things that principals do to assess the culture of their schools and lead the change process.

Based on this review of the literature and my desire to explore culture and change within the context of school leadership, this study will address several pertinent research questions. Several central research questions address the core concepts of this study. The central research questions are: (1) What was the culture of the school like when the principal entered the setting? (2) How do principals assess the culture of their schools? (3) How do principals plan and implement change in their schools? (4) What leadership thoughts and practices aid in leading change conducive to improving teaching and learning? (5) And what forms of community currently exist and are evolving in schools?

These central questions will be addressed in detail in Chapter Five, Analysis of Findings, and Chapter Six, Conclusions and Recommendations. The research study links findings in the research with leadership practices of the leaders in the two schools studied.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

While a regression coefficient can express the statistical relationship between demographic factors and student achievement, only a narrative analysis will explain why some students and teachers defy the odds and perform at an exceptionally high level despite the prevalence of poverty, special education, second languages, or other factors that in statistical terms are associated with low student achievement. (Reeves, 2006, p. 23)

Overview

As noted in the header quote for this chapter, even Reeves, a self-proclaimed quantitative methodologist, proclaims the merits of qualitative research in the educational setting. There are characteristics and qualities within personal connections and reality of the context that cannot be captured in statistical analysis. The goal of this study was to capture experiences of principals and schools as they navigated school culture and addressed the need to facilitate change.

This study of two principals and their quest to lead change was a qualitative study which holds true to Stake's statement that "research questions typically orient to case or phenomena, seeking patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships" (Stake, 1995, p. 41). The research data revealed stories of two principals who championed change in their schools and attempted to create a positive culture for teaching and learning as well as a sense of

community. A constructivist approach was taken as “most contemporary qualitative researchers nourish the belief that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered” (Stake, 1995, p. 99). I constructed understanding of school leadership and the change process by interacting with and observing participants in this process in two schools. As explained below, the research methodology incorporated a limited case study of two principals and their schools with data collection including interviews with principals and teachers, observation, review of school documents, and field notes. The data collection process enabled me to triangulate conclusions concerning the cases. This form of qualitative research “involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world....study[ing] things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). I learned about each school by interacting with the subjects during the interviews and spending time in the schools observing. I attended faculty meetings, school level meetings with the principals, observed in classrooms, and observed the general operations of the schools.

While using a qualitative approach, I also utilized survey data from the 2005 National Association of Educators (NEA) climate survey. The data collected included district-wide aggregate scores as well as scores for the two sites in the study. This data serves as additional criteria for corroborating the qualitative data.

A consistent theme running through educational literature on change, leadership, and the role of the principal is the centrality of leadership in initiating and sustaining change (Hall & Hord, 1987). School leadership and the change process is a contemporary issue as evidenced by its prominence in educational literature. Fullan and Miles (1992) submit that there are multiple examples of single schools, leaders, and teachers that demonstrate successful school reform; however, there is little evidence whether or not these efforts are sustained. Michael Fullan writes extensively on the change process and principal leadership. Inherently, change is part of our cultural fabric. According to Fullan (1993), "It is no exaggeration to say that dealing with change is endemic to post-modern society" (p. 3). The premise of this study is that the leadership behaviors of the principal influence school culture and that school constituents are affected by these changes in the school environment. The primary purpose of this research is to determine the relationship between school leader practices and how the change process occurs.

Site Selection

According to Foster (1986), "Understanding the school can be seen as the equivalent of understanding a work of literature: it is multi-faceted, complex, and tells a story" (p. 29). Through this process, I attempted to capture the stories of two principals and how they read the culture and lead change in their schools. As the goal of the research is to understand principal leadership practices and

the change process, I felt that the appropriate schools must be chosen in order to reveal information concerning the topic of research. Stake (1995) refers to this form of inquiry as an instrumental case study. The instrumental case study is not only interested in particular phenomenon, but also to how the investigation of the topic can translate to other settings. This study provides information about principal leadership practices that can translate to other settings. I chose purposive selection for the cases in order to maximize learning. Stake (1995) proposes that although “balance and variety are important; opportunity to learn is of primary importance” (p. 6).

The selection process for the participant schools occurred with the assistance of the school district senior administration. I reviewed potential subjects who are principals in the 41 elementary schools in the district and sought the recommendation of the assistant superintendents for the elementary division. Four school principals were suggested and to further narrow the selection, I considered the history of the schools, the tenure of the principals, anticipated changes on the horizon for the schools, and survey data related to teachers' perspectives on climate at each site. Along with the assistance of the assistant superintendent for the elementary division, I selected two administrators and their schools to investigate during this project. One was new to the principalship and had less than two years experience as a principal. The other was a veteran of eight years in the principalship and was currently in his fifth year as principal at his current school. The data collection occurred from

May 2005 until January 2006. Once the principals were selected, I personally invited them and their schools to participate in the research project. Initial phone calls to each principal were made and I met with each principal to explain my research interests, the data collection methods related to the project, and the benefits that the research would provide to each participating school. Following is a chart of school and principal characteristics of the two sites selected for the study. For the purposes of the study, I chose pseudonyms for the participants and the names of the school to protect confidentiality. Both schools are located in a large school district in the piedmont of North Carolina. The school system contains rural, urban, and suburban areas with approximately forty elementary schools.

Table 1
Demographic Information

	Greenway Elementary	Franklin Pierce Elementary
SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS		
Number of Students	819	540
Caucasian	15%	5%
African American	70%	52%
Hispanic	15%	43%
Percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch	65%	98%
Number of Teachers	55	44
PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS		
Name	Ronald Allen	Sally Beaty
Gender	Male	Female
Race	African American	Caucasian
Years of Teaching	10	17
Years as Assistant Principal	3	3
Years as Principal	9	2
Years at Current School	5	2
Total Experience	22	22

Methodology for Research

This study utilized a case study inquiry approach as to how two elementary school principals read the culture of their schools and worked within the culture to lead change. During this process, in addition to talking to the principals, I interviewed a variety of teachers in the schools and learned their perceptions of the schools' culture and the principals' ability to bring about change. I incorporated the National Education Association (NEA) survey data from the 2005 survey as an additional means to assess school climate and the

staffs' perceptions of their school and principal. The study findings emerged as I reviewed data from school artifacts, observations, interviews, and the survey instrument.

Before conducting my principal interviews, I conducted a pilot interview with a principal at a local elementary school in the same district. The practice interview allowed me to try out the interview format and revise interview questions. Further, this allowed me to ask research-question-based questions, make alterations prior to my official interviews, and revise my research questions.

The initial meeting with each principal was crucial as it set the tone for our relationship and the course of my access to each site. The data collection process included three semi-structured interviews with each principal as well as individual teacher interviews with select school staff at each school. All principal interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. The teacher interviews were collected by the interviewer by taking notes and subsequently writing up the findings after the interview. With the understanding that anonymity would be respected and the tapes would be destroyed upon completion of the research, the principals were asked to identify and elaborate on critical incidents related to reading the culture of the school and the change process. Dialogue concerning creating community in the school also emerged from the interviews. I conducted several informal staff interviews with teachers and school staff. The participants were asked about the culture of the school, the sense of community in the school, and what elements contribute to school culture. I observed each

principal as he or she interacted within formal and informal settings in the school. The principal observations were quite different at each site. Ronald Allen, the principal of Greenway Elementary, wanted me to be a shadow of his direct interactions with individual teachers, staff, students and parents. In contrast, Sally Beaty, the principal of Franklin Pierce Elementary, invited me to attend meetings with her and have the latitude to go into the building and observe the workings of the school. Additionally, I reviewed school documents that provided insight into the school including internal communication and public documents such as school improvement plans, NEA survey data, mission statements, and the school website. And finally, I maintained a journal documenting personal connections, field notes, and discoveries during the investigation.

Throughout the data collection process, I continually organized and coded the data while maintaining a journal of my personal reflections. Data coding created a process to organize the material and begin analyzing it. According to Chi (1997):

Codes must be developed to correspond to a formalism which will be used to represent the knowledge....what codes and formalism are chosen depend entirely on a researcher's theoretical orientation , the hypothesis or questions being asked, the task, and the content domain. (p. 289)

I found it helpful to organize responses to my interview questions, analyze them, and then code my thoughts and findings around what was collected. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), "As qualitative researchers we work to some extent by insight and intuition. We have moments of illumination. Things 'come

together.’ The problem is that we could be wrong” (p. 253). Therefore, it was essential to code and track data over multiple sources and an extended period. As I coded the data, I also began to make connections with existing research from the literature review.

In order to gain a trusting relationship with each principal, I maintained phone and email contact with each during the data collection phase. Between the initial meeting with each principal and subsequent interviews, I called and /or emailed each principal with questions and comments, soliciting feedback as the data collection moved forward. As the data collection progressed, each principal seemed more and more comfortable with sharing information and experiences. Likewise, the intermittent contact tended toward email exchanges. As the research continued, I cultivated personal and professional relationships with Mr. Allen and Mrs. Beaty. I experienced an insider’s perspective to the issues they faced and methods they used to resolve problems and lead change. Gaining access to the teacher and staff population at each school was also an important task in the research. From August 2005 to February 2006, I attended at least two staff meetings at each school. At the initial staff meeting at each site, I was introduced to the staff by the principal and given an opportunity to discuss the research project. I conducted several extended visits to each campus to observe and collect data. I talked to teachers individually and observed the daily activity of the schools. After gaining a rapport with each teaching staff, I talked to individual teachers to gain insight into their perception of issues related to my

research. The relationships with the teachers and staff members were harder to foster because of less direct contact with them. However, the teachers interviewed were forthcoming and open during discussions and interviews.

Table 2
Data Collection Methods and Frequency

	Greenway Elementary	Franklin Pierce Elementary
Principal Interviews (Formal)	August 3, 2005 September 20, 2005 October 25, 2005	May 5, 2005 August 5, 2005 October 26, 2005
Staff Interviews (Informal)	3 May 2005 to Feb. 2006	5 May 2005 to Feb. 2006
Site Observations	3 Aug. 2005 to Feb. 2006	4 Aug. 2005 to Feb. 2006
Staff Meetings Attended	3	2

Data Analysis

The data analysis phase is an important step in the research process which occurred throughout the data collection process and culminated with in-depth analysis after all data were collected. I created a spreadsheet with categories related to the research interests and coded the data collected from the two cases. At this stage, the data from the interviews and observations were evaluated to identify emerging themes, relationships, and connections between cases. The data analysis phase was a time to draw connections and make sense of the study. I utilized my journal entries as an additional data source and coded all the data before assigning it to emerging themes or categories.

After each interview, I analyzed the data and coded it while seeking to identify emergent themes. The data collected during each interview also directed subsequent interview questions in later interviews. I triangulated data from participant interviews, teacher interviews, school artifacts, and observations. Thurmond (2001) proposes that “the benefits of triangulation can include increasing confidence in research data, creating innovative ways of understanding a phenomena, revealing unique findings, challenging or integrating theories, and providing clearer understanding of the problem” (p. 254). Triangulation was attained by comparing and contrasting multiple data sources within each case. These multiple sources were built into my research plan as I interviewed principals, held informal interviews with school staff, reviewed documents, observed in the school, and maintained a journal.

Another important aspect of qualitative research is to maintain trustworthiness. Member checks are one way to maintain trustworthiness. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), “The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (p. 290) In a credible research design, the researcher must establish trustworthiness. Glesne (1999) advocates prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checks as methods of creating trustworthiness. I incorporated all these strategies in order to provide trustworthiness in the study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), prolonged engagement provides the

researcher an opportunity to gain trust in the field. By gathering data within the school district where I worked, it was important to distance myself from my work role in the school district and present myself in a non-threatening manner. I continually balanced my role as an administrator in the school district and was careful to not take things such as procedures and expectations for granted. Although I developed collegial relationships with each principal, the teachers and staff at each site sometimes remained guarded in their interactions and responses. The data collected from the principal interviews were shared with each respective principal. Mr. Allen and Mrs. Beaty reviewed the data for accuracy and provided feedback. The member checks and triangulation strengthens the trustworthiness of the study and adds reliability and credibility.

Along with gaining trust and validity, it is also imperative that the investigator identify the key problems and issues while observing in the field. This process is called persistent observation. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth." (p. 304) Prolonged engagement with the principals allowed me to gain empathy and understanding of their role as principal and their professional practices related to school culture and the change process. Likewise, persistent observation in the building and with the principals granted me the opportunity to connect what the principals stated in their interviews with the actual functioning of the school. Prolonged engagement and persistent

observation are key research qualities that are essential for observers to gain insight into a given case.

The Role of the Researcher

My objective in the study was to be a principal observer of the two cases and gather pertinent data from each case. As an aspiring principal interested in school culture and change, I wanted to learn how proficient principals work within their school's culture to catalyze change and build a sense of community. My role in the research was unique as I was an assistant principal in the same district as the location of my study.

From my years of experience as an assistant principal I have grown to respect the importance of reading the school environment, interpreting human interactions, and treating people respectfully. Fostering the culture and climate of a school is an essential characteristic of leadership. The foundation of my leadership style evolves from my belief that there is a right way to treat others. The essence of educational leadership revolves around human interaction. Treating students, teachers, parents, and community members with honesty and respect is a key to success. At the same time, I understand that there are cultural norms and boundaries in schools that must be negotiated by school leaders.

As a researcher, I addressed my personal subjectivity and how it interfaces with my research. One issue that I overcame was my preconceptions of school culture and change. With an interest in this topic, I had to maintain an awareness of my opinions of how change evolves and evaluate those in the context of existent literature and my findings in the field. Peshkin (1988) notes that “one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17). My subjectivity was based on my prior experience as a school level assistant principal. Instead of being impartial or suppressing one’s subjectivity, Peshkin (1988) advocates embracing your subjectivity in order to enhance awareness and continually monitor personal feelings in the research process. Subjectivity is an asset to the data gathering and interpretation process rather than a liability. My experiences as an assistant principal and my aspiration to a principal position enhanced my interest in school culture and the change process and helped to craft the dissertation in a manner that is informative to those interested in school leadership. Peshkin (1988) asserted that a writer’s unique subjectivity allows the researcher to make a distinctive contribution to the field. I maintained a continual awareness of my subjectivity and listened as it spoke to the research and strengthened the presentation of the data.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the research methodology used in this study. The use of two case studies with interviews and observation provided a methodology that gave insight into the culture of the two schools and the leadership practices of each principal studied. Data for this study were triangulated with interview responses from the principals, teacher commentary, and the NEA survey data for each school. The findings of this study provide examples of two principals that work within the culture of their school to bring about change. While analysis and interpretation of the research are presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, conclusions and recommendations are found in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

More than anything else, leadership is about creating a new way of life. And to do that, leaders must foster change, take risks, and accept the responsibility for making change happen. (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 39)

Overview

This chapter addresses the two cases in the study and the stories that evolve at each school. At first glance, the cases seem entirely different. However, on closer examination, both principals address similar issues as he and she attempts to work within their school's cultures and lead change in their school. According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), "Incremental change fine tunes the system through a series of small steps that do not depart radically from the past. Deep change alters the system in fundamental ways, offering dramatic shift in direction and requiring new ways of thinking and acting" (p. 66). From the findings and analysis of Greenway Elementary and Franklin Pierce Elementary, the two cases exhibit change processes on varying levels. The data reveals that incremental change occurs at Greenway, while Franklin Pierce faces deep change that will alter the structure and daily functioning of the school. Along with an investigation of the change process in these schools, I am interested in a cultural analysis that shows how people make sense of their

school, understand what is valued, and how constituents experience a sense of connectedness.

