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Leading standards-based reform: examining the role of the principal in raising student achievement in a program improvement school, a case study 2004-2008

Jacqueline Sanderlin

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

LEADING STANDARDS-BASED REFORM:

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL IN RAISING STUDENT

ACHIEVEMENT IN A PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT SCHOOL:

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Jacqueline Sanderlin

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John Fitzpatrick, Ed.D - Dissertation Chairperson

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Jacqueline Sanderlin

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

November 11, 2008

Faculty Committee:

_____

John Fitzpatrick, Ed.D. Chairperson

_____

Robert Barner, Ph.D.

_____

Bettye Rae Jones, Ed.D.

_____

Eric R. Hamilton, Ph.D.
Associate Dean of Education

_____

Margaret J. Weber, Ph.D.
Dean

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VITA

Education:
2005-Present

Candidate for Ed.D in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy
Pepperdine University

2004

Masters of Arts, Special Education
California State University Dominguez Hills

2002

Doctor of Ministry/Theology
Southern California School of Ministry

2000

California Administrative Services Credential
California State University Hills College

1992

Bachelors of Arts, Communications – Public Relations
California State University Dominguez Hills

Additional Education:
2006-2007

Harvard Graduate School of Education – The Principal's Center

2004

Completed AB75 Principal's Academy (LACOE)

2004

Clear Certificate of Completion of Staff Development (SB395 B-CLAD)

2001-2002

California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) – Los Angeles County Office of
Education (LACOE)

Professional Experience:
2005 – 2007

Adjunct Professor
Pepperdine University (Graduate School of Education Program)

2004 – Present

Principal
Dr. George Washington Carver Elementary School (K-5; 421 student population)
Compton Unified School District (CUSD)

2003 – 2004

Program Coordinator/Administrator
CUSD

2000 – 2003

Principal
Lincoln/Drew Magnet School (Pre-K-8; 650 student population), CUSD

2002
> Principal
> Ralph Waldo Emerson Elementary School (Pre-K-5; 930 student population),
> CUSD

1998 – 2000
> Assistant Principal
> Walton Middle School (5-8; 675 student population), CUSD

1997-1998
> Curriculum Specialist (English Language Arts)
> CUSD

1995 – 1997
> Special Education Teacher (SDC)
> Dickinson Elementary School, CUSD

1994-1995
> Assistant Director/Lead Teacher
> YWCA Preschool

1993-1994
> First Grade Teacher
> Alpha Elementary School (K-5 Private School)

1992-1995
> Special Education Teacher (Severely Handicapped)
> Tierra Del Sol Foundation

1991-1992
> Paraprofessional
> Culver City Middle School, Culver City Unified School District

Honors, Awards, Training:
- Communicator of the Year – Compton Unified School District
- It Takes a Village to Raise a Child Educator Award – Charles Drew University
- Special Education IEP Goal - Compton Unified School District

Publications/Presentations:
- Professional Learning Communities, Compton Unified School District, 2008
- Effective teaching and learning, Pepperdine University, 2007
- Culture and Collaboration, Pepperdine University, 2006
- Author, *The Life and Times of Dr. Reatha Morris D. Herndon*

Organizations/Committees/Current & Former:
- Association of California School Administration (ACSA)
- American Association of School Administrators (AASA)

ABSTRACT

The role of the principal has changed in definition and perception over the last decade. Today's principal is deeply involved with instruction, curriculum, accountability as well as management of the school site. Given this change, there is a need to define critical skills essential to principal leadership, particularly of low performing schools.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the role of one principal in Los Angeles, California over a four year period as a school leader who implemented standards-based reform to raise student achievement in a Program Improvement school. The results of this case study will serve to inform the design and implementation of effective strategies for principals who lead schools in Program Improvement and may also inform other local districts with similar needs.

This study was qualitative in approach and case study in design, utilizing literature review, survey, and personal interview methodology. The literature review investigated the role of the principal, the urgency of school reform, traits of effective schools and best instructional practices. Information from the review assisted with the development of a survey and interview questions. These methods allowed the study to examine both current research and perceptions from teachers and the principal of Sunnydale Elementary School.

Findings revealed that there are specific attributes that are evident in a school exiting out of program improvement: building school capacity, accountability, high quality professional development, collaboration, common assessments, parent involvement, a clear mission and vision, and an effective instructional leader.

More specifically, this case study examines the perceptions of teacher's and how they view the role of the principal with building capacity and accountability to implement standards-based reform. This case study will also reveal the process this school went through with implementing common assessments, standards-based teaching, high quality professional development, and much more to implement grand scale reform.

Finally, findings revealed that in order to sustain student achievement, this school would need to continue looking at data to inform instruction and provide high quality professional development to strengthen teacher knowledge on what the California Standards are asking students to be able to master.

CHAPTER 1

The Problem

Introduction

This case study will endeavor to unveil the process that the principal and staff at Sunnydale underwent to raise their student achievement in order to exit Program Improvement. Although standards are one path in the roadmap used to increase student achievement, "Standards, even when well implemented, can take us only part way to successful large-scale reform; it is only leadership that can take us all the way" (Fullan, 2003, p. 16).

Statement of the Problem

A review of literature revealed minimal reports on the role of principals in implementing standards-based reform to raise academic achievement in order for their schools to exit Program Improvement. Schools in Program Improvement are mandated to implement standards-based reform practices to meet their required AYP and API. Such schools face the dilemma of having to make the necessary changes in order to raise student achievement under a time constraint. Reeves (2001) maintains,

> Although many people have accused the U.S. Department of Education of being the power behind the standards movement, the truth is that states have been the ones to establish academic standards, rather than the federal government. In most cases, the states use those standards so that teachers, students, and parents can have a clear understanding of what is expected (p. 10).

Regardless of who is behind the standards movement, schools in Program Improvement are required to learn how to implement them in the most effective way. This requires a change in Program Improvement schools' previous practices.

1

In the search for different ways of increasing achievement, standards-based education appears to be one of the main factors in doing so (Briars & Resnick, 2000; National Commission on Education Standards and Testing, 1992; Smith & O'Day, 1990).

Research on effective schools from the 1970's and 1980's placed principals at the head of school improvement efforts. These studies described effective principals as those who went beyond "running a tight ship." According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), the model principal that emerged from this research was a strong, forceful, assertive individual who was quick to take initiative and create an effective school, no matter what. Lieberman (1995) describes the changing image of the principal in this way:

> The 1990's view of leadership calls for principals to act as partners with teachers, involved in a collaborative quest to examine practices and improve schools. Principals are not expected to control teachers but to support them and to create opportunities for them to grow and develop (p. 9).

The educational community has acknowledged the significance of the principal in shaping school culture. It is evident that over time, the role of the principalship has changed and evolved to today's high levels of accountability and sanctions. However, the school reform agenda, as set by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, set a new bar for accountability measures, school governance, and school improvement practices. Standards-based reform is to inform teachers what they should teach at each grade level. Schools are expected to align their curriculum and professional development to meet these standards. (Lake, Hill, O'Toole, & Celio, 1999).

Noted education and leadership scholar Dr. Douglas Reeves (2001) argues,

> The standards movement is hardly a new and revolutionary idea. In every school in the country, there are athletic teams and musical groups that routinely take a 'standards-based' approach to education. When students fail to make a free throw in basketball or hit an F-sharp in band, they do not receive a B- in those subjects. Rather, those students get immediate feedback to improve their performance.

Essentially, the standards movement asks parents, teachers, and students to apply the same techniques to academic classes (p. 7).

This new sense of accountability did more than set the bar for all schools in California; it also exposed underperforming schools that were in need of Program Improvement as measured by the California State Test (CST). Schools in Program Improvement have not met their AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress).

Today's educational setting demands strong leadership that is focused and knows best practices, and the leadership at the school level must begin with the principal. As a result of standards-based reform the role of the principal has had to undergo a transformation. Today's principal can no longer be the manager who simply sets schedules, holds meetings and supervises the yard. Instead, he or she has to be an instructional leader who must build school capacity and create a culture of learning in order to sustain student academic growth.

Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis (1996) agree that it takes a team to lead a school effectively. Consequently, principals continue to struggle with balancing the demands of the district while trying to develop a team culture among the school's teachers and staff. In order to work effectively in this type of environment, today's principals require new skills and a new mindset. Lambert (2003) argues that the role of the principal is vitally important for academic success.

Background of the Problem

Sunnnydale Elementary School's student achievement has expanded incrementally over a four-year period. Table1 illustrates this growth in the area of English Language Arts. As a Program Improvement school in 2004 – 2006, Sunnydale met its Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2007.

Table 1

Sunnydale English Language Arts Data from 2004 – 2008

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Percent Proficient	6.8%	22.7%	23.5%	25.7%	32.5%

The School Reform Movement

The national school reform movement was initiated due to lack of consistent curriculum, variations in grading practices, lack of educational outputs, and the existence of national curricula among other countries with reputations of academic excellence (Marzano & Kendall, 1996). These are the main challenges currently faced by schools in Program Improvement. Many of them do not have a consistent curriculum, and what curriculum they have is often lacking in coherence of the curriculum due to high teacher turnover rates and professional development that usually ends up taking a back seat to district business. Principals in these schools often function merely as managers and not as instructional leaders (Marzano, 2003).

In order to create equity in schools and ensure that all students receive a "good" education, large-scale reform movements have led schools and school leaders to think differently and change what they do, which can be a challenge. Marzano (2003) argues that implementing a curriculum that is based on the standards is very challenging and sometimes difficult.

California has developed state-adopted content standards in all subject areas specific to each grade level. These content standards are tested every year and measured by the California State Test (CST) as a result of No Child Left behind Act (NCLB). NCLB amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, by requiring testing and accountability of all students, which requires changes in educational practices at many levels (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002). NCLB mandates testing of standards-based reform efforts, substantially increasing the "testing requirements for states with measurable Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) objectives for all students and subgroups of students defined by socioeconomic background, race – ethnicity, English language proficiency, and disability" (Linn et. al., p. 3).