Part of the data collection for the two cases involved select questions from the National Association of Education (NEA) climate survey taken by all schools in the district in 2005. Questions addressing job satisfaction, principal/staff relationships, morale, and other areas relevant to school culture and climate were extracted from the survey. Following are questions and responses taken from the survey with school district averages and data for Franklin Pierce Elementary and Greenway Elementary.

Table 3
2005 National Association of Education Survey
Results for Franklin Pierce and Greenway

	Choice	School District		Franklin Pierce		Greenway	
		Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Job classification of respondents	TEACHER	2610	67%	40	74%	47	68%
	ADMINISTRATOR	101	3%	0	0%	2	3%
	TEACHER ASSISTANT	602	15%	6	11%	14	20%
	LICENSED SUPPORT	209	5%	3	6%	6	9%
	OMITS	373	10%	5	9%	0	0%
Overall, how would you rate your job satisfaction at the present time?	Excellent	1269	33%	6	11%	39	57%
	Good	1634	42%	23	43%	21	30%
	Average	726	19%	18	33%	7	10%
	Below Avg.	229	6%	5	9%	2	3%

	Omits	37	1%	2	4%	0	0%
Which statement best describes the principal/staff relationship in the school?	Fear and control	250	6%	14	26%	0	0%
	Little communication	703	18%	8	15%	1	1%
	Trust and mutual commitment	2827	73%	29	54%	67	97%
	Omits	115	3%	3	6%	1	1%
The work of individual staff members is appreciated and commended by the principal.	Strongly agree	1769	45%	21	39%	51	74%
	Tend to agree	1550	40%	27	50%	14	20%
	Tend to disagree	393	10%	2	4%	4	6%
	Strongly disagree	148	4%	4	7%	0	0%
	Omits	35	1%	0	0%	0	0%
How would you rate the morale of the staff at your school?	High	1215	31%	2	4%	48	70%
	Average	2072	53%	39	72%	18	26%
	Low	576	15%	13	24%	3	4%
	Omits	32	1%	0	0%	0	0%
It is okay in this school to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations with the principal.	Strongly agree	1692	43%	6	11%	53	77%
	Tend to agree	1448	37%	29	54%	14	20%
	Tend to disagree	514	13%	12	22%	1	1%
	Strongly disagree	212	5%	6	11%	1	1%
	Omits	29	29%	1	2%	0	0%

The principal places the needs of the children ahead of her/his personal and political interests.	Strongly agree	2053	53%	19	35%	61	88%
	Tend to agree	1376	35%	29	54%	7	10%
	Tend to disagree	294	8%	4	7%	1	1%
	Strongly disagree	121	3%	2	4%	0	0%
	Omits	51	1%	0	0%	0	0%
It is okay in this school to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations with other educators.	Strongly agree	1932	50%	14	26%	38	55%
	Tend to agree	1502	39%	32	59%	26	38%
	Tend to disagree	332	9%	7	13%	4	6%
	Strongly disagree	100	3%	1	2%	0	0%
	Omits	29	1%	0	0%	1	1%
To what extent do you feel respected by your principal?	To a great extent	2322	60%	23	43%	57	83%
	Some	1007	26%	16	30%	10	14%
	A little	345	9%	9	17%	1	1%
	Not at all	155	4%	4	7%	1	1%
	Omits	66	2%	2	4%	0	0%
Teachers in my school have time to plan with their colleagues during the school day.	Strongly agree	633	16%	4	7%	13	19%
	Tend to agree	1635	42%	26	48%	33	48%
	Tend to disagree	1039	27%	19	35%	14	20%

	Strongly disagree	518	13%	5	9%	8	12%
	Omits	70	2%	0	0%	1	1%

As evidenced in the survey, 87% of teachers at Greenway rate their job satisfaction as good or excellent. Likewise, 97% of respondents report that the principal/staff relationship is described as one of trust and mutual commitment. Further, at Greenway, 94% claim that their work is valued and appreciated while 96% rate the morale as good or high.

In contrast, the survey data from Franklin Pierce are starkly different. Only 54% of respondents rate their job satisfaction as good or excellent. Similarly, 54% rate the principal staff relationship as one of trust and mutual commitment while 26% rate the relationship as one of fear and control. Incongruent with the other data, 89% do indicate that their work is appreciated and commended by the principal, and 76% rate the school morale as average or high.

Greenway Elementary

Greenway Elementary School opened in the fall of 2001 with a student population near 300. As a new school in a rural part of the county constructed to relieve overcrowding, school boundaries were drawn creating a conglomeration of students from area schools. Consequently, the student population is highly diverse and represented by white, black and Hispanic students. The first, and current, principal of the school is Mr. Ronald Allen, a veteran principal, with prior

experience at another elementary school in the district. Mr. Allen was charged with bringing together a new staff and student body in the new Greenway School.

In the past five years, the student population has grown steadily and surpassed the 800-student mark. The staff and students have grown together to create an environment that is uniquely Greenway. The mission statement is as follows:

The Greenway Elementary School and Community are committed to providing a respectful, inclusive environment that builds good citizenship and respect, by encouraging each child to strive for his or her academic best through critical thinking and emphasis on curriculum.

Greenway consistently receives high marks (generally over 90% positive) on the National Education Association (NEA) annual survey. Licensed and classified staff and addresses areas such as school safety, school climate, school discipline, and decision-making processes take the survey annually. The school's performance on the North Carolina Accountability program (ABC's) and the Federal No Child Left Behind regulations measuring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are listed in the chart below.

Table 4
ABC's and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Report 2005
for Greenway Elementary School

Year	Percent Proficient on North Carolina's ABC's	Percentage of Federal AYP Goals Met
2002	73.9%	N/A
2003	74.8%	81.0%
2004	76.7%	100.0%
2005	82.7%	100.0%

As indicated in the chart, Greenway has exhibited steady growth in the North Carolina Accountability program and has met 100% of the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for the past two years.

Along with teaching the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, Greenway also emphasizes Writing and Publishing. Writing skills and written expression are integrated across the curriculum. Theme units of study incorporate the community's cultural heritage and provide experiences for the school's young authors. Likewise, technology is used for research and project development. The following features enhance the academic program at Greenway:

- Focus on integrated student writing across the curriculum.
- Thinking Maps program, which provides students with organizational tools, needed for writing.
- Accelerated Reader program, which incorporates computerized assessments for reading comprehension.

- Quarterly themes related to the cultural heritage of the community. Units of study culminate with special events such as a story telling festival, live museum, time-capsule celebration, or historic fair.
- Authors and poets-in-residence encourage and support student writing.
- Partnerships with businesses and community organizations provide support for a writing center and other programs.
- School newsletter spotlights student writing.
- Research and multimedia presentations using Hyper Studio and desktop-publishing software.

Greenway Elementary School is a diverse school with high expectations for students and staff. While increasing in size from 300 to over 800 students, the school continues to attain academic gains as indicated by state and federal measures. There is a sense of family among the teachers and a sense of shared community in the school. While the student and staff population of Greenway Elementary increases, Mr. Allen continues to lead the school with a personal touch.

Franklin Pierce Elementary

On a fall morning at Franklin Pierce Elementary School, green panther paws line the sidewalk leading to the front entrance to the school. The lobby has a clean paint scheme of off-white and forest green. It is apparent from the lobby that the mascot is the panther. The lobby is clean and inviting with potted plants,

green leather couches, armchairs, and matching rugs. There is a citizen of the month bulletin board that reads, "Building a Better Franklin Pierce." There is a Volunteer Spotlight and Faculty Spotlight bulletin board, but both are blank. No recognitions. Two staff members are in the lobby checking in late arrival students as if it is a regular part of their daily schedule. The students are signed in, given a tardy ticket, and sent to school. The two staff members seem pleased that the children are simply at school.

Franklin Pierce Elementary School is an established school in the district with a student population of approximately 500. The demographics reflect a population that is 52% African-American, 43% Hispanic, and 5% white. The Hispanic population has rapidly grown to the extent that the school now contains an English as Second Language (ESL) program. After thirteen years with the former principal, Mrs. Sally Beaty was named principal of Franklin Pierce in the summer of 2004. This is Mrs. Beaty's first principal position, although she has three years of experience in a middle school as an assistant principal. Franklin Pierce was classified as a "low performing" school in 2003 and designated as a priority school, which decreased the class size to a maximum of 16 students.

Prior to June 2005, Franklin Pierce hosted three State Improvement teams in the previous five years based on poor student academic performance. These teams provided instructional assistance for teachers, staff, and administrators in an attempt to improve student academic performance. However, there was no consistency of support between assistance teams to bridge the support and

strategies implemented from year to year. These efforts yielded no long term or sustained school improvement. At the end of Mrs. Beaty's first year as principal, she had gathered enough understanding of the issues in the school to implement changes that she had planned with her teachers. The majority of the change issues at Franklin Pierce were in the initiation phase as Mrs. Beaty entered her new role as principal. Mrs. Beaty had many new ideas, a high energy level, and high expectations for success. The school applied for and was awarded a federal school reform grant and was ready to implement recommendations from it.

Shortly after the grant was awarded, the school was informed that it would have yet another Assistance Team and because of continued poor student performance could face severe sanctions from the state if students did not exhibit significant gains. The news of the School Assistance team took the wind out of a renewed and invigorated core group of teachers that held hope in the future. The school's performance on the North Carolina Accountability program (ABC's) and the Federal No Child Left Behind regulations measuring Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) are listed in the chart below.

Table 5
 ABC's and No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Report 2005
 For Franklin Pierce Elementary School

Year	Percent Proficient on North Carolina's ABC's	Percentage of Federal AYP Goals Met
1997	38.8%	N/A
1998	50.0%	N/A
1999	49.0%	N/A
2000	49.1%	N/A
2001	52.1%	N/A
2002	54.9%	N/A
2003	64.3%	84.6%
2004	64.2%	80.0%
2005	63.1%	52.6%

As indicated in the data, the percent proficient was static from 1998 to 2001 hovering around 50% and static from 2003 to 2005 averaging 64.5%. Likewise, the percentage of Federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals being met has declined annually since the inception of the Federal guidelines.

Clearly, Mrs. Beaty was hired into a failing situation with a mandate to bring about change. Through a staff retreat in the summer of 2005, Mrs. Beaty led the school in revising the school mission, vision, and philosophy statement. The staff at the beginning of the 2005-2006 school year approved the collective effort. These shared expectations are the basis for collective efforts to reform the school. Following is the school mission:

Our mission at Franklin Pierce Elementary School is to become lifelong learners through:

- Academic Excellence

- High Expectations
- Cultural Awareness
- Social, Emotional, and Physical Health
- Good Citizenship
- Self-discipline

The teachers also collaborated with Mrs. Beaty to articulate a vision statement for the school. The team of teachers felt that an acronym would be easy for parents and students to identify with and remember. The one that they adopted also had a powerful message. The vision statement for the school is TEAM, which stands for Together – Educate, Appreciate, Motivate. Along with the vision statement, a school philosophy was articulated. Following is the school philosophy:

We, the faculty and staff of Franklin Pierce Elementary School, believe the purpose of our school is to educate all students to higher levels of academic performance. The school also serves as part of the community to provide experiences to promote and nurture an understanding of one's heritage, as well as, the heritage of others. We are committed to developing the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical aspects of every child.

As evidenced in this section, Mrs. Beaty inherited a school with long lived and pervasive problems related to student performance. Further problems in the composition of the staff and structure of the school will become also complicated the student performance issues at Franklin Pierce. Principal Beaty was hired to bring new leadership to a failing situation. This case reveals how she

approached this challenge and the beginning stages of change at Franklin Pierce.

The School Culture – Greenway Elementary

On a cold January morning, students fill the hallways of Greenway Elementary School. Principal Allen and the teachers are in the halls greeting the students as the day begins. A portrait of James P. Greenway is proudly displayed in the foyer. As another day starts, even an outside observer can sense the feeling of purpose and support that envelopes each child in the school. From the mild mannered custodian to the considerate and compassionate secretary in the main office, there are multiple levels of affirmation and support for each child at Greenway.

Ronald Allen had a somewhat unique experience of opening Greenway Elementary as the first principal of a new school in a new building. Mr. Allen was given the mission to assemble a teaching staff and build a shared vision for success. He hired a faculty and staff based on these premises. In the midst of these changes, there were very few preconceptions of the school because of its new origins. However, Mr. Allen received a mandate from the superintendent:

[Dr. Modlin] made it very clear. He said, ‘Open it up and make it work.’ So with that mandate in mind, it was get my staff on board and concentrate on curriculum first –staff, curriculum – and then build what I call the ‘informal school’ – all those things that make school good. (Allen, Interview 2)

With his previous principal experience and the challenge of opening a new school, Mr. Allen embraced the opportunity. He was committed to meeting the ever-changing needs of the school. Mr. Allen commented on his first year as principal of Greenway:

The first year, we tried to maintain status quo – get them in, teach, and get the parents on board. That was my first year. We began to take all the data that was collected at all the meetings and say, ‘Okay, this is where we need to go to get a win-win with the parents, with the staff, and for students.’ (Allen, Interview 2)

Mr. Allen’s positive outlook contributed to his ability to mold a new culture at Greenway Elementary School. Mr. Allen also builds relationships with students and families in order to establish a positive school culture. He spoke of the first years at Greenway and steps that were taken to mold a culture of high expectations. Principal Allen stated:

My first year here, we had kids all over the place and they were just very unruly but the kids that started out with me in first grade are now in fifth grade. They have been here the whole time and they know what we expect. There are five rules. It’s real simple. P.R.I.D.E. Polite. Respect. Integrity. Discipline and Excellence. Those are my five rules. Every opportunity we get, we preach those five rules to these kids. We also let the kids know that when you break a rule, which rule did you break and how can we correct that rule. So they know the expectation of this school and it is not a question anymore. We still have the small stuff – talking back, you know, some other small things. Kids are kids....Every chance I get; I put that P.R.I.D.E. in something so the kids and parents know what the five letters mean. (Allen, Interview 3)

Emphasis on P.R.I.D.E: Polite, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, and Excellence, continues to be a theme of Greenway Elementary and the basis of their

behavioral standards. The teachers at Greenway say that Mr. Allen continues to inject P.R.I.D.E. into written and verbal communications throughout the school year and makes it a continued expectation—not just a catchy acronym for the opening of a school year. According to Mr. Allen, one benefit of having five years of experience in one school is that he maintains an ongoing expectations for success with staff and students. According to second grade teacher, Elizabeth Duke:

The 'Greenway Way' and P.R.I.D.E. are school philosophies and all classrooms reflect these. They are all goals that we hope the kids can achieve. Hopefully, the students see these attributes through the teachers and guidance lessons reinforce these too. (Duke, Interview)

Many of the 4th and 5th graders have been with the school and Mr. Allen for five years and are engrained with these consistent expectations. When the school opened as a new facility in the school district, it enrolled children from various area schools. All of the students were indoctrinated into a new community of learners. Five years later, Allen states, "Now we are able to take our kids from Kindergarten and raise them our way, our expectation, our discipline." (Allen, Interview 2)

Mr. Allen continues to read the culture of the school by being an active participant in the daily activities of the school. When Mr. Allen was observed in the school, he interacted with children in the classrooms and halls, helped with sick children in the office, and conferred with teachers on various issues. He has an open door policy and is willing to help anyone. According to Mr. Allen:

I'm rarely in the office during the day. I'm out walking the halls, lunch duty, car duty and visiting classrooms. I'm handling situations out there before they come here. I will get called back to the office for a parent phone call or I'll get called back to the office for a discipline problem or whatever. I've got to come back. I'm not sitting here waiting for things to come to me. I'm out there in the building and the teachers see that. They see that I'm here at 7 o'clock in the morning every day and I stay until 5:00 or 6:00 every night. They see that. Workdays I'm here. If snow needs to be shoveled, I'm out there shoveling snow. Whatever needs to be done to make the school work! If we've had a bad flu day and we've got four kids out there getting sick and they have got the nurse taking care of one, the secretary taking care of one, well, I'll put on my gloves and take care of number three. So I think they see that I'm right there with them and right there with the kids. I know almost every kid by name and every parent by name. (Allen, Interview 3)

Another example of Mr. Allen's effort to continually read the school culture is expressed as he discusses how he visits classrooms and supports the teachers. He does classroom walkthroughs on a daily basis.

I do a lot of walking, a lot of talking and a lot of listening. You can tell real quick where the morale of the school is and who is having a bad day or a rough week. I'm really good about trying to show people I appreciate what they do and try to recognize them in positive ways. I'll say, 'Okay. Look. Let's work with everybody and see if we can get together for a Friday afternoon dinner or let's go bowling or let's do something.' We've got to get it out. (Allen, Interview 1)

Mr. Allen always has time for people. During one site observation, Mr. Allen worked with a parent who had placed a fund raising order with the Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.) and had not paid the debt. Mr. Allen worked out a payment plan with the parent and helped him through that situation. According to Elizabeth Duke:

Mr. Allen is caring. He understands feelings of others and is great with people. He is dedicated and knows what needs to happen and will back teachers up. He is a master at conflict resolution. He is good with children and knows all the kids by name even though there are about 800 in our school. He works with students when they are struggling and praises them on their good days. (Duke, Interview)

There are many examples of Mr. Allen extending himself to parents, students, and teachers. Mr. Allen presented himself as a genuine person and constituents in the school sense that he identifies with them and empathizes with their situations. He senses and experiences joy, sorrow, accomplishment, and frustration with his Greenway family.

The School Culture – Franklin Pierce Elementary

Mrs. Beaty had a much different experience as she took the challenge of leading Franklin Pierce Elementary School in the fall of 2004. She inherited an established school with a history of sub-par academic achievement and declining school morale. The principal's office had been occupied by an antiquated leader and educational innovations and creativity were lacking. Prior to Beaty's arrival, student academic success had been neglected and high expectations did not exist. Mrs. Beaty discovered that many teachers had not been evaluated in five years. Further, there were three assistance teams at the school in five years and the teachers were being directed and led by various and inconsistent assistance team members rather than the principal.

Mrs. Beaty gained a sense of the needs of the school from the initial interviews for the position. She knew that Franklin Pierce had many needs, but she had no idea of the depth of the problems until she attained the position and was briefed by the district administration. Following are her initial impressions of the school based on her interviews:

I'll tell you from my interview committee first because the interview committee in [this district] is very interesting because it consisted of about nine people and three interviews, so it was an interesting process to deal with others and there were staff members on the committee. So, I got initial concerns from them in that there was lack of structure and it was everything from people being at work on time to dress code issues, so a lot of them were policy issues that they wanted. There was a lot of talk about whether I was good at dismissing personnel, which was a real interesting thing to ask people at an interview. Luckily, I had been in a school and we had to make some of those decisions and so it was obvious the quality of the personnel at the school was an issue. (Beaty, Interview 1)

After Mrs. Beaty was hired for the position, she spent much of the summer interviewing staff members individually. She felt that this was the best way to connect with the staff and gain a better understanding of their perspectives and needs. During scheduled interviews, teachers and staff came to the school and met with Mrs. Beaty. Following are some of the things that she found.

The staff as far as once I was hired, was real interesting because I spent all summer doing individual interviews with all the staff and I've got about eighty three, I think. They all showed up for their appointments and spent time just sitting there. I had no questions for them other than 'What do you want me to know?' I gave them the opportunity to tell me whatever they wanted to tell me. There were a lot of issues brought up as far as fairness and the way people are treated, policies, programming and things like that. There were a lot of the teachers' issues. Things need to be fair.

They didn't have a lot of issues about quality of curriculum or things like that. Discipline did not even come up as an issue that I recall at all. It centered on the people more themselves. They felt there might have been some racial issues.... It was more of a personal slant to it. (Beaty, Interview 1)

It was apparent to Mrs. Beaty that an unhealthy and self-serving climate among the staff existed and that a constructive culture did not exist. One of the teachers stated, "I think that any time someone comes into a situation that people's intentions are questioned. I think it has brought some apprehension." There was no continuity in the instructional program or uniform expectations for staff and students. Along with obvious problems with the instructional program, Mrs. Beaty gathered that the primary areas of need were a lack of structure, teacher dress code, and staff attendance.

As part of Mrs. Beaty's new role as the principal of the school, she invited North Carolina A & T University to do a study of Franklin Pierce's teaching staff. Investigators from North Carolina A & T University surveyed the teaching staff and conducted extensive observations. The study found that:

- (1) The faculty blamed students and parents for poor student performance. However, when asked how they would utilize parent support, they seem to not have an answer.
- (2) The faculty has low expectations for students and do not seem to know how to plan instruction based upon the needs of students that they teach.
- (3) The faculty agrees that some in their ranks need to leave the school.
- (4) The faculty does not work collaboratively for instructional planning or delivery.
- (5) The faculty indicates that they should be involved in class scheduling.

The data from North Carolina A & T provided concrete evidence for the teachers and administration that there was a need to begin a process of self-evaluation and reflection as a basis for school improvement. The A & T study is one instrument that Mrs. Beaty utilized to gain a clear picture of the issues in the school. From this data she sought to create an atmosphere of collaborative ownership of the school and school reform.

With the support of the district office, Mrs. Beaty hired a literacy facilitator with teaching and administrative experience to work at Franklin Pierce and focus on instructional issues and provide training and support for classroom teachers. The literacy facilitator, Mrs. Palmerton, indicated that, "There is a pervasiveness of problems with the curriculum and instruction in the building." Mrs. Beaty and Mrs. Palmerton were focusing her initial efforts on the Kindergarten, first grade, and second grade as an attempt to create a foundation of effective instructional practices for students that will spend four to six years in the school. This approach focused on long-term needs and the formation of basic skills in the early elementary grades. Mrs. Palmerton also indicated that, "The teachers are going through the motions of school without academic rigor." Another intervention that Mrs. Palmerton implemented was to have second grade teachers from Franklin Pierce observe teachers in a successful elementary school with similar demographics. Mrs. Palmerton said this activity yielded mixed results and that the teachers view the students at Franklin Pierce as having a unique set of circumstances. Wincek (1995) noted, "Teachers resist imposed

change. Unless they see either greater efficiencies in their work or improved learning for the children, they quickly and quietly abandon the prescribed reform.” (p.10) Wincek’s comments on resistance to change reinforce the difficulty faced by leaders who attempt to initiate and sustain meaningful change in schools.

Mrs. Beaty realized that there were many levels of need in the school community. Principal Beaty worked with an inadequately prepared teaching staff, socio-economically disadvantaged children, a large percentage of whom were from single parent families, and a weak school culture. She commented on the students and parents at Franklin Pierce:

We just have a lot of families in crisis. We have a lot of single parents and abusive homes. Some of these people are really having a hard time. I know it is true for all kids, but when you have at-risk kids and they need so much from you, it is really hard to give it if you are not together and you are not real secure with who you are and where your life is. (Beaty, Interview 1)

Mrs. Beaty believed that the teachers need stability within their personal lives in order to cope with and address the needs of the children at Franklin Pierce.

Likewise, Mrs. Beaty felt that many of the problems in the school stemmed from pervasive problems in the surrounding community. According to Mrs. Beaty:

I think there are really some social needs in this part of town. We have really high substance abuse. We have really high child abuse. There are really high factors in this neighborhood.... There need to be some social agents put into place to sustain this neighborhood and people in the community and health agencies.... It is not a criminal element. It is a mental illness issue. It is a social dysfunction issue. (Beaty, Interview 2)

Mrs. Beaty's understanding of the school culture assisted her efforts to work with teachers, students, and parents and continue her effort to lead reform in the school.

Now in her second year as principal of the school, Mrs. Beaty continues to read the culture of the school through her daily activities. She maintains a presence in the building, but says that it is difficult because of the constant demands placed on her with meetings outside of the school. Mrs. Beaty makes a concerted effort to talk with the students. She shows interest in understanding student needs and assessing their individual progress. Mrs. Beaty also reads the culture of the school by working with the teachers and helping them in their professional growth as they work together toward school improvement. Mrs. Beaty understands that a strain was placed on the teachers as a result of the assistance team's presence in the school. From the assistance team and Mrs. Beaty, there has been a major effort placed on staff training and development. Mrs. Beaty is instrumental in guiding the selection and delivery of professional development that meets the needs of her staff.

Mrs. Beaty also found that many of her decisions and direction for the school were met with baggage from the past. There was also fear within the teaching staff because of the presence of the state assistance team and the possibility of sanctions from the state if student performance did not drastically improve dramatically. Likewise, a wait and see attitude existed with some of the teachers because of poor leadership in the past. According to Mrs. Beaty:

They were also waiting things out. Because they said every year he (the old principal) would come in and say, "I'm going to make people do this" and a month later he gave up. So it took them a while to understand that it wasn't going to go away. We're still going to monitor this. They tried to wait me out and some of them still try and do that. (Beaty, Interview 1)

With many of the teachers, there was a passive culture of going about things the same way day after day and year after year, hoping that things in their world will not change. Many teachers felt that even though things were not going well, that status quo was better than the unknown aspects of change. Some of the teachers also felt that a top-down approach to fixing the problems previously existed. Mrs. Beaty discovered that many of the teachers had been enabled over the years. Mrs. Beaty stated:

The teachers are so enabled, it drives me crazy sometimes, but they expect everything to happen up here and I know a lot of it does because it wasn't happening in the classroom, so I generated a lot of things. Behavior rewards were coming from the office down. (Beaty, Interview 1)

Mrs. Beaty also understands that with the assistance team in the building this year there is a sense of scrutiny felt by the teachers. According to Mrs. Beaty:

I think most of what we have seen in them is just a little trepidation in the fact that there are so many people constantly watching them. So I've got a few people that are just ill that, 'She was in my room...' you know. Because you have to realize I have two assistant people for every two grade levels, so I mean, that's one person per grade level and they are monitoring four classes. So, you know, when they are just in and out of four classes all day long, that is a whole lot of time they are in your room and they are seeing a lot that is going on and that kind of keeps people on their toes a little bit and so I think they feel they are a little spied upon. (Beaty, Interview 3)

The ultimate purpose of the assistance team was to provide support for improving instructional practices and strategies. However, if improvement did not occur with some individual teachers, the assistance team could assist the principal with implementing action plans and remove teachers from the school or district.

Clearly, there are multiple evidences related to the school culture at Franklin Pierce and the obstacles faced by Mrs. Beaty. Teachers did note that their new principal was making strides toward changing a negative culture. However, some of the changes seemed forced and impersonal. According to Mrs. Hammerstein:

[Mrs. Beaty] has a high energy level. She is a take-charge person. I think she gets impatient with people that don't have her high energy level. Some teachers are concerned that the expectations are so high that they do not have time for family. That causes a little stress on teachers.

However, the same teachers respected Mrs. Beaty for the task that she undertook, feel some connection to the school and a sense that they want better things for the school as well.

The Change Process – Greenway Elementary

According to Miles and Louis (1994), "Helping to formulate a vision appears as a critical function of principals working to facilitate significant change at their schools." (p. 31) Visionary leadership is essential in leading the change process in schools and part of that process is cultivating a sense of trust with

teachers and staff. From his first years at Greenway, Principal Allen's goal was to construct a shared vision.

My job was to shape and mold that vision, so every month I met with my PTA (Parent Teacher Association) executive board and I also included any parent that wanted to come in and talk to the principal in the evenings. I said, 'This is principal time. I need to know what is going well, what is not going well and what we can do.' My first year, we only had 350 kids, so there were some things that were not in place that we wanted to be in place just because of the lack of numbers and the staff, we couldn't make it all work. I had constant dialogue with my parents and constant dialogue with my teachers. (Allen, Interview 1)

Mr. Allen's vision for Greenway Elementary consisted of several recurring themes. First, when Mr. Allen wanted his staff to move from a narrow classroom focus to a school-wide focus, he talked about "Mr. Allen and the Big Picture." This phraseology helped focus teachers on issues larger than their classroom to understand needs of the school community. Mr. Allen was a master at using language to motivate and unify his constituents. He used phrases like "Where do we want to go with this issue?" And "Here comes the big picture...." These verbal cues allowed him to introduce issues and procedures that opened discussion and feedback with his staff. The verbal cues also focused the teachers on relevant issues to the discussion at hand. Language was a powerful tool in Mr. Allen's leadership practices at Greenway School.

Likewise, Mr. Allen had an unofficial theme for the school. The theme was "Unity in the Community." Mr. Allen believed that the local school played an important role in the larger community and that these relationships needed to be

developed with the students. One of the ways Mr. Allen created an environment of continual school improvement at Greenway was to form alliances with community agencies, bring local presenters into the school, and celebrate and value the uniqueness of the school's community. Ms. Duke, a second grade teacher at Greenway adds:

Mr. Allen orchestrates a lot of different things with the school and community. After-school basketball programs and the YMCA program are two examples. Ronald reaches out and knows the community. He also knows the dual role of church and school. He organized a water drive for hurricane victims and participated in it each week. He encourages students and teachers to get involved in the greater community. (Duke Interview)

Another phrase that Ronald Allen ingrained in the school was "The Greenway Way – our way!" These words gave ownership of the school and a connectedness to the daily participants –the students, parents, and teachers.