As a result of NCLB, schools must continually increase in student achievement and close the achievement gap on an annual basis in order to avoid sanctions. (Student achievement is defined as those students who score "proficient or higher" on the language arts and math CST's.) In California, individual schools must reach a minimum score of 800 (out of a possible 1000) on the Academic Performance Index (API) to be considered proficient. Failure to meet improvement targets would earn the school the stigma of a "Program Improvement" label.

The Principal's Role in Achieving Reform

If teachers are not teaching the required content standards and assessing those standards, students who are tested on the standards are less likely to perform well. The principal, therefore, serves a crucial role leading this effort, both in re-directing teachers and curriculum, and in other, more subtle ways. After all, the leadership role of the school principal has changed dramatically over the years (Glasman & Heck, 1992). This

is especially true now, since NCLB introduced the practice of Program Improvement. As a result of this shift, schools must implement standards-based reform and many other research-based best practices in order to be considered a sound educational institution.

To implement any reform effort takes a principal who knows how to implement standards-based reform and build the school's capacity to sustain it. The principal's role is often considered the make or break of reform efforts. Reform for Program Improvement schools is not a choice; rather, it is a mandate from the state and federal governments. The principal has to be savvy in how he/she achieves these mandates, taking care not to crush the spirit of staff members whose efforts will bring about the needed reform. "Schools of the 21st century will require an instructional leader who focuses on strengthening teaching and learning, builds school capacity, allocates resources, provides professional development, uses data-driven decision making, and develops accountability" (Institute for Educational Leadership 2000, as cited in Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 75).

Any principal is likely to feel overwhelmed by sanctions, timelines, and the state, especially if Program Improvement is not done properly. After all, a great deal of pressure is placed on principals to ensure that their schools succeed and exit Program Improvement. Principal's who see themselves as instructional leaders focus on teaching and learning, as well as managing a school (National Staff Development Council, 2000). To implement these strategies, the principal's mindset must change fundamentally. He or she must shift from merely managing the building to being an instructional leader who inspires others to help him or her accomplish the goal. Indeed, standards-based reform has required principals to further reexamine their leadership role in schools, shifting from

manager, to community leader, to visionary leader, to instructional leader, and beyond

(Hale & Moorman, 2003). But change, as Fullan (2001) has suggested, only comes when

the principal accomplishes his or her role of leadership by shaping the contextual factors

that create the organizational conditions necessary for school change.

Implementing School Reform Legislation

Linn and colleagues (2002) maintain that:

The challenge before us is the implementation of legislative intent in a way that
will provide the information needed to assess and improve school level
educational quality - information that must be simultaneously relevant to teachers,
administrators, policy makers, and of course parents and students (p. 15).

How can a principal do this alone? Lambert (2003) argues that building capacity is one of

the chief actions a principal must take in any type of school restructuring. Smith and

O'Day (1991, as cited in Ahearn, 2000) conclude that accountability means that all

children, even from various backgrounds receive the same education with high

expectations.

This qualitative case study will shed light on the process and strategies that the

principal and staff of a Program Improvement school took to implement best practices.

This study will also attempt to show how the principal led the school in a cultural shift,

and a successful implementation of Program Improvement protocols, which resulted in

achieving the school's reform goals.

Purpose of the Study

Using a qualitative case study approach, this study will examine the leadership

role of one principal in building school capacity and accountability to raise student

achievement in one Program Improvement school in Compton, California. According to

Reyes & Wagstaff (2003, as cited in Hale & Moorman, 2003), says that principal's are

inspirational to a school's success. Lashway (2003) reports that principals should focus more on student learning.

As education continues to change and evolve over time, the pressure on principals in Program Improvement schools to raise and sustain academic growth remains a challenge. Time is not on the side of a principal in Program Improvement; each year, they have to not only make improvements, but also they must sustain them, which is even more difficult.

Research Questions

The aim of this qualitative case study is to gain insight into two aspects of Program Improvement school reform: the implementation of standards-based reform and the leadership role of the principal in building school capacity and accountability in order to raise student achievement. The research questions are:

1. How has the leadership role of the principal changed with the implementation of standards-based reform?

2. How does the principal engage teachers in the process of implementing standards-based reform?

3. What key strategies does the principal employ to raise academic achievement?

4. How does the principal hold individuals accountable for implementing standards-based reform in order to raise and sustain academic achievement?

The information presented in this chapter clearly demonstrates the need for further exploration of how the principal's role as instructional leader shifts as schools implement standards-based reform to raise student academic growth.

Significance of the Study

In recent decades U.S. society has become increasingly concerned with the quality of youth education, especially given that schools are mainly responsible for preparing youngsters for today's rapidly changing world. Furthermore, the implementing of standards-based reform has required a change in the principal's leadership role from manager to instructional leader, particularly for schools that are in Program Improvement.

As previously described, the role of the principal is crucial in successfully implementing school reforms. Reyes and Wagstaff (2003, as cited in Hale & Moorman, 2003) note:

> The leadership ability and leadership values of the principal determine in large measure what transpires in a school; what transpires in a school either promotes, nourishes, or impedes and diminishes student academic success (p. 7).

This qualitative case study will significantly contribute to research about the leadership role of principals in building school capacity and accountability in order to raise and sustain academic achievement. Information obtained from this study will assist other principals of Program Improvement schools in their quest to change school culture and enhance student performance. Even though Program Improvement schools certainly face many of the same challenges that other schools do, the former face different pressures as a result of the sanctions and timelines under which they must operate. This qualitative case study will specifically address the challenges, obstacles and processes principals navigate as they lead standards-based reform in Program Improvement schools.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this qualitative case study is that the researcher will only study one high-poverty, Program Improvement School over a four-year period. The researcher will interview 18 teachers and 1 principal, all of whom are self-selected and voluntarily chose to participate in this study.

Definition of Terms

1. *Academic Performance Index (API)* – A rating the state gives each school, ranging from 200-1000. A minimum score of 800 is the goal for all schools.

2. *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* – A percentage of students the federal government determines must score proficient or above on the CST test in language arts and mathematics.

3. *Building School Capacity* –The process of giving school staff the training, resources and opportunities to pursue complex tasks (namely implementing standards-based reform) and then to hold them accountable for the school's performance (Fullan, 2003).

4. *California Standards Test (CST)* –Examinations administered annually to all California students in language arts and math, science, and social science, which are used to determine school and student achievement.

5. *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* – Enacted in 2001, the NCLB allows the federal government to set goals for student achievement nationwide.

6. *Program Coherence* – The extent to which the school's programs for student and staff learning are coordinated, focused on clear learning goals, and sustained over a period of time.

7. *Program Improvement* –Under current NCLB policy, a school or district could be identified for improvement if different subgroups do not make AYP in the same content area for two consecutive years.

8. *School Achievement* – In California, a school can be defined as achieving its goals when it scores 800 or above on the API.

9. *Standards-based Reform* – A set of standards for what children should know and be able to do at particular grade levels. States are expected to align their curricula and teacher training to the standards, create statewide assessments to measure student achievement, and based on the results, provide rewards, sanctions, or assistance.

10. *Student Academic Achievement* - In California, students can be said to be academically achieving when they when they score "proficient or higher" on the CST.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

       The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the history of school reform and to

present a review and summary of the literature relating to: (a) implementing the goals of

standards-based reform, and (b) roles, styles, and characteristics of principal leadership. It

will discuss what constitutes "effective" reform for all schools, not only for schools in

Program Improvement. This chapter will also discuss how principals build school

capacity and accountability in an effort to raise and sustain student achievement in a

Program Improvement school.

History and Urgency of School Reform

       In the past, the consequences for a school failing to meet expectations were more

complaints, new calls for reform, and a continuing struggle between those who would

take the schools back to an old format that worked in the past (Schlecty, 1997). During

this time of school change, principals have a greater responsibility to utilize their

leadership skills and implement best practices that have proven successful in other

schools. Since the enactment of NCLB, California schools have had to meet the standards

created by the California Department of Education. Schools that do not meet these

standards are quickly identified as Program Improvement schools and have sanctions

levied against them. Each year, as the stakes for reading and math increase, the

accountability increases as well, causing principals to push harder and require more of their staff in order to sustain growth.

The school reform efforts of the past 25 years can be categorized into three major eras: the Intensification Era, the Restructuring Era, and the Reformation Era. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education created a document that would drastically change the American perspective on education. *A Nation at Risk* served as a catalyst for a flurry of school improvement initiatives throughout the United States that came to be known collectively as the Excellence Movement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). This was not a new program or concept. Rather, it simply called for schools to do more and teach more: basically, to intensify what they were already doing. During the Intensification Era, the government provided the driving force behind reform, requiring intense, top-down, scripted instruction.

History has a tendency to repeat itself; it seems that today's schools, it seems we have returned to the trends of the Intensification Era. Today's reforms have resulted in state-adopted curricula and content standards, expanded standardized testing, more strenuous graduation requirements, and stricter standards for certification of teachers (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). DuFour and Eaker described the 1980's as the decade of reforming schools, the 1990's as the decade of restructuring schools and the 21st century as the time for less restructuring and more re-culturing to develop into professional learning communities. Although the proponents of the Intensification Era believed that the top-down approach was most effective in enhancing school performance, recent research proves that approach is actually least effective. Accordingly, if schools are going

to restructure, there must be a collective effort that involves all staff members and produces a shared vision and mission that will support teaching and learning.

Schlecty (1997) argued that the key to systemic reform is the development of the capacity of school districts to support change at the building level and to make sure that those who occupy top-level positions (namely the principal) in the system have the inclinations and skills to use this capacity to the fullest.

Ongoing research says that the entire staff and stakeholders of the school must be aware of the vision and the mission in order for reform to occur. Everyone shares the capacity that is built, not only the principal. This is not a solo performance. In fact, those who are responsible for reform, must continually be updated and provided professional development on best practices so they can implement research based ideas. "The demands of modern society are such that America's public schools must now provide what they have never been provided before: a first rate academic education for nearly all students" (Schlecty, 1997, p. 235).

That was the intention of the Intensification Movement, but the approach brought about much public concern. With the launching of Sputnik in 1957, many cited the failure of education as the primary reason that the United States had fallen behind Russia in the space race (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The Intensification approach, and the well-intentioned concepts of higher standards and scripted curriculum, did not solve the United States' academic crisis. Reform was not filtering down to the classroom where teaching and learning could impact students in a more positive way.