Principal Allen's vision for the school was captured in the following words:

We are on our 5th year. One goal I had, which you never know if you are going to make it or not, I want to continue to have my test scores increase and we did get the 80% distinction. Actually we got four recommendations. We had one of the highest growths in the school system, so we got the recognition of school of distinction. We met AYP and high growth; the school board recognized so all those four.... The second piece that we're still working on is to really become more of a community school – not necessarily having the building open and renting the building out but having parents meetings at night and having more parents – maybe computer classes or something here. (Allen, Interview 2)

As the themes like ‘the Big Picture,’ ‘Unity in the Community,’ and ‘the Greenway Way’ were cultivated in the school, Mr. Allen was better equipped to lead change. By cultivating these thematic approaches, Mr. Allen was able to engage constituents in a shared vision for the school. According to Principal Allen:

Anytime that I really see a change in something or would like to make a change in something, I can pull my team together and I listen to the big picture and think, ‘How does this impact where we want to be?’ If it works with that, then we go with it. If not, we just say, ‘Well. We’ll just put it on the back burner.’ There is really nothing concrete that I do per se—just a matter of taking it and evaluating it where it is. (Allen, Interview 1)

Although Mr. Allen felt that there was nothing concrete to his approach to leading change, it was evident that he built a culture of trust and exploration where members of the community could take risks and investigate doing things in non-traditional ways. The culture set forth by the principal also maintained a student focus. According to Sharon Hennis, a fifth grade teacher:

Student welfare comes first. When we make a decision it is what is best for the children. With discipline, Ronald Allen always looks at the circumstances with the child. Everything is not black and white. Mr. Allen tries to understand what is going on at home and he believes that you cannot always go by the book. (Hennis, Interview)

Mr. Allen used the Quality Schools training model as a basis for his administrative practices and initiating change in the school. He believed that change is a cyclical process that required evaluation and monitoring after initiation. According to Mr. Allen:

This is a basic quality personnel procedure. Plan. Study. Do. Act. PSDA. Plan it. Study it. Do it. Act on it. It actually goes back to your planning, so it is a continual cycle. P.S.D.A. Sometimes you start a plan and it is not working, so you go back and study why it is not working and you go back and change it, do it, act on it, and then just go back constantly – a revolving door. (Allen, Interview 2)

A good example of evolving change was how the school addressed the problem of limited space and discipline problems during 5th grade recess. Mr. Allen used a collaborative approach to addressing this issue. The teachers and administration were able to create a five-station rotation for classes where teachers could monitor students. The teachers collectively problem solved and collaborated with Mr. Allen to create a solution. The new plan eliminated free play, reduced discipline problems and created beneficial physical activity for the students.

The changes needed at Greenway were often incremental or slight adjustments to a well functioning school. Some of the changes were procedural and not cultural. Throughout all the change processes that Mr. Allen led, he acculturated each one with his philosophy.

I try to take everything that I believe and apply it and make it real. I think the kids, parents and the teachers see that. Are there are few folks that disagree with me? As you can tell, yes. You can't win them all. I try my best. The bottom line is if you're so unhappy with the way things are here, you have a way out. You can transfer. (Allen, Interview 3)

Although this statement ended with a reference to transferring to another school, that did not capture the essence of his leadership philosophy. Mr. Allen

demonstrated a high level of participation, encouragement, group thinking, and collaboration. Allen's participatory approach to leadership contributed to hands on effort to lead change. Mr. Allen stated:

Try to be as hands on as you can with change. If it is changing the bus line or bus, cafeteria lines, just try to be there those days that you are implementing the change and you're going through it with the tremendous variances. (Allen, Interview 2)

Once again, Mr. Allen participated with his staff as change occurs, both leading them and walking with them. Greenway had effective procedures in place concerning daily schedules, discipline procedures, and opening and dismissal procedures; however, Principal Allen was attuning to the school's need to change for the sake of continual improvement. Mr. Allen and the Greenway staff realized that a certain amount of change is required to maintain a productive and effective school. Mr. Allen understood that Greenway needed fine-tuning in the decision making process. During the time of the data collection, the principal and teachers were re-thinking the role of the School Improvement Team (S.I.T.) and how it functioned within and governed the school. Mr. Allen and the teachers interviewed indicated that there was a change toward curricular and school wide issues as well as a move away from petty and personal issues that could be resolved separate from a public forum such as S.I.T.

In general, the change process at Greenway Elementary was initiated and driven by the principal. Ronald Allen worked diligently to motivate and lead his staff in the direction that he envisioned for the school. Allen was the principal of

the year for the school district in 2001. In an article for a local paper, Mr. Allen says, "There is no job that I cannot do in this building, and that helps me to be more aware of what is going on." In addition to being a school administrator, being hands-on is part of his natural leadership style. Likewise, Mr. Allen is a bi-vocational pastor of a local church. His dual role as a minister and a principal seem to go hand in hand. He is people-oriented, compassionate, and ministers to others through his leadership position. You can tell he has a genuine concern for everyone he encounters. These qualities serve him well in both of his positions, but at the same time, he balances both roles and keeps them separate. Mr. Allen's participatory style has been conducive to his collaborative change efforts at Greenway. He stated:

A lot of it is communication. First of all, I try very hard to make sure everyone is informed, so there is an e-mail distribution that I create. There is a daily sign-in board with reminders. There is a monthly calendar posted. So between the daily reminders, the weekly e-mails and the monthly calendar of activities, everyone should know what is going on in the building. What I also try to do is I just stick to my word. I often tell them, 'this is my decision. You may not like the decision but this is the decision and this is why I've made my decision.' That just usually works very well. They know they can approach me. As long as my door is open, they can come in on anything and everything and they often do. (Allen, Interview 3)

Not only does Mr. Allen have an open door policy, he has also led change by walking through change with the teachers and staff members. Mr. Allen stated:

Basically it is trying to hold their hands through it - whether it is one person, five or the whole school. Just try to be accommodating and as nurturing as you can to help them through the change and at some point

once you have done all that you can do, you have to say, 'This is the way it is.' (Allen, Interview 2)

Mr. Allen gave the teachers opportunity to provide input into decision-making and possible changes. His staff also understood that some changes were collaborative efforts and some were mandated changes. Mr. Allen took mandates from the school board and state department and attempted to implement them at the school in a manner that best impacted the teachers and students. He attempted to make state and federal mandates correlate with school level goals in order to have desired outcomes for all parties involved.

The Change Process – Franklin Pierce Elementary

Generally, principals are hired to either maintain the status quo or to shake up the organization by being an agent of change. With the extensive needs at Franklin Pierce, Mrs. Beaty instinctively knew that she was hired to be a change agent at the school. One of Mrs. Beaty's initial challenges was to identify the primary areas that required change in order to start turning the school around. Fullan and Miles (1992) identify first order and second order changes. They classify changes in curriculum and instruction and school organization as well as changes in community involvement, staff development, assessment, reporting, and evaluation as first order changes. Second order changes include things such as changing the school culture, fostering interpersonal relationships, and changing values and expectations.

Second order changes are often viewed as more difficult to achieve because the culture is ingrained in the deep fabric of the school's mind set. Mrs. Beaty faced a combination of first order and second order changes in her new position. At Franklin Pierce, the first level of change needed was at the individual classroom level and individual teacher level. Mrs. Beaty attempted to change how teachers taught and how students learned. One of her primary goals was attempting to get teachers to teach the North Carolina standard course of study. While the assistance team seemed to be focusing on increasing grade level planning, the reform grant representative focused on instructional strategies - specifically reading and questioning techniques. Principal Beaty said that many of her teachers could not plan appropriate lessons and the purpose of the collaborative planning time was to improve overall lesson planning. Through multiple strategies, Mrs. Beaty tried to change the instructional culture of the school. From working with teachers, students, and parents, Mrs. Beaty realized she had the most impact with and influence on the classroom teachers. She understood that she had limited influence on the parents and that she could not change the background or personal experiences of the students. However, she could impact the way the teachers understood the students and related to them. The school needed a systematic cultural change related to how teachers viewed teaching, children, and learning.

Mrs. Beaty realized the importance of a clear vision to her success as a leader and to the success of Franklin Pierce Elementary. She stated:

I'm not sure you can do this job unless you have a driving vision and can see the better side or it will drive you crazy.... If you don't know where you need to go with this kind of job, you're just going to wallow around.
(Beaty, Interview 3)

Principal Beaty also understood that she must hold a specific vision for school improvement to occur and have the ability to obtain buy-in from her staff.

According to Mrs. Beaty:

One of the goals is just to start making changes we need to with our grant to incorporate the Effective Schools model and start to make some professional changes and changes in the way we are teaching kids. Basically it is just to make that connections piece begin. We need to make growth. No doubt about that. We are still at 63.1%, so, you know, my goal is that we at least hit 70% and that is not monumental task, but certainly it would be a milestone for us as far as numbers go. I have a very clear vision and I did a lot of reflection this summer in what has got to happen for this school to succeed and that kind of drives my vision and we redid our vision and our mission this year so we spent a lot of time doing that and I personally did a lot of that about where I need this school to focus and it is pretty aligned.... I am very policy driven in that end of it but, in order to work here, you have to have a very strong commitment and belief system in knowing that things can be different. (Beaty, Interview 2)

She wanted to fully implement the Effective Schools model and to provide training on proper instructional strategies such as working with students in poverty, teaching for understanding, and differentiated instruction. According to O'Hair, McLaughlin, and Reitzug (2000):

The impact of poverty on children and young adults is significant. As might be expected, living in poverty significantly affects the childhood experience and impacts the ability of children to learn. The greatest single predictor of academic achievement is not race, ethnicity or gender, but social class. Young adults growing up in poverty have lower academic achievement and lower job and career expectations and opportunities. Children from economically disadvantaged families experience greater rates of generally poor physical health, serious illness, developmental disability, teenage pregnancy, and dropping out of school. (p. 200)

Learning to work with and teach students in poverty was crucial at Franklin Pierce as 98% of the students were on free or reduced lunch. Mrs. Beaty's goal was for quality teaching to occur in every classroom in the building. From observing classroom lessons, it was evident that the school had a variety of skill levels in the classrooms. The principal and the assistant principal completed walk through classroom visits in order to provide effective feedback. The state assistance team also provided written and verbal feedback related to classroom instructional practices.

Faced with the need for massive institutional change, Mrs. Beaty made some progress during her first two years as principal. She stated:

A lot of changes have happened in school structure – getting used to a little bit more power and letting the school improvement team make some decisions. We now have grade-level planning time and things like that they never had before, so they have got a little bit more power and say as a group. There have been a lot of collaborative things that have happened. I don't have even one teacher that stands out as a real power piece here and that is real unusual at a school. Usually you have a little core of them and I don't have any. (Beaty, Interview 1)

Mrs. Beaty led change by building up the self-esteem and personal outlook of her teachers. She worked tirelessly to place a positive spin on her role as change agent in the school. According to Mrs. Beaty:

In looking at that change process and in making people believe they can, that just reminds me of one of the things that we try to do is the whole belief theory – you have to believe you can change.... Like I said, when you feel downtrodden and you're not sure, if you don't believe you can do it, you don't believe the kids can do it. (Beaty, Interview 1)

Mrs. Beaty believed that she had to build up and sustain teacher morale in order to effectively equip the teachers to meet the needs of the students. Although Principal Beaty nurtured her staff and built self-esteem, there was also an expectation and demand for change at Franklin Pierce. The staff and Principal Beaty were in an uncomfortable position because of the school's history of sub-par academic performance. These strains created an environment of distrust in which many people felt all their actions and deeds were scrutinized by the administration and the school assistance team. Mrs. Beaty felt that she was an orderly and structured person, and she placed high value on policies and procedures. She seemed to have the right personality and right leadership skills for the needs of Franklin Pierce. Mrs. Beaty stated:

I'm sure there are a lot of people that think there is a lot of control and there is. That is part of my personality. I'm very controlling compared to the person that was here and I manage much more hands on than he did. (Beaty, Interview 3)

Principal Beaty was in a position where staff support was expected and demanded. Things had to improve or the school could be taken over by the state of North Carolina. Mrs. Hammerstein, a second grade teacher, expressed her displeasure about the constant demands being placed on the teachers. Mrs. Hammerstein states, "There is little reflective time and that bothers me. So many things are happening that it is a double-edged sword. There are so many needs and so many entities trying to help. It is overwhelming." (Hammerstein Interview)

Understanding the pressures placed on the teachers, Mrs. Beaty nurtured the staff as well. It was a complicated and delicate balance between pressure and support. Mrs. Beaty mentioned in interviews that she spent nights and weekends at the school working on things she could not accomplish during the workday. She said that staff often came by after hours to talk with her about personal matters, both good and bad. She shared one story where an elated teacher shared with her that she was pregnant. Mrs. Beaty asked if her husband was excited, and the teacher stated that she had not shared the news with him yet. In another situation, a teacher sought her advice about an abusive spouse and what she should do for her personal safety. Principal Beaty spoke many times over the course of our conversations about the neediness of her staff and how they clung to her for personal guidance. These personal demands further stretched her from the immediate goals of school improvement. At the same time, the teachers needed emotional stability and support in order to work with

the at-risk students in their classrooms. Once again, Mrs. Beaty walked the fine balance between nurturing her staff and focusing them on school reform.

Ultimately, Principal Beaty viewed the change process positively. She understood her role as a change agent along with the expectation to minister to the needs of her staff and students. She stated:

In looking at the change process and in making people believe they can, that just reminds me of one of the things that we try to do is the whole belief theory – you have to believe that you can change. We even did this huge bumblebee thing with ‘Bee-lieve’.... Like I said, when you feel downtrodden and you’re not sure, if you don’t believe you can do it, you don’t believe the kids can do it.... A lot of our change is internal and believing that they have the power to make things better for these kids. (Beaty, Interview 1)

Principal Beaty valued the need for change at Franklin Pierce and recognized the multiple levels of change that needed to occur with instructional planning, teaching practices, and how the teachers interact with students. Second grade teacher, Mrs. Lewis, said, “Changing the school can change the community and the town.” (Lewis Interview) This type of widespread change that overflows into the community and surrounding areas can be achieved when a principal and the staff embrace shared goals for transforming the school.

Interpersonal Dynamics – Greenway Elementary

When working in schools and leading change, principals must be attuned to and able to navigate interpersonal dynamics within a variety of adults including teachers, parents, and members of the community. Principals need to be aware

of the daily climate and overall culture of the school and the undercurrents of teacher sentiment. Along with awareness of these areas, the principal also must function within the interpersonal dynamics of a school's staff. Mr. Allen shared a positive view of the staff at Greenway when he stated:

I think you gain strength from learning each other's styles. A teacher assistant has been over here for 4 years and now she can go into this class and say, 'Hey. You know your way is good but what about doing it this way.' It is a good way of exchanging ideas. It is not a bad thing to shake up some people every now and then.... It is going to be a rough beginning but so far no one has called me yet. I know the grapevine is going. (Allen, Interview 1)

Mr. Allen did not view the variety of opinions and personality differences as competing interests, but rather as dynamic entities with varying abilities and interests that contributed to the success of the school. He embraced differences as healthy attributes of a vital school culture. Another way that Allen navigated the interpersonal dynamics of the school was to stay highly involved. He was open to assisting staff members with personal issues and was willing to be as involved as the staff members desired. At the same time, he maintained his objectivity by setting his own personal boundaries.