The Restructuring Era was born in the late 1980's and 1990's. The demise of the Excellence movement prompted another approach that called for goals and standards. In

1989, President George Bush convened a summit meeting on education, which became "Goals 2000." The result of the Bush summit was the identification of the following eight goals for national education:

1. All children in America will start school ready to learn;

2. The high school graduation rate will increase to 90%;

3. American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy;

4. U.S. students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement;

5. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;

6. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment that is conducive to learning;

7. By the year 2000, the nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued development of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century;

8. By the year 2000, every school will promote partnerships that will increase parent involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (California Department of Education, 2006).

Unfortunately, the Restructuring Movement did not make progress occur as rapidly as expected. Regarding this failure to adapt, Richard Elmore, prominent researcher on the effects of education policy on schools and classrooms noted,

> A significant body of circumstantial evidence points to a deep, systemic incapacity of U.S. schools, and the practitioners who work within them, to develop, incorporate, and extend new ideas about teaching and learning in anything but a small fraction of schools and classrooms (1996, p. 1).

Fullan (2001), world authority in education reform, agreed, arguing, "None of the current strategies being employed in educational reform result in substantial widespread change…The first step toward liberation, in my view, is the realization that we are facing a lost cause" (p. 220). There was a definite urgency in the minds of the public.

Although the public at that time began to lament and be discouraged over America's education crisis, educators had a different view. Some researchers report that most teachers believe that schools are doing as well as possible given the societal problems and lack of parental involvement. But the principal, who feels the most pressure, is aware that if they don't make progress, it could mean they could lose their jobs, according to NCLB.

"The inability to articulate the desired results in meaningful terms has led to initiatives that focused on methods and processes rather than results"(DuFour and Eaker, 1998, p. 10). The world of education today is all about results and data, specifically the AYP and API, and whether schools are meeting their desired goals and objectives. This emphasis is what birthed a new accountability effort called Program Improvement.

Program Improvement

Heifetz (1994) argues that people look for the wrong kind of leadership when the going gets tough:

> In a crisis…we call for someone with answers, decision, strength, and a map of the future, someone who knows where we ought to be going – in short someone who can make hard problems simple-problems that require us to learn in new ways (p. 21).

When NCLB implemented the practice of Program Improvement in 2001, everyone in education began to learn and see things in new ways. One might say that educators returned to the Restructuring Era and began a top-down movement that focused on standards, scripted curriculum and strict graduation requirements. Theoretically, this is close to what did happen. In reality, however, Program Improvement meant much more than that.

Program Improvement brought about a change in how educators view teaching and learning, providing a new performance-based system that profoundly transformed the principal's role and responsibilities (Barker, 2000). This protocol offers Program Improvement schools launching pads with which to replicate evidence-based best practices. Because of the strict criteria for identifying Program Improvement schools, principals are able to specifically define what they need to improve.

According to the California Department of Education, a Title 1 school (a school that has received funding from Title 1, the largest federal aid program for U.S. schools) will be identified for Program Improvement when, for two consecutive years, the school: (a) does not make AYP in the same content area (English language arts or mathematics) school-wide or for any numerical sub-group; and (b) does not meet AYP criteria in the

same content area in all grades of each grade span (grades 2-5, grades 6-8, and grade 10), or does not make AYP on the same indicator (API or high school graduation rate) school-wide.

NCLB requires the following goals and outcomes for schools in Program Improvement:

1. All students have a fair, equal, and sufficient opportunity to:

   a. Obtain a high-quality education.

   b. Reach proficiency on challenging state academic content standards and state academic assessments. (*20 USC* 6301)

2. The Local Education Agency (LEA) closes the achievement gap between:

   a. High and low-performing students, especially between minority and non-minority students (*20 USC* 6301[3])

Although NCLB has its criteria, the Program Improvement School has to be aware and implement what they are required to do. These requirements are far more than what the principal can do alone. Rather, it requires the work of the entire staff and its stakeholders for a school to move forward and ultimately exit out of Program Improvement status. It requires the collective effort of everyone on a school's campus to effectively build capacity and create ownership so the school can make progress (Lambert, 2003). However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the principal to stimulate capacity building and develop and engage his or her staff in this process.

LEA Program Improvement Requirements

1 Year 1 – Revise and develop LEA single site plan within three months of identification.

2 Year 2 – Plan Implementation: Implement plan from Year One

3 Year 3 – Make at least one Corrective Action: Defer programmatic funds or reduce administrative funds; institute new curriculum and professional development for staff; replace LEA staff; remove individual schools from jurisdiction or LEA and arrange for governance; appoint trustee in place of superintendent and school board; abolish or restructure LEA.

4 Year 4 and Year 5+ – Planning for restructuring and alternative governance (California Department of Education website, 2006).

The school in this qualitative case study is a Program Improvement School that implemented a standards-based curriculum. In order to do this effectively, the principal had the task of building the school's capacity, engaging the teachers, using data to drive instruction, implementing effective interventions and providing high-quality professional development for school staff.