The teachers at Greenway valued the collegial atmosphere at the school.

Elizabeth Duke stated:

There is a unique feeling of team at Greenway. Each year, the school goes on a fall retreat. About fifty or sixty of the staff attended a weekend at NCCAT (North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching). We did team building activities and read a book about writing instruction.

There is a sense of community among the staff and my co-workers are also my best friends. (Duke Interview)

The teachers I interviewed at Greenway emphasized the supportive nature of Mr. Allen's leadership. Mrs. Duke spoke of the relationships she fostered with her colleagues and the atmosphere of respect and care created by the school administration.

Interpersonal Dynamics – Franklin Pierce Elementary

The interpersonal dynamics at Franklin Pierce were more volatile than the ones observed at Greenway. As noted earlier, many of the issues that Mrs. Beaty faced were personal in nature and involved staff issues as well as student issues. Many of these points of contention were entangled with personal conflicts such as equity, personnel issues, and staff dress code. Early on in the first year of her principalship, Mrs. Beaty battled with the staff over issues of petty leave, staffs report time to work, and staff dress code. Many of these items were resolved by the teachers working things out in collaborative teams. There were many opportunities for collaboration and compromise.

Mrs. Beaty believed that to successfully lead Franklin Pierce in a direction of school reform, she needed to navigate the interpersonal dynamics of the staff. As stated earlier, many staff issues were discovered in her initial interviews with teachers during her first summer on the job. Often she navigated the interpersonal issues in a positive way. Mrs. Beaty said:

I do a lot of morale building. I do a lot of the pumping them up – On the 10th day, I brought in all the stuff and made smoothies for them and I said ‘Thanks for a smooth start.’ I try to do a lot of those little things – the feel good things – just ‘we appreciate you’ kind of things. (Beaty, Interview 2)

Mrs. Beaty planned many activities and events to say ‘thank you’ to the staff and build them up. She constantly placed positive notes in teacher boxes and provided snacks for various meetings. Although this was a positive reinforcement for teachers, one assistance team member warned that this could easily be overdone.

Principal Beaty also noted that navigating the dynamics of her staff was quite difficult. She realized that the level that her staff needs to be led was draining on her emotionally. She further stated:

They are a needy group of teachers as you can imagine just because they are so insecure with what they are doing. We just have a lot of personal dysfunction. I know we are not typical and I know teachers just themselves can be a mess sometimes. Their lives are a mess. I have one teacher the got beat up the other day by her boyfriend and I have another one who had to leave her husband because he was beating on her. You have to give so much of yourself to at-risk kids because they need so much. If you don’t have it personally, it is hard to give it. If you are not together, it is just not there and I think that is part of our issue. Some of these people are so unstable personally that they don’t have what they need to give to the kids. (Beaty, Interview 2)

Mrs. Beaty expended an enormous amount of energy supporting the personal needs of her teachers. She believed that a high level of support would have long

term implications for building trust and cultivating adequately prepared teachers to meet the needs of the students at Franklin Pierce School.

Current Change Issues – Greenway Elementary

Greenway was a high performing school with a stable teaching staff and student population. As Fullan (1991) cited, first order changes are those that “improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what already is currently done without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles” (p. 29). This was where Greenway functioned related to the change process. None of the changes outlined or addressed by Mr. Allen altered the basic structure of the school or the manner in which it operated. However, he was cognizant of the need for continual evaluation of the educational environment and the need for process improvement. According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), “Change and innovation can be effectively led only through human contact; leaders guiding a change must therefore establish more relationships, connect with more sources of information, and get out and walk around more frequently” (p. 48). Mr. Allen functioned within the school by nurturing relationships and maintaining a sense of connectedness among the Greenway staff. Greenway experienced continual growth and outgrew their facility. The school had several mobile classrooms and last fall the school district ordered a seven-classroom pod for the school. There were several complications related to the instillation including a lack of space for

the pod and how to select which grade level would occupy it. Mr. Allen led his teachers to common goals by remaining calm, factual, and supportive. When speaking of the pod instillation, Mr. Allen stated:

The biggest change we have had has been the pod – the mobile classrooms—seven of the classrooms going outside. It is all second graders, so that is 145 kids out there. The building was on time. School started on time. The kids were in the building on time. (Allen, Interview 2)

Mr. Allen further explained how he tries to keep things professional and encourages his staff not to take things personally. Moving from the nice confines of the school building over the summer was a tumultuous event for several classroom teachers. Mr. Allen understood and respected the apprehension of these staff members as they were concerned, as he was, that that pod would not be ready. He took an active role in ensuring the pod was in place and he proactively kept the teachers informed and involved in the process. As it turned out, it was a smooth transition and the second grade teachers enjoyed their new community in the pod.

Another major change that Mr. Allen led was the re-allocation of teacher assistants in Kindergarten. Mr. Allen believed that it was necessary to re-align teachers and assistants on the grade level as the move would be beneficial to the staff and students. According to Mr. Allen:

The second change, like I mentioned, was that we did rearrange all my teacher assistants. Before the kids arrived, it was ugly. No one could understand why and so I tried to deal with it one-on-one. Once the kids got here, it all went away. (Allen, Interview 2)

Mr. Allen explained that the grade level needed shaking up and that some times tough decisions have to be made for the benefit of the entire school. He believed that realigning teacher assistants on the Kindergarten hall would have long term benefits for the teachers, assistants, and students.

At Greenway, decisions and process improvements were made based on the prior history of the school because of Mr. Allen's tenure in the building. As decisions were made, reflection was part of Mr. Allen's leadership practice. As a veteran principal, Mr. Allen had the insight to look back on the history of his tenure and the history of the school to make decisions and influence teachers toward shared goals and vision.

Another issue that Mr. Allen and Greenway faced was the implementation of computerized report cards. Mr. Allen led this effort by example and by offering the teachers the choice to participate before it became mandatory. Allen stated:

I try to take all the barriers away and even said, 'Who will volunteer? Do you want to try computer report cards? If you do, great. If you don't great. Just try it. But if you don't feel comfortable, let these 40 people try it and once you see how easy it is, you can maybe come on board next year.'
(Allen, Interview 2)

Principal Allen continually modeled a supportive leadership style as he walked with teachers through change. The change issues at Greenway were geared toward meeting the demands of a growing school and making minor adjustments

toward the goal of process improvement. As stated earlier, the change issues at Greenway aligned with Fullan's concept of first order changes.

Current Change Issues – Franklin Pierce Elementary

Franklin Pierce Elementary was in the process of major curricular and structural change, much of which was a result of years of poor leadership and mismanagement. In order to cultivate the change she envisioned for the school, Mrs. Beaty and her staff applied for and was awarded a Federal Reform Grant which was a 3-year renewable grant for \$100,000 per year. Part of the recommendations of the grant team was to realign the leadership structure of the school to reflect Effective Schools Correlates. Principal Beaty realigned her leadership team to include the principal, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator, and literacy facilitator. Likewise, she realigned the School Improvement team. Mrs. Beaty changed some classroom teachers to full day primary reading teacher doing pull out instruction in small groups. Mrs. Beaty and her assistant principal also attended the Principals Executive Program (PEP) training – Classroom Walkthroughs with Reflective Practice. The purpose of the training was to provide school administrators with methods to provide quick and effective feedback to teachers based on short and frequent observations. Mrs. Beaty and the leadership team aligned the School Improvement Plan and the Reform Grant together so they were cohesive and directed toward school

improvement goals. These collective efforts constituted process improvement that impacted the total school program.

As was discussed earlier, Mrs. Beaty was hired to bring about change at the school. Mrs. Beaty also understood that they were in the early stages of starting a reform movement. She identified a general lack of knowledge from the teachers concerning the standard course of study and realized that there are so many things going on with personnel, the reform grant and the assistance team. One of her top priorities was to engage in Effective Schools practices. Mrs. Beaty stated:

The whole premise is to get the Effective Schools established this year and to provide training on proper instruction whether that be working with kids with poverty, teaching for understanding – it is just quality teaching and that is just not everywhere here. It is not many places here. (Beaty, Interview 2)

Mrs. Lewis, a Literacy teacher at Franklin Pierce indicated that change efforts are resulting in positive changes in the school. Mrs. Lewis stated, “First, the curriculum is being changed. We were into Scott-Foresman very big. I do guided reading. Now we are putting emphasis in reading better texts.” She continues, stating, we are making “a move to bring more books to the individual student—to target that student and to move from there. We are working on organizing leveled books in the book room.” (Lewis Interview) According to Mrs. Hammerstein, the school’s English as Second Language teacher:

The building itself looks better too. The lobby is much more clean and inviting. The office is organized in a much more efficient manner. Getting everybody on board and having everybody to do things the same time, the same way is good. The children need that structure. There are a lot of needs. (Hammerstein Interview)

The changes in instructional practices and the physical environment of the school are key elements to school improvement.

Another priority for Mrs. Beaty was staff collaboration for common goals such as forming a mission and vision statement. She used some of the reform grant funds to take the staff on several summer planning retreats. Mrs. Beaty stated:

We had a full day retreat and then we had a two-day retreat and then we had a three-day retreat. All that time was development of a mission and a vision, so everybody had input and everybody had some say-so. Then this school year, we spent more time publishing it. (Mrs. Beaty, Interview 3)

Principal Beaty desired to move toward teacher empowerment. However, she found that many of her teachers are not in a place personally or professionally to take on that role. While moving the teachers step by step to an empowerment model, Mrs. Beaty worked with them to take positions on committees and focusing on school issues such as curriculum development and instructional practices. Principal Beaty set expectations for the teachers and then supported and nurtured them toward success. According to Mrs. Lewis, "Mrs. Beaty says that we have to get it done and if you are going to stay here, you have to join the team. The kids come first and it doesn't matter what the

teachers think. She is in it for the kids.” (Lewis Interview) The restructuring of the School Improvement Team to Correlate Teams based on Effective Schools is part of this change process. One element of teacher empowerment is the need to create a culture of reflective practice. During summer planning, the staff was required to reflect and give input on key issues facing the teachers and school. Mrs. Beaty posed the following questions. “What is it we believe as a school? What is it we want people to see that we’re trying to do?”

Mrs. Bates from the Federal reform grant said, “Delegation and shared leadership is needed. (Mrs. Beaty) needs to give them responsibility, room to succeed or fail, and hold them accountable. She seems to have support from the central office and she needs to use it.” Concerning empowering others to lead in her building, Mrs. Beaty said:

We have kind of spread the power a little bit and some are really struggling with taking that role but it is going to build – And I told them they are going to make mistakes. I said even experienced people do that but it is going to build some leadership and we are going to do some leadership training this year because, you know, they seem to think that leadership is making decisions but they don’t seem to understand what you do before you make that decision – that it is a matter of having an understanding and doing the work behind and getting the information that you need to make a good decision. (Beaty, Interview 2)

Mrs. Palmerton, the curriculum facilitator, indicated that there is a pervasiveness of the problems with curriculum and instruction throughout the building. Many of the teachers were going through the motions of school without the academic rigor that is necessary for student proficiency. I asked Mrs.

Palmerton if they had taken their teachers to other schools to observe. She said that they did that last year with 3rd grade teachers but it was not very productive. Even though the school the teachers visited was similar demographically, the teachers at Franklin Pierce still viewed the needs of their children differently than the children and teachers they observed. Mrs. Palmerton felt that continuing to visit other successful at-risk schools was important to the improvement efforts at Franklin Pierce Elementary.

Another area that Mrs. Beaty was trying to change is how the teachers work with at-risk students and have an understanding of poverty. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) presented a concept of “cultural capital” in schools and embodied by school personnel. They proposed that all families and cultures have cultural capital, but schools tend to identify with middle and upper class value systems. This is problematic for the majority of students at Franklin Pierce who are economically disadvantaged. The school assistance team worked with the teachers and presented training on “A Framework for Understanding Poverty.” Following are the guidelines related to poverty that were set forth during the training (Payne, 2003):

- Schools are set up on the premise of middle class values.
- Education and relationships are the two proven factors that can help children move out of poverty.
- Children living in poverty often are responsible for getting themselves up, getting ready and to school, and getting siblings ready...a middle class

values system does not fit this picture and this creates a conflict if certain conditions exist.

- Relationships are important factors in student academic gain.

Part of the change process for Mrs. Beaty is to shift the thinking of the staff from middle class value systems that most of them espouse to an understanding of poverty. She feels that understanding poverty is a key to getting the teachers to understand the children, where they are coming from, and being able to meet their needs.

Summary

The presentation of findings related to the National Association of Education (NEA) data revealed differences in teacher perceptions at each school that is beneficial data to the administrators in each building. The snapshot of each school and its principal also outlined differences within each building. The discussion of each school's culture and current change process in each school also shed light on how two different principals with their unique leadership qualities address the issues of change in their schools. The current change issues at each school also indicate that Franklin Pierce and Greenway are at different stages in their staff relationships and school dynamics. The schools clearly present two contrasting cases that face very different issues related to school culture and needs for change. Both principals implemented a

combination of support and pressure for change with their staff and tailored their leadership practices to the particular needs of their school.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Rather than developing what they lack, great leaders will magnify their own strengths and simultaneously create teams that do not mimic the leader but provide different and equally important strengths for the organization. (Reeves, 2006, p. 23)

Overview

This research evolved from my interest in school culture, the change process, and the interrelation of both with school leadership practices. This chapter is an analysis of what I discovered in both schools – Greenway Elementary and Franklin Pierce Elementary. The chapter reveals information about the unique intricacies of the schools and leadership practices by leaders. The results of extensive interviews with principals, discussions with staff members, and survey data from the NEA survey are used to triangulate and substantiate my findings.

Leadership for change is a negotiated experience between leaders and followers. Change, no matter how big or how small, is not something most of us embrace because it moves us into unfamiliar places. However, change is a necessary part of life and public schools. Through the change process, there are various goals and means to reach those goals. The two cases in this study represent schools that are at very different places in terms of their educational

and institutional needs, goals, and objectives. However, there are binding themes that emerge from the cases. As I conclude my look at school culture and the change process, it is important to remember:

Leaders function within a culture...it takes a different set of skills to be successful in one culture than it takes in another. You may establish excellent relationships with people inside the schoolhouse walls and have poor communication with your extended community, or vice versa. (Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987, p. 115)

Negotiating school culture and change is a never ending, non-linear, and complex challenge for school leaders and teachers. In a study by Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992), results suggested that six broad strategies were used to influence school culture. According to the study, effective practices incorporated by school principals to strengthen school culture included using bureaucratic mechanisms to stimulate and reinforce cultural change, encouraging staff development, engaging in frequent communication about cultural norms, values and beliefs, empowering others, and using symbols to express cultural values. (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992) Some of these practices were observed in the two cases in this study. Clarke (2000) stated:

Seeing successful school improvement as the ability to live with contested and problematic issues is a more realistic and developmentally helpful way of preparing for sustained reform. This way of operating implies an acceptance that conflict is a necessary dynamic of good reform and healthy learning environment. (p. 350)

This chapter outlines the leadership practices in the two cases that support efforts to work within the school culture to lead continuous improvement efforts and change.