Standards-based Reform

Reeves (2001) says that standards-based reform is more than claiming you are one. In order to exit Program Improvement, this school needed to implement several best practices reform elements, one of which involved teaching the State Standards. The school's teachers had not been previously exposed to these standards because they had never been provided with copies of the California State Standards. One of the first actions

the principal took was to give each teacher a copy of the State Frameworks. The teachers

then carefully reviewed them both as a school and in grade levels. Throughout the years

of reform, the teachers were engaged in professional development that caused them to

carefully examine the standards and begin to unpack what the standards required students

to master grade level content. The principal led weekly conversations with the teachers

about the standards until the teachers became confident enough to conduct the

conversations on their own.

Implementing standards-based reform. Implementing standards-based reform

requires instructional, cultural and systemic change. Fullan (2001) asserts:

> The question of implementation is simply whether or not a given idea, practice or program gets "put in place" and "the logic is straightforward – no matter how promising a new idea may be, it cannot impact student learning if it is superficially implemented (p. 2).

The entire staff, which includes all its stakeholders, must be knowledgeable about the

State Standards and know what is expected of them in order to implement those

standards. Schein (2004) reports that implementing change requires a change in values,

beliefs and behaviors, and not merely the formation of new structures. If done incorrectly,

the principal can easily interrupt the building of the school capacity if he or she does not

fully understand the change process. Fullan (2001) argues that change is a process and

the principal must respect that process in order to sustain academic growth.

According to Reeves (2001):

> Merely decorating rooms with colorful posters of standards from the state department of education is a futile exercise. The impact of standards can only occur when teachers collaborate and reach a consensus on the meaning of standards and proficiency (p. 10).

Standards are the heart of fairness and develop a bar or threshold for all students to reach. They set a standard of performance, particularly for Program Improvement schools that need to know if students are reaching proficiency.

Reeves (2001) groundbreaking book, *Making Standards Work* (1997), provides ten steps to creating standards-based performance assessments. It also contains several appendices with practical ideas for creating a standards-based classroom and school. Here is a summary of some critical steps schools can take when implementing standards:

1. *Read the state and district standards that apply to your classroom and school.* Educators are obligated to think about what is missing in their current curriculum and, more importantly, what units in the current curriculum can be eliminated.

2. *Prioritize the standards.* Few have taken the essential step of distinguishing which standards are most important to implement first, also known as "power standards."

3. *Select (and, if necessary, create) assessments that match the standards.* Schools can only know if a standard has been met when a student has provided evidence of proficiency.

4. *Select curriculum necessary to support student proficiency.* This step stands in marked contrast to creating lesson plans that match unrealistic and over-burdened curricula or the more primitive march through textbooks until, inevitably, teachers run out of gas in the spring. The selection of a standards-based curriculum implies focus, discernment, and the clear exclusion of many

elements that currently exist in textbooks, lesson plans and curricula. An

effective standards-based curriculum is planned with the end result in mind.

5. *Collaborate with colleagues with a focus on real student work.* Collaboration

is at the heart of effective standards implementation. Education is an

inherently a collaborative profession, not a solitary one, and the

implementation of standards-based assessment and curriculum requires the

development of a consensus on what "proficiency" in meeting a standard

really means. Collaboration also allows professionals to engage in frequent

mid-course corrections so that improve teaching, learning, curriculum,

assessment, and leadership can be improved throughout the reform process.

Standards-based reform is not intended to be accomplished by schools alone; this

is especially true for low performing and Program Improvement schools. Rather, such

schools are meant to stand on the shoulders of giants by replicating best practices and

implementing the use of pre-established standards. Reeves (2001) points out that school's

don't need to reinvent the wheel. The answer lies in effective schools.

The implementation is a focus on evaluating student work. This is done by

evaluating a piece of student work (with the name concealed) based on the pre-

determined assessment scoring guide or rubric (Reeves, 2001). The teacher does this

alone, then with a colleague and ultimately in larger groups. This collaborative process

may lead to changes in instruction, rubrics, and student work as well as expectations for

students.

Reeves (2001) stresses that "…although education is not a solitary process,

teachers do need to know how to incorporate standards into their everyday instruction.

First, teachers should be clear about their expectations. Secondly, teachers must use their time to focus all instruction on meeting the content standards. And thirdly, they must provide feedback that is respected by all students and can be used to enhance performance. In a standards-based school, teachers are not simply evaluators; they are seen as coaches and guides, rather than mere instructors. They facilitate the learning process and use standards to provide more information for students and parents" (p. 168).

Monitoring standards-based instruction. Educational leaders, teachers, students, and parents must know whether a student is performing proficiently. Standards communicate what students must be taught. Standards-based school systems focus on the extent to which their students meet or exceed standards, and it is essential that teachers and leaders understand the relationship between standards and accountability (Reeves, 2000). At Sunnydale, accountability for implementing standards and monitoring standards had to be put in place. The school decided to utilize the Standards-based checklists from the book *Making Standards Work*. The *Standards Implementation Classroom* and *School Checklist*, as seen in Table 4, were both used at Sunnydale Elementary School and helped teachers to identify whether or not they were properly implementing standards. They also informed the principal whether or not standards were truly at work.