The Important Questions

Michael Fullan (1993) states in Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform that, “In order to be effective at change, mastery is essential, both in relation to specific innovations and as a personal habit.” (p. 17) While unfolding the story of Mr. Allen, at Greenway, and Mrs. Beaty, at Franklin Pierce, Fullan’s comments on the change process ring true. Both principals engaged a variety of techniques and strategies to navigate the culture of their respective school and engage the change process. Michael Fullan (1993) stated that:

Productive educational change is full of paradoxes, and components that are often not seen as going together. Caring and competence, equity and excellence, social and economic developments are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, these tensions must be reconciled into powerful new forces for growth and development. (p. 4)

Through specific questions I was able to ascertain the subtle changes and political prowess that Mr. Allen incorporated into his daily interactions. Likewise, after asking specific questions of Mrs. Beaty, it was clear that she was in the early stages of major change efforts at Franklin Pierce Elementary. Through my interactions with the principals and their staff, the following research questions were addressed in the study:

- 1) What was the culture of the school like at the time that the principal entered the setting?
- 2) How did the principal assess the culture of the school?
- 3) How do principals plan and implement change in their schools?
- 4) What leadership thoughts and practices aid in leading change conducive to improving teaching and learning?
- 5) What forms of community currently exist and are evolving in schools?

This research focused on the experiences and vantage point of the principals as they navigated their school culture and worked within it. Culture is a lived experience. As the culture evolves over time, the identity of the members also evolves. Both principals, on some level, are working within the school culture to lead change and work toward a community of learners.

The story of Greenway Elementary reflects a school with an experienced administrator who understands and values the importance of nurturing a positive school culture and a community of learners. Mr. Allen solicits the involvement of his staff in the decision making process and values their professional judgment and ability. As a school with a strong community of learners in place, the leadership practices create a supportive environment where teachers feel valued and supported. Mr. Allen has a participatory leadership style that supports the shared values and goals of the staff. Greenway Elementary is a high functioning organization with teacher leaders in place that adopt a shared vision for success among all staff and students. Another striking element of the culture of

Greenway is the sense of family. There is atmosphere of mutual caring and concern among the teachers and between the principal and staff. The notion of caring and family continually emerged in the teacher interviews. Nell Noddings (1988, 1992) would propose that this ethic of care flows to the students and creates a better environment for teaching and learning.

A different story is told at Franklin Pierce Elementary. It appears easy to start with a notion of creating a learning community and engage leadership practices to create it. However, it is difficult to do this when starting with a struggling culture. Mrs. Beaty was charged with trying to improve core competencies and teaching practices—a daunting task in the era of high stakes accountability. After two years in a leadership role at Franklin Pierce, Mrs. Beaty is working with a school culture that is in transition. She is faced with transforming outdated teaching methods into innovative and engaging practice. The cultural dynamics of the school reflect conflicting agendas. Many of the new teachers are engaged in the reform efforts and excited about transforming the school. However, there are teachers from the 'old guard' that continue to resist change efforts. The cultural dynamics of the school are unlike any other that I have observed or worked within.

Table 7 represents a summary of how the research questions guided the research through the empirical research related to culture, change, leadership, and community. It also shows some of the findings from my interviews and observations.

Table 6
The Research Questions

Central Question	Greenway Elementary	Franklin Pierce Elementary
1. What was the culture of the school like at the time that the principal entered the setting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *the school was a new building and Mr. Allen was the first principal *Mr. Allen was able to build a culture with a staff he selected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *student academic success was a low priority *teachers had not been evaluated in five years (records did not exist) *there had been a state assistance team for 3 of the last 5 years *there had been an ineffective principal in place for many years *there were issues with the teacher dress code and teachers not reporting to work on time *the culture was not healthy *there was a lot of baggage that the teachers carried forward from their prior experiences *the teachers were apprehensive of their new leader and the expectations for change
2. How did the principal read the culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Mr. Allen received a mandate from the superintendent to open the school and make it work *Mr. Allen got in the trenches with the teachers to make things happen within the school *Mr. Allen worked with the teachers on all aspects of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Mrs. Beaty learned information about the school from her interview for the position *Mrs. Beaty interviewed all the staff individually during the summer to gain an understanding of their perspective and expectations *Mrs. Beaty asked the question – What do you

	<p>*Mr. Allen spent much of his day in the building visiting classrooms and consulting with teachers</p>	<p>want me to know? *Mrs. Beaty talked to and connected with the students to understand their perspective and needs</p>
<p>3. How did the principal plan and implement change?</p>	<p>*Mr. Allen used a team approach to building consensus *Mr. Allen adapted state and federal regulations to fit the needs of his students and staff *Mr. Allen spoke of collecting data before entering a change process *Mr. Allen said that he tried to be hands on when it comes to change *He stated that he tried to be present during change initiatives, be visible, and participate *Mr. Allen stated that communication is key *Mr. Allen stated that he tried to create a culture where it is appropriate to have fun, laugh, and smile</p>	<p>*Mrs. Beaty was policy driven and attempted to meet the letter of the law *Mrs. Beaty was in the initial phase of pulling together collaborative teams to make joint decisions *Mrs. Beaty acknowledged that there was an immense amount of data to use for decision making and implementing change *Mrs. Beaty planned staff development in order to improve instructional practices Mrs. Beaty attempted to bring about systemic change in how the teachers viewed teaching, children, and the learning process *Mrs. Beaty attempted to improve the staff morale by offering incentives for perfect attendance of staff members</p>
<p>4. What were the leadership thoughts and practices of the principals?</p>	<p>*hire good people and support their progress *allow for an atmosphere of risk taking on the part of teachers and students *support novices that make mistakes, but also make sure they learn</p>	<p>*at the initiation phase of change for the school *required to balance many expectations from various groups *attempting to apply pressure and support for her teachers and staff</p>

	<p>from their errors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *do the change efforts impact one or two common themes or foci for the school? *lead by participating in all aspects of the school *support the 'informal school' which are all the non-academic activities of the school that make it inviting and engaging for the students *participates in school activities such as pep rallies for end of grade test success, slept on the roof after the students attain their Accelerated Reader goals, supports all kinds of after school clubs for the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *felt the pressure of the state and federal guidelines to improve student performance *negotiated and supervised interaction between the state assistance team and her staff
<p>5. What is the current status of the school culture?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *the teachers generally feel supported by their principal and their peers *the change initiatives of the school focus on fine tuning a high functioning organization *there is little staff turn over *there is a culture of family and support among the majority of the staff *there is an expectation and culture oriented toward success by all *a strong community of learners exists within the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *there is tension among some staff members because of the emphasis and pressure to improve test scores *the teachers at times appreciate the new leadership and are frustrated at the same time with the new demands *many years of inadequate instructional practice are slowly being redirected *the newer staff members that were hired by Mrs. Beaty are on board with the change efforts *some of the veteran staff continue to resist change *there is a culture by

		<p>some staff to question the initiatives of emerging organization *an emerging community is in the making</p>
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Overarching Themes and Leadership Practices

The central research questions represented separate stages of change, but what I found were common themes that emerged across these questions. The emerging themes captured in both settings assist in the understanding of the relationship between school culture, the change process, and leadership practices in these schools. After extensive observation in the schools, collection of interview data, and reflection on the research process, the leadership practices and themes that emerge are participatory leadership, personal investment, cultivating a shared vision, empowerment, and cultivating a community. These themes are outlined in the remainder of this chapter.

Participatory Leadership: Leading by Doing

A participatory leadership style by the principals in the two studies shows how each principal actively assesses the school culture by their daily interactions and their philosophical approaches to their schools. Participatory leadership lends itself to involvement with and engagement in the daily activities of a school or setting.

Ronald Allen's leadership practices are based on the philosophy that there are global, school-wide objectives that drive the decision making process and operation of the school. All decisions and interactions funnel back to one or two continual themes or foci. The "Greenway Way" and Greenway P.R.I.D.E. are continual focal points and a basis for decision making and collaboration. During interviews and observation at Greenway, the teachers continually alluded to these themes and spoke of them as living characteristics of the school. On visits to Greenway, Principal Allen made walk throughs of the halls and classrooms. He gave high five's to various students, checked on homework with a few individual students, inspected projects, and checked to see if one student "dressed to impress."

For Mr. Allen, the "informal school" is all of the activities, events, and phases of school that are non-academic and make attending and participating in school enjoyable to students. One of the ways that Mr. Allen leads the school is through his passion for nurturing the "informal school." For example, at the end of school-wide Accelerated Reader competitions, Mr. Allen has taken a pie in the face in front of the student body. Last year, Mr. Allen agreed to sleep on the roof of the school if Greenway students achieved a certain level on the end of grade tests. True to his word, Mr. Allen spent the night on the roof last spring.

Likewise, Mr. Allen was involved in the daily activities of the school. He often assisted others in the computer lab, front office, cafeteria, or classroom. He was genuinely and consistently engaged in all aspects of the school. From

my interviews with him, it was apparent that Ronald Allen related to people and thrived on personal interactions. At Greenway School, Ronald Allen was not the focal point, but rather an energetic participant in the school process. Speaking of his level of involvement with school wide activities and how teachers viewed his participation, Mr. Allen stated:

So that gives them a way of saying, 'Look. He is in the trenches with us. He knows and appreciates what I am trying to do.' And it just comes across that way. (Mr. Allen, Interview 3)

He always had time for people and was attuned to the little things that make a difference in the minds of a teacher or student. He attested that part of his leadership success was because of his interpersonal skills. He was a “people person” and notices “when a kid got a hair cut.” (Mr. Allen, Interview 3) Likewise, there was a real side to him. Along with his staff, he experienced joy, sorrow, frustration, and empathy. One of the teachers stated that he is one of the most down to earth principals that she has known or worked for.

Mr. Allen exhibited a participatory style of leadership. He often spoke of “walking through change” with his teachers. He was aware that change sometimes evoked fear or apprehension in teachers, but he also saw the larger benefits of change and the importance of process improvement. In instances of change in the school, he was committed to helping teachers through their fears and trepidation in order to attain the larger goal. Allen was Principal of the Year for the school district in 2001. In a local newspaper article related to this honor,

Mr. Allen stated, "There is no job that I cannot do in this building, and that helps me to be more aware of what's going on." Allen's style was demonstrated as he insisted, "come with me and I will show you what I do."

For Mrs. Beaty, her leadership style was more behind the scenes than that of Mr. Allen. She led by doing, but her actions were not always as out front as Mr. Allen portrayed. With the high level of outside influence in her school from the Federal grant program and the state assistance team, Mrs. Beaty often found herself facilitating meetings and staff development with these entities. She also spent much of her time managing all the outside interests in the reform effort in the school. Mrs. Beaty focused on policy enforcement and conformity within her teaching staff. Likewise, she continued to distribute power and decision making within the school.

Mrs. Beaty often worked seven days a week. Often when I talked to Principal Beaty, she referred to being in the school on Saturday and Sunday. She was working ten hours a day and seven days a week as she worked on organizational issues and administrative duties that she could not get to during the day because of her activity within the building.

Mrs. Beaty voiced frustration that change within the school could not happen as quickly as she desired. She had a five year plan to turn the school around and she was looking at replacing four to five staff members each year over that period. She believed that hiring dynamic teachers was the key to

sparkling grade level improvement. Principal Beaty was actively recruiting teachers for her school.

Personal Investment: Owning the Challenge

Ownership of continual improvement processes in schools is indicative of how effective principals plan and implement change in schools. There is little research available on one's personal drive for excellence; however, both principals in this study indicated a drive for excellence that contributed to the potential success of their respective schools. Fullan (2001) also describes this type of personal investment as moral purpose. There is an understanding of the larger puzzle and how each piece inter-relates to each other, forming a cohesive whole. Reeves (2006) explained this drive for excellence as passion that comes from within the leader. According to Reeves (2006), "While passion does not appear on the balance sheet, it is surely the asset that matters most for leaders and followers alike, and passion is most wisely invested by leaders in human relationships." (p. 43) During my time with Mr. Allen and Mrs. Beaty, it was apparent that their personal drive for excellence galvanized their leadership potential in their schools. Likewise, both principals understood the importance of relationships with people in their respective organizations. This level of commitment to the organization cannot be taught in a leadership classroom or imparted by a supervisor. It is an internal character trait of the individual.

Little is written about a leader's ego or passion to succeed. However, in these cases it seems to be noteworthy. According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), "Given the perceived importance of leadership, it is no wonder that an effective principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school" (p. 5). The 1970 United States Senate Committee Report on Equal Opportunity (U.S. Congress, 1970) identified principal leadership as a key school factor. According to the Congressional study:

In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He or she is the person responsible for all activities that occur in and around the school building. It is the principal's leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching, the level of professionalism and morale for teachers, and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. The principal is the main link between the community and the school, and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and students about the school. If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success. (p. 56)

The leader's desire for responsibility and sense of purpose invigorate him or her in the challenging position of the school principal. Neither Ronald Allen nor Sally Beaty would characterize themselves as egotistical, nor am I. However, there is an element of passion in their leadership activities and thought processes. Both principals have taken on the responsibility of the principal's role within their school and there seems to be an inseparable interplay between the person and the position. Ironically, Mr. Allen stated that he works hard to remove himself

from being seen as the principal and wants to be seen as a supportive player in the functioning of his school.

At Franklin Pierce, Principal Beaty made a personal investment in turning the school around. At the end of my time with Mrs. Beaty, her journey was still in the initiation phase of change. From her first days on the job, she was hired to be a change agent for the school—a process that is a multi-year commitment. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) characterize change agents as leaders who actively challenge tradition, lead initiatives with uncertain outcomes, have a systematic approach for new ways of doing things, and operate on the edge versus in the center of the school's competence. Fullan (2001) explained that change agents do not “live more peacefully, but...they can handle more uncertainty—and conflict—and are better at working through complex issues in ways that energize rather than deplete the commitment of the organizational members” (p. 15). This statement holds true of Mrs. Beaty. She pushed the limits of the organization and moved teachers away from their comfort zone.

At Greenway Elementary, decisions are made and processes are put in place based on a prior history at the school. Mr. Allen established a foundation for success at Greenway Elementary. The foundation for success included a culture of mutual trust and exploration. He was comfortable in his leadership role and with making decisions for the school. According to Mr. Allen:

They may not agree with me and say they do but they make most of the decisions. We can't control what comes from Raleigh or comes from the curriculum departments but once it gets in the building, they make the

meetings bogged down about 'We need to do this.' It's 'You can do this.' The bottom line is as long as it works. It is up to you. Just feel comfortable making a lot of decisions. (Mr. Allen, Interview 3)

It is also apparent from this statement that Mr. Allen capably navigates ambiguity by addressing issues head on with decisiveness. Likewise, he operated on the premise that his staff would take on leadership, responsibility, and decision making as a healthy culture within the school.

Cultivating a Shared Vision

Just as a principal's personal investment in change is imperative, cultivating a shared vision is also a key ingredient to planning and implementing change. As noted earlier, Greenway and Franklin Pierce were in different developmental stages as related to the change process; however, both principals endorsed a shared vision as a key to the success of a change initiative.

Adopting and promoting a shared vision is a primary method by which leaders can catalyze change in organizations. School cultures can be transformed when effective leaders are proponents of and participate in shared visions for school success. According to Reeves (2006), "Great visionary leaders challenge the status quo with terminology that is clear and vivid" (p. 35).

Therefore, the role of the effective leader is instrumental in concisely stating a view that is easily understood and adoptable by teachers and staff. Further, the visionary leader not only articulates a new way of thinking, he or she continually revisits the vision and makes it part of an ongoing dialogue. As noted in the

review of literature, changing the culture of a school involves questioning the status quo, examining current protocol, and redefining deeply rooted practices.

If school culture is important to the school principal, then cultivating shared ideas is essential. Two areas that were a focus for Franklin Pierce and Greenway were the creation of a mission and vision statement and incorporating the shared ideas with the faculty, students and community. The secondary goal of creating these statements was to articulate them through time, continue to evaluate their efficacy, and make them a living part of the school's dialogue. As an experienced principal at Greenway, Mr. Allen shares compelling stories to make the school's purpose for existence a part of his conversation and actions. His words and deeds solidify a unified direction for the school.

Mr. Allen cultivates a shared vision by challenging his staff to take a participatory role and always being open to their input. He is able to articulate views of the staff in noteworthy and effective ways. According to Reeves (2006), "Vision contemplates the future, and the future inevitably involves uncertainty, change, and fear" (p. 35). In observations of staff meetings, Mr. Allen talked to his staff in about "The Big Picture" concerning issues that faced the school such as computerized report cards or getting the pod classrooms into place. Mr. Allen can articulate "The Big Picture" and facilitate dialogue concerning how to meet issues facing the school. Likewise, he promotes a shared vision of the school being an integral part of the Greenway community. The vision of Greenway's place in the community was reinforced by comments from teachers. The theme

of “Unity in the Community” helps the students and teachers see their role in a larger context than the individual classroom. Mr. Allen and his staff believed that they worked within a community of learners.

At Greenway, the School Improvement Team (SIT) is the primary committee within the school for teachers to have a voice and input into structures and procedures related to the school. While the SIT team is open to teacher input related to process improvement, Mr. Allen made it clear that it was not a forum to air personal grievances or personnel issues. He maintains that personnel and personal issues remain administrative functions.

Another way that Mr. Allen cultivates a shared vision is through staffing vacancies. He interviews prospective teachers along with one or two teachers from that grade level. The collaboration allows the interview team a greater chance of selecting a high performing team member to add to the Greenway staff. The interview team makes hiring decisions based on teachers that share Greenway’s philosophy of teaching and learning.

Alternately, Sally Beaty is at a different point in this process. As the Franklin Pierce staff adopted a vision and mission about a year ago, Ms. Beaty is in the beginning stages of promoting a shared vision. Mrs. Beaty worked toward buy-in from the Franklin Pierce staff. A living mission and purpose are essential to a school’s culture and must be adopted collectively in order to be effective.

According to Peterson and Deal (2002):

Deeper values and purposes shape a school's vision—its picture of a hoped-for future, its dream of what it can become. These obscure and often veiled dreams provide a deep and rich sense of purpose and direction for an otherwise uncertain future. (p. 13)

As stated earlier, Mrs. Beaty was hired as a change agent to turn a failing school around. According to Marzano, Walters, and McNulty (2005), "Underpinning the responsibility of acting as a change agent is the leader's willingness to temporarily upset the school's equilibrium" (p. 44). Likewise, Marzano and others (2005) stated that "The responsibility of *change agent* refers to the leader's disposition to challenge the status quo" (p.44). The position of change agent is exactly where Mrs. Beaty situates herself in her leadership role at Franklin Pierce Elementary. Oftentimes, she must upset the equilibrium of the school while keeping it on a steady long-range course. It is difficult and tedious work that requires intellectual acumen and emotional resilience. During the course of the research, Mrs. Beaty's leadership practices focused on policy enforcement and gaining control of a misguided staff.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) outline seven leadership practices for leaders that lead to second order change. These practices align with actions observed with Mrs. Beaty in this study. The leadership practices include: (1) Being knowledgeable concerning how innovation and change will affect curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices and providing conceptual guidance in these areas. (2) Being the driving force behind the change or innovation and fostering a belief that the innovation can produce exceptional

results if adopted by the staff. (3) Being knowledgeable about the research and theory regarding the innovation and fostering this knowledge with the staff through required reading and discussion. (4) Challenging the status quo and moving forward without a guarantee for success. (5) Continually monitoring the impact of the innovation. (6) Being both directive and non-directive relative to the innovation or change depending on the situation. (7) And operating in a manner consistent with one's own belief systems relative to the innovation.

At Franklin Pierce, Mrs. Beaty replaced the School Leadership Team with a newly created Correlate Team. The Correlates are from Effective Schools research and focus on: opportunity to learn, high expectations, clear and focused mission, frequent monitoring, instructional leadership, safe and orderly schools, and home-school relations. Mrs. Beaty also revamped her leadership team to include a newly hired literacy facilitator, the assistant principal, and the curriculum coordinator. The realignment of these groups allowed for a new approach to shared governance. After her first year at Franklin Pierce, she took the staff on an off campus retreat during the summer of 2005. The teachers worked together to build unity and to create a vision and mission statement for the school. This type of input from the teachers allowed them to have a voice concerning what Franklin Pierce is about and what expectations would follow. The mission and vision statements were drafted on the retreat and adopted by the faculty in the fall. Injecting a sense of pride into expectations, Mrs. Beaty had

the mission and vision statements framed and matted for display in the office and classrooms.

Based on her prior experiences and expectations for the school, Mrs. Beaty had a clear vision for what she wanted to transpire at Franklin Pierce. However, her vision and those of her colleagues had not successfully been developed into a shared vision. The sense of urgency for change at Franklin Pierce may have prevented this. There was such an increased focus on school wide improvement that several teachers seemed to retract into their own classrooms and keep a low profile. Some of the teachers voiced overwhelming feeling of pressure and resented that their teaching practices were in question. And several teachers were skeptical that anything would change for themselves or the students. However, Mrs. Beaty had a few teachers that were willing to rise to the occasion, attempted to take on leadership roles, and helped promote shared efforts for improvement.

Part of the vision process is cultivating a sense of trust with teachers and staff. According to Reeves (2006):

Leaders can use vision to build trust rather than break it if they are willing to let their rhetoric give way to reality and allow their vision to become a blueprint.... Effective visions help individuals understand that they are part of a larger world and also reassure them of their individual importance to the organization. (p. 36)

Mrs. Beaty realized that she needed to invest time and energy into building trusting relationships with her staff. She was well on her way to achieving this

goal during the study. Her methods to build trust included having an open door policy for the staff, working through personal issues that teachers brought to her, and generally listening to their needs.

Empowerment: Who Are the Leaders?

Empowering other staff members within the school structure was an essential indicator of Mr. Allen's and Mrs. Beaty's leadership thoughts and practices that aided in leading productive change efforts in both schools. Both principals understood the need to collaborate, delegate and bring others into the process of school improvement. Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall (1987) stated, "Effective principals are collaborators; they are also delegators, carefully and thoughtfully identifying and utilizing available human resources" (p. 84). Collaboration is an essential skill for 21st century school leaders. It was important for both principals to cultivate leader-follower relationships within their respective schools. The role of the principal is so multifaceted and demanding that shared power and delegation are a must, even in the highest functioning school.

Shifting the power-base of the school from the principal to teacher leaders in the school was a recurring theme at both Greenway and Franklin Pierce. Both leaders respected and understood that they could not lead change on their own and that their role was to orchestrate it. According to Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1992), "Central to the concept of a collaborative culture is the more

equitable distribution of power for decision-making among members of the school” (p. 142). Transformational leadership enhances individual and collective problem-solving capacities of members in the schools. Although they operated within different contexts and the staffs contained slightly different memberships, both school principals in this study empowered their staff by facilitating school based leadership teams. The teams required the teachers to step beyond the normal confines of their classroom and engage in cross-grade and school-wide issues. According to Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall (1987):

It is not important where on the organizational chart the person falls; what is important is that facilitators support, help, assist, and nurture. Sometimes their task is to encourage, persuade, or push people to change, to adopt an innovation and use it in their daily school work. (p. 3)

Once again, Hall and others (1987) refer to the leader as a facilitator that nurtures, persuades, and catalyzes colleagues to action.

Ronald Allen placed employees in the proper environment for their skills and allowed them to do their job. Abiding by this philosophy, Mr. Allen states, “I hire good teachers and then get out of their way and let them teach. We also create a climate where it is good to have fun and laughter and smiles” (Mr. Allen, Interview 1). Along with facilitating where teachers need to be in order to exhibit their strengths, Mr. Allen also fully trusted his staff, gave them room to take risks, and supported their efforts. A prime example of this level of trust is how Mr. Allen worked with his curriculum coordinator. Allen stated:

I trust them. Again, trust. The new curriculum coordinator this year may switch roles, so I told the new person who has been with me the whole time – she is a first grade teacher working on her masters of administration – I said, ‘Look. This is working because I trust you. I know you are new. Again, you will make some mistakes. We all do.’ I said, ‘I would like for you to work on – these are the areas that you are going to work on.’ I said, ‘Just work on them. If you have any questions, see me. If you don’t have any questions, just make it happen.’ (Mr. Allen, Interview 3)

The philosophy that Mr. Allen took with his teachers was similar to the advice that the superintendent gave him. “Open it up and make it happen.” Mr. Allen gave away power and walked through changes with his staff, parents, and students.

According to Allen:

I give away a whole lot or I delegate and create places where I don’t have to be the principal. You’re the teacher. You’re on this committee. PTA. You’re on this committee. You do your thing. (Mr. Allen, Interview 1)

By the end of the study, Sally Beaty had not yet fully empowered teachers; however, she was providing a foundation for empowerment. Mrs. Foltz from the reform grant said, “Delegation and shared leadership is needed. She (Beaty) needs to give them responsibility, room to succeed or fail, and hold them accountable. She seems to have support from the central office and she needs to use it.” While still in the early stages of empowering teachers and encouraging them to accept new roles in the school structure, these changes were difficult for some teachers. Mrs. Beaty stated:

We have...spread the power a little bit and some are really struggling with taking that role but it is going to build – And I told them they are going to

make mistakes. I said even experienced people do that but it is going to build some leadership and we are going to do some leadership training this year because, you know, they seem to think that leadership is making decisions but they don't seem to understand what you do before you make that decision – that it is a matter of having an understanding and doing the work behind and getting the information that you need to make a good decision. (Mrs. Beaty, Interview 2)

Part of empowerment is creating a culture of reflective practice. Mrs. Beaty shared that during summer planning sessions, she challenged teachers to reflect on “What is it we believe as a school? What is it we want people to see that we’re trying to do?” (Mrs. Beaty, Interview 3) Mrs. Beaty’s and the staff’s reflective practice paid off with collective efforts to form mission and vision statements for the school—particularly during the summer planning retreats. Mrs. Beaty was truly creating an internal culture of reflection and renewal in the school. According to Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004), change in public schools is more about renewal than reform. Reform is often catalyzed from an external perspective whereas change inside schools is the result of a renewed attitude and perception from the community about what constitutes an educated person.

During observation sessions at Franklin Pierce, I attended several grade level meetings that were vertical planning and curriculum integration meetings. The assistance team members were in attendance as well as the reform grant representative. The assistance team members were ironing out a two hour planning block for grade levels once every two weeks. Principal Beaty reminded the teachers that the purpose of this scheduling was to help those who are

struggling with lesson planning. There seemed to be some resistance from the teachers and concern that they were being pulled from their classrooms. Mrs. Beaty wanted the teachers to focus on how they are reaching children, to learn how the parts of the curriculum fit together, and discover what needs to be altered. All of these steps were learning and growing process for Mrs. Beaty and the Franklin Pierce staff.

Cultivating a Community

The final emergent theme in this line of research was the importance of community in both settings. A sense of community within schools creates better learning environments for students, an inviting school for all participants, and fosters an environment where teachers seek to grow professionally and engage students in the learning process. According to Firestone and Louis (1999), culture speaks to the issues of togetherness and community. As noted in the literature review, Moser (1997) framed an entire dissertation around various forms of community that exist in schools based on Sergiovanni's (1994) Building Community in Schools. Efforts to attain community strengthen and unify the culture of the school. According to Fullan (1993):

The development of a sense of community and the habits and skills of collaboration among students is also a central tenet of all proposals to develop schools as learning organizations from Gardner's 'apprenticeships' and 'children's museums' to Sizer's maxim that teams of teachers should have direct responsibilities for developing a community of learners with given groups of students. (pp. 44-45)

Many educational leaders value the importance of developing a community of learners. Sergiovanni (1994) defines cultural connections as ‘shared purposes, values, traditions, and history that promote harmony and provide a sense of community’ (p. 58). Following are examples of what forms of community exist at each school and what efforts were being made to create a sense of community.

At Greenway Elementary, the importance of community was echoed in the unofficial school theme, “Unity in the Community.” Mr. Allen and the school constituents understood Greenway’s collective school community and how it functioned within, influenced, and was influenced by the larger community outside the walls of the school. Goleman and colleagues (2002) found that administrators with relationship acumen had three times more impact on organizations than leaders with analytical skills. Mr. Allen excelled at cultivating relationships within and outside the school.

Another way that Mr. Allen cultivated community was by advocating a formal process by which he and other staff members could recognize those whose commitment to the organization and hard work exceeded expectations. Mr. Allen implemented the “Drop in the Bucket Philosophy” several years ago. The “Drop in the Bucket Philosophy” is based on “The Theory of the Dipper and the Bucket” by Donald Clifton, chairman of the Gallup International Research and Education Center. The basis of the theory is that people can emotionally take from others and not reciprocate by giving back emotionally. However, when people add to other’s “bucket,” that also fills one’s own “bucket.” “A Drop in the

Bucket” is a recognition system for uplifting those around you. Mr. Allen wrote a drop to an employee for lending a helping hand, being a team player, completing a huge project, or simply as a “thank you.” Writing these notes was a way to uplift the sender and receiver. Mr. Allen consistently incorporated this recognition system into his weekly activities. The “Drops in the Bucket” created a sense of appreciation and community among the staff. Not only did Mr. Allen send drops, he encouraged his staff to do the same among themselves.

Early on in her tenure at Franklin Pierce, Mrs. Beaty realized that she inherited a school with a fractured sense of community and a detrimental culture. One of the ways she combated these issues was to reduce teacher isolation which often strengthens school culture and creates a sense of community. The summer retreat in 2005 was a key effort in building collegiality and collaboration among staff members. Likewise, during the 2005-2006 school year, the Correlate Team worked on integrating vertical planning across grade levels and curriculum integration into lesson design.