Sustaining standards-based reform. Once a school has made gains as a result of implementing standards-based reform, that same school faces the new challenge of maintaining their efforts so their performance does not plateau or drop. Maintenance is particularly difficult in Program Improvement, presenting ongoing challenges for a

number of reasons: high teacher turnover, lack of instructional rigor, implementation of too many programs, inability to collaborate, lack of teacher morale, etc.

Gupton (2003) calls schools that implement many programs with little knowledge of how those programs work, "Christmas Tree*"* schools. This is because such schools have many fancy bells and whistles on the outside, but on the inside have minimal accountability and ultimately do not foster or sustain student academic growth.

Datnow and Stringfield (2000) speak to the difficulty of initially implementing and continuing reforms. In a study of eight schools that had implemented reforms, only three had continued to implement their reforms after a few years. In another district, by the third year of a four-year study, only one of thirteen schools was still continuing its selected reform design, and reform in six other schools had expired. Interestingly, teachers in some of those schools were not even aware that their school was in a reform process.

Fullan (2001) says, "…Policy makers and citizens have demanded large scale reform involving all or most of our schools, not just an innovative few. Models of *Whole School Reform* have been generated to help the spread and depth of reform" (p. 2).

According to Stoll (1999), the main goal of academic growth is to increase the pupils' progress as defined by a student's ability to relate to people, demonstrate learning and apply it in various arenas. In order to do this, teachers must be knowledgeable about the appropriate standards and curriculum if they are to deliver effective instruction. According to the research, schools that raise and sustain student achievement also develop teachers' knowledge of curriculum. They collaborate, share and continue to learn what they are expected to teach.

Fullan (2001) describes program coherence as common programs for students to enhance teaching and learning. He says that true program coherence is obvious when there is a common instructional framework and the working conditions support implementation of the framework. He also stresses that resources are aligned to support the academic decisions.

The principal is not the beholder of knowledge and information. Instead, the teacher must be knowledgeable about pedagogy and best practices and keeps abreast of current standards. This is critical if teachers are to be held accountable for delivering such instruction. The principal is responsible for ensuring that teachers engage in professional development so they can increase their knowledge and program coherence.

Marzano (2003) also says that coherent schools use a set of strategies to harness resources and staff towards a common instructional framework. These schools invest in technical resources that assist the entire school, focus staff collaboration and channel school and community resources to support a strong instructional program.

Sunnydale Elementary School, as in the case of most Program Improvement schools, had to focus on increasing its teachers' program coherence so they could teach with confidence, thereby raising student achievement.

Creating whole school program coherence is a team approach: both the school leadership/administration and the teachers are pivotal in leading this process, as articulated by Newmann (1992):.

> Since the sources of incoherence rest both within and beyond schools, strengthening instructional program coherence requires simultaneous effort from the bottom-up and the top-down. If actions to strengthen program coherence are integrated with actions to develop other key supports for school improvement, schools can build and reinforce the types of staff competence and commitment that will advance student learning (p. 44).

Performance Assessments

Schools in Program Improvement cannot wait until the end of the year to determine how their students performed. Rather, they must engage in frequent performance assessments so they can navigate their instruction throughout the year. Consistently gathered data can help monitor and assess performance (Schmoker, 1996). According to Lortie (1975), "the monitoring of effective instruction is the heart of effective instruction"(p. 41). An accurate performance assessment requires a demonstration of knowledge, skills, and understanding by the student (Reeves, 2001). Performance assessments are used and scored with rubrics. In the past, students had to guess what they would be tested on, whereas today's instructional and assessment standards leave no doubts as to what is expected of them.

Reeves (2001) argues that effective performance assessments include these three major components:

1. Performance assessment should have an engaging scenario. Students need a compelling reason to be involved in the activity.

2. The assessment should contain multiple tasks.

3. The assessment should communicate immediate feedback.

Assessments are no longer given solely for establishing a grade; rather to inform instruction.

Effective Staff Development

Reeves (2001) asserts, "First, professional development must be focused on student achievement" (p. 142). That means every possible hour and dollar should be devoted to professional development. Schools in Program Improvement must provide

time for teachers to collaborate and share ideas as they look closely at the standards for their grade level.

Effective staff development is critical and not a time for announcements or other unrelated tasks. Teachers should have a copy of the standards and be allowed to engage in collegial dialogue often. Fullan (2001) argues that collaboration can't be made up. Rather, collegiality is characterized by authentic interactions that are professional in nature. In the simple words of Schmoker (1996), he says collaboration works.

But in a Program Improvement school where the principal has to implement standards-based reform, the staff must first understand the fundamental purpose of academic standards before creating a professional development calendar for the year. Lezotte and Mckee (2002) argue that school improvement cannot be done in a vacuum, because it affects so many groups and individuals. Teachers should be engaged in collaboration and collegial dialogue that allows them to be transparent and reflect on their own practice. Reeves (2001) points out that working on standards, assessment, and curriculum is an inherently collaborative process. Teachers must have the time to talk about and unpack the standards they are expected to teach. Some researchers believe that a focus on "power standards" will allow them to implement standard-based reforms more effectively.