In a Correlate Team meeting led by Mrs. Foltz, the Reform Grant representative, there were 16 participants in the meeting. Mrs. Foltz presented an article and talked to the team about the need to create a classroom environment where the children are required to communicate in complete sentences. Principal Beaty talked about quality instruction and the things that she and Mr. Lowder, the assistant principal, were looking for in their classroom walk throughs. Mrs. Beaty and Mr. Lowder participated in “Walk Through

Training” which is a Principal’s Executive Program staff development for principals. Mrs. Foltz talked about the need for student work products on the walls in the classroom and creating an inviting school. Mrs. Foltz said, “I can tell from our retreat in Asheboro that you all have what it takes. This school is by far the most welcoming and inviting.” Open and honest dialogue as well as focused discussions moves toward the larger goal of creating a shared vision for the school and an appropriate classroom and school climate.

Summary

Although there are criteria that differentiate the school demographics and dynamics between Franklin Pierce and Greenway, several cultural themes and practices of the two principals emerged from the data. Both principals actively engaged the cultures of their individual schools and worked within each culture to bring about changes that fit their leadership qualities. Their participatory leadership and personal investment in their positions strengthened their ability to advocate for change and collaborate with the teachers. Both principals also understood the importance of cultivating a vision that is shared by all constituents and empowering teachers to take the lead. However, it was quite apparent that Mr. Allen’s years of experience and established position at Greenway allowed him the latitude to lead change in a more effortless manner than was experienced by Mrs. Beaty at Franklin Pierce. In her second year as principal,

Mrs. Beaty was truly in the initiation phase of change and facing a long term commitment to turning the school around.

There are many forms of culture within schools. Examples of these include the staff culture, the student culture, a culture of high expectations, or a culture of low expectations. There are also sub-cultures among grade levels, departments, or student groups. School culture can be positively or negatively impacted according to the leadership thoughts and practices of the principal. In order to impact a school culture, the principal must be attuned to the norms, traditions, rituals, expectations, and undercurrents of the school. The principal's interpretation of these culture indicators impacts how he or she works within the existing culture, attempts to conform to it, or works to change it. Whether the principal acknowledges it or not, teachers have an awareness of the culture and adapt to established expectations and routines. As discovered in this line of research, a variety of leadership practices are needed to navigate diverse cultural issues within schools.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

[Principals] must be cognizant of the fact that changes between the school and its environment are imminent. (Murphy & Louis, 1994, p. 15)

Significance of the Study

In addition to informing my own work as a public school administrator, this study speaks to aspiring and currently practicing school principals. It provides further insight for school administrators who value the significance of culture in their school and strive to build a sense of community within their students and staff. Although focus of the dissertation was on elementary schools, the concepts of school culture, the change process, and community addressed in the research also apply to administrators at the secondary level. The business of leadership is people centered and there are concepts in these findings that cut across all grade levels.

Another contribution of this research is the examination of the inter-relation of school culture and principal leadership. This study supports Fullan's claim that school culture can be impacted by leadership practices. The findings of the study speak to the fact that change and disequilibrium go hand in hand and that a certain level of discomfort and apprehension are part of the change

process. Principals must gauge their ability to provide pressure for change and support along the path to reform.

Navigating School Culture

Discovering how two schools and their principals navigate school culture and lead change directs us to a conclusion that change is inevitable and oftentimes unpredictable. Change is part of the daily life of public schools. Not only is change inevitable, reform is essential if schools are to meet the demands of the 21st century. Just as learning is a lifelong pursuit, change is also a lifelong challenge. According to Fullan (1993):

The new problem of change...is what would it take to make the educational system a learning organization—expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy, but as a way of life. (p. 4)

Both Mr. Allen and Mrs. Beaty accepted and appreciated the need for continual evaluation of the school program and the need for change. Although each school was in a different point in its needs, the leaders in each school embraced the idea of continual and comprehensive reform.

There are two examples in recent United States history where the federal government indicated that large scale action was needed in order to address the need for change in education. First was the release of A Nation at Risk (1983), a governmental study on the status of the public education system in the United States, and a second was the Federal legislation of No Child Left Behind in 2001.

Both of these pieces indicate a societal recognition of the importance of adequate public education and the urgency to meet the ever changing needs of children and society. Michael Fullan (1993) aptly described the change process in the preface to his book, Change Forces: Probing the Depths of Educational Reform:

It is a world where change is a journey of unknown destination, where problems are our friends, where seeking assistance is a sign of strength, where simultaneous top-down and bottom-up initiatives merge, where collegiality and individualism co-exist in productive tension. (vii-viii)

In Leading in a Culture of Change, Fullan (2001) identifies five characteristics of effective leadership for change. These qualities are moral purpose, understanding the change process, strong relationships, sharing of knowledge, and making connections with knowledge. Further, Murphy and Louis (1994) state:

As organizational architects, principals will need to acknowledge the changing contexts of schooling. They will need to articulate this new order and help to cultivate organizational structures that not only respond to but also shape the directions of change....These administrators will need to work with students, teachers, parents, and others to discover or invent the structures, policies, and processes that will enable schools to be places where engaging teaching and learning contribute to individual growth and development and to the common public good. (p. 12)

Murphy and Louis' comments aptly capture the sentiment of the principals in this study. They acknowledged changing norms, worked within their organizational structures, and reached out to engage constituents toward shared goals and objectives.

One Principal's Story

After reading many empirical studies and working with the two cases in this study, I discovered a narrative description of one principal's experiences and his thoughts about his role as an administrator. This principal's outlook and experiences mirror many of the findings in this study related to school culture and principal leadership. The following excerpt, titled Hardly a Week Goes By is Jack Picken's description of his experiences in school leadership.

If there is one thing I have come to accept in my role as a school principal, it is that someone will always remind me that I have an arduous job. Hardly a week goes by without a parent, staff member, or community member commenting, "How do you do this? I'm glad you do this and not me!" or "What a thankless job!" or "I guess that's why you get the big bucks." Indeed, we principals face more than our share of confrontational situations, punitive actions, and insanely bureaucratic paperwork. Our work can test our verve if not our amity. What many people fail to consider is the bigger picture of the principal as facilitator, inspirational leader, and change agent.

As I consider why I come to work every morning and I mull over the many hats I wear as principal, I find myself returning to the very first hat I wore as an educator: the teacher hat. The twenty-three years I spent in K-8 classrooms prepared me for the next twelve in administration by clarifying my priorities. I enjoy what I do simply because I am able as a principal to live the vision I had when I entered education. That vision depicted a principal who was the leader of a model school, a school that was continually evolving and striving for excellence. A principal who sincerely cared about all members of the school community who was

engaged in their learning. I envisioned a staff of eager life-long learners who candidly shared their values, thoughts, and ideas in a safe, professional setting.

This vision resulted, in part, from my frustrations as a classroom teacher, from a desire to fulfill the more fundamental vision of a learner-centered school I had developed as a teacher. I knew that although many teachers and I had the energy, ideas, and willingness to make education better for children, the task was nearly impossible unless the site administrator's actions supported change and fostered a team approach. The vision I had of a school administrator did not place the principal above, but alongside. As a principal I wanted to be sure that all new ideas were thoroughly and respectfully considered and when adopted were supported by the staff and the administration. (Ackerman & Donaldson, Jr. pp. 75-76)

Picken's description of his experiences as a school principal further identifies the importance of a leveled, non-hierarchical approach to collaborative decision making and collective efforts to make differences in the lives of children, one at a time. Picken's experiences echo the findings in this research linking principal leadership, change agency, the visioning process, and the personal nature of leadership in public schools.

Central Findings and Implications for Each School

After forming a basis in current and prior research as well as collecting data at Franklin Pierce and Greenway, I have identified several key characteristics of schools that function with effective and emerging school cultures. These characteristics promote a sense of collaboration for all constituents. The key elements of schools with effective cultures are a shared

vision, traditions, collaboration, shared decision making, innovation, and communication.

The vision of a school is a powerful picture for the future generated by all members. A shared vision offers staff members direction and purpose for their work. A vision statement is simple, reflecting the shared meaning developed through the history of the group. A vision statement is based on values. It speaks about what a school considers it's most important work, the environment that will be created, and the relationships shared by members.

Traditions make the values and assumptions of a school visible through actions, metaphor, symbols, rituals and ceremonies. Each of these enactments transmits what is important about the school both internally to members and externally to constituents. Traditions include annual events such as student recognitions, graduations, staff retreats, and other symbolic gestures that bind a group together. Mr. Allen was an expert at engaging and maintaining visible traditions and ceremonies in the school that engaged students and teachers.

When members of an organization work together to accomplish a task, they demonstrate collaboration. This may occur in small groups, teams or with the entire staff. In order for teamwork to occur, members must deal with the stated and unspoken expectations for behavior norms in each group. Collaboration also creates a leveled organization that downplays the hierarchy of designated positions such as teacher, assistant principal, or principal.

Shared decision-making has been described as the moral fiber of culture. Both formal and informal decisions made by a group translate the values of a group into actions. Site-based decision-making is an example of lateral and collaborative leadership, offering members an opportunity to contribute to solving site issues and building a sense of community. Staff collaboration was an organizational need at Franklin Pierce and was in an emerging stage at the end of the study.

Innovation is demonstrated when a new element is introduced into a group for their benefit. This trait also includes dealing with change, which challenges the existing assumptions and beliefs of the culture, and introduces uncertainty. As a change agent within Franklin Pierce Elementary School, Mrs. Beaty's goal was to catalyze change by introducing innovations which caused a certain level of discomfort within her staff. At the same time, Mr. Allen encouraged innovation by creating an exploratory environment for his teachers and students.

Communication is the final key characteristic of a healthy school culture. A culture expresses itself through communication, which includes the emotions of its members. Communication patterns exist internally between staff members and externally to parents and stakeholders. The communication piece was definitely a strong point for Mr. Allen at Greenway Elementary School. He utilized many strategies for communicating with parents and staff as well as championing a shared vision for the school.

These effective school practices correlate with the emerging themes in this research study. The ideas and practices of participatory leadership, personal investment, a shared vision, empowerment, and community are not recipes or prescriptions for success. However, they are practical and lived experiences of two principals that are leading change in their respective schools. As in any school or organization, the culture and leadership practices at Greenway and Franklin Pierce are works in progress and these findings are simply suggestions of effective practices that have worked at these sites.

Limitations of the Study

Although the initial intent of this research was to gather a balanced data collection from teachers and administrators, the progression of the research tended toward gathering data from the two principals. While the data provided from the descriptive narratives of the principals is supported by the NEA survey, anecdotal and other document analysis, there is the question of subjectivity for the participants. However, the information gathered from multiple sources was triangulated and substantiated by repeated comments and answers from the teachers that were interviewed as well as through observation at each site.

Further limitations include the difficulty of gaining a rapport with the teachers in each school. The teachers were receptive to my presence in the building to observe their classrooms. However, it was more difficult to access time to have meaningful conversations with them. In spite of this obstacle, I had

multiple conversations with several teachers at each site. Because of the limited amount of time spent with each of them, it was difficult to gain meaningful relationships with teachers. It was also difficult to discern whether their feedback and responses were legitimate or whether the teachers were saying what they thought I wanted to hear. A methodological problem arose because I was not able to visit each site as much as I wanted in order to foster relationships with the teachers. The limited number of stakeholders also provided insight from only a small population from each school.

Another challenge was correlating the change process at two schools that starkly contrast in student performance, demographics, and principal experience. Although observing a newly appointed principal versus veteran principal was part of the study methodology, this was a complicating factor in analyzing the data.

Another issue relevant to school improvement is how we, as educators, researchers, and practitioners, measure it. Louis, Toole, and Hargreaves (1999) state that, "Research has taught us that the problem of change is much deeper than the adoption of new innovations" (p. 254). The change process also includes implementation, maintenance of purpose, impact, and replication. The proper way to evaluate school improvement efforts continues to elude many researchers. Although adequate evidence abounds, there are also indications that there has been little change in the culture of schools and classroom.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study provides several possibilities for further research. Based on my experiences observing, dialoguing with, and assessing Greenway Elementary and Franklin Pierce Elementary schools, further research with the change process and school reform is necessary in order to expand our understanding of the relationship between leadership and the change process. Leadership exists within a social or group context and the complexity of those relationships are noteworthy and oftentimes unique to the setting. There is a need for “longitudinal design that balances describing the uniqueness of specific contexts and identifying commonalities that permit generalization” (Firestone & Riehl, 2005, p. 165). A longitudinal study of a school like Franklin Pierce that is required to host a School Assistance Team would allow data collection and observation over a period of years instead of the short period of observation and data collection in this study. A lengthier study would allow the researcher to analyze change initiatives and whether the changes evolve and transform the school. Many researchers describe second order changes as “deep change” in the culture of a school. Deep change alters a school in systematic ways that create a dramatic shift from previous procedures and require new ways of thinking and acting. A longitudinal study would provide formidable support for findings related to ongoing ‘deep change’ in a school’s culture.

Another area for consideration is how principals relate to and value school culture and the change process. According to Firestone and Riehl (2005), “some

research can provide enlightening information, perspectives, and frameworks for leaders and help them to think differently about the value choices, sociopolitical realities, and complex technical decisions they face” (p. 162). It would be informative to interview or survey a large population of principals related to school culture and change. A larger sample would provide transferability of findings to a larger audience.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study suggest that building a strong culture and fostering a community of learners are important endeavors for principals that value these concepts. For struggling schools like Franklin Pierce, school culture is one area where effective leadership practices can make initial impact on the school morale. This is particularly true in elementary schools. It is imperative that educational leaders understand the dynamics of school culture in their schools. The culture of each school is unique and one of a kind. However, there are commonalities and methods of working within the culture that transcend individual settings.

Murphy and Louis (1994) refer to a web of influence with the principal functioning at the center of the web. This is an apt description of a principal that understands and engages the culture of the school. While understanding the norms, rituals, and values of the school, he or she is at the nexus of the activity and dialogue, able to advise, lead, and guide teachers, parents, and students. A

key to being at the nexus of information is the principal's ability to communicate within the school environment. Using effective communication tactics is crucial for principals that lead change efforts.

Culture exists in all schools and organizations. Some school leaders make conscious efforts to work within school cultures and make appropriate adjustments, while others place emphasis on other areas and leave the culture to its own devices. During my research, I discovered that constituents within a particular setting will have an awareness of and value the school culture in direct relation to how much it is valued by the leader. If school culture is important to the leader, it will probably become a part of the dialogue within the school. If school culture is not valued by the leader, the teachers and staff have some input into how much attention it is given, how it is valued, and how it plays out in relationships in the school.

School leaders can learn more about school culture in a variety of ways, including reading sources like Deal and Peterson (1994, 1999) as well as Fullan (1993, 1997, 2001). In addition, principals can further their understanding of school culture by being observant of their school's culture, organizing formal discussion of culture with their staff, and reflecting on the culture of their own and other schools.

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