The Power of "Power Standards"

Reeves (2001) stresses the importance of "power standards" and the need to establish which standards are most important to teach first, rather than worry about covering the entire curriculum, mainly because it is impossible to teach all the California State Standards in one year. This is very important for Program Improvement schools that

need to focus and assess whether students are meeting or mastering standards throughout

the year. Deciding which standards to teach is not something that should be done alone;

rather, it is a collaborative process that should be done by grade level. But in order to do

this effectively, Reeves says teachers should bear in mind three factors as they weigh

each standard:

1. *Endurance*: Will the knowledge and skills involved in this "power standard"

   last for years to come?

2. *Leverage*: Do these skills help students in multiple areas of study?

3. *Readiness*: Are these skills necessary for the next level of study?

Thinking through these criteria help faculty members to focus on central issues, instead

of attempting to cover everything that each faculty member believes is important.

Sunnydale utilized a similar process in order to select the "power standards" it planned to

teach first. Teachers cannot be expected to do this type of work alone, however. Rather,

principals must provide leadership as well as carve out and protect time for collaboration

and collegial dialogue.

Leadership Role of the Principal

   Introduction. During the past 20 years, the principals of United States public

schools have been seen as key figures in school reform (Brookover & Lezotte, 1979).

Although, as previously mentioned, it takes the entire school community to make the

necessary changes in school culture to bring about reform, the principal is the one who

drives the vision and the mission to be accomplished.

   Although NCLB has a strong monitoring component, the principal and his/her

staff must collectively do the work of implementing reforms. In order to change a system,

players must alter the rules, roles, and relationships that define it (Schlechty, 1997). The principal in this case study had to make several immediate changes if progress was to occur, but before any structural changes took place, the need for the principal to learn more about the organization was even more crucial.

Over the past 25 years, school reform efforts have varied widely, in terms of what experts felt principals should do and how they should lead their schools. Reform efforts themselves have also had different primary foci, from restructuring the school to enforcing the curriculum, to developing new ways of teaching and learning. However, the principal, as the school's leader, has always been ultimately responsible for building support, giving direction toward the ultimate goal, and helping the school community understand how to implement the school reform initiative. Without question, the role of the principal has evolved into a very different job from the principalship most often associated with the early and mid-1900s (Gupton, 2003).

Types of leaders. Keller (1998) suggests that school, regardless of the socio-economic background of the students, continue to increase academic growth with a good principal at the helm. The educational literature has come to the consensus that leaders of effective schools know where they are headed and have a laser focus on instruction (Stoll, 1999). This concept of visionary leadership appears to be the heartbeat of teaching and learning since the implementation of standards-based reform.

During the early years of school reform, leaders with a traditional style led the movement on a small scale. However, new theories about leadership began to emerge. Some of the various forms that have been advocated through the school reform movement included participative, instructional, moral, and transformational leadership.

In their 1990 report entitled "Principals for our Changing Schools," the National Commission for the Principalship described the contemporary principal's dual role of managing and leading:

> Principals provide leadership to schools along two dimensions: Exercising broad leadership, they influence school cultures by building a vision, stimulating innovation, and encouraging performance. Principals also exercise initiative in a more technical sense by the daily practice of functional leadership. They "make things happen" and ensure that the organization's tasks are accomplished (p. 21).

Critical examination of today's effective principal reveals that the most critical shift in principal leadership style has been from that of a manager to that of an instructional leader.

Instructional leadership. The term "instructional leadership" has been widely used since the 1980's. However, Daresh and Playko's (1995) report that instructional leadership has a strong impact on teaching and learning.

Principals who are instructional leaders focus on implementing standards and a rigorous curriculum, standards, as well as using data on student performance. Such leaders guide teachers in reflection so teachers can engage in collegial dialogue about and collaboration around student achievement. Instructional leaders help to develop a positive environment for rigorous instruction to occur (National Staff Development Council, 2000).

Today's principals must work collaboratively with teachers, collect and review data, and serve as instructional leaders for student learning (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Fullan (2001) also says that understanding that the principal is vital to improving student achievement is a major first step for a school to take. However, in order to get to the next

step, principals must inspire their followers to take action; this step requires the principal to adopt qualities of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership. Northouse (2004) defines transformational leadership as "a process that changes and transforms individuals. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that move followers [teachers] to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them" (p. 169). This style of leadership describes a leader who is conscientious of their teacher's strengths and weaknesses (Northouse). This type of leader creates connections or relationships that raise the level of motivation; expresses high expectations for all followers; displays a strong set of internal values and ideals; and is effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self-interest (Northouse).

Effective leadership practice. There is no shortage of literature regarding the principal's primary functions of managing and leading (Schlecty, 1990). However, there are subtle distinctions between these two roles. Managers are more typically concerned with an organization's tasks, whereas leaders are concerned with motivating workers to the overall mission of the organization. Today's principal must embrace both organizational and human concerns to maximize the school's effectiveness.

A major revelation in the literature is the emphasis on a more democratic style of leadership, which engages people in the leadership process. According to the National Commission for the Principalship (1990), true leadership is exercised when "leaders nurture in their constituents a capacity to engage in the leadership task" (p. 13). Since autocracy undermines initiative, building this capacity requires leaders who consult, listen, and respect and develop human potential.

Summary. Although definitions of leadership are numerous and vary widely, and many models of leadership abound, one theme emerges loud and clear: No one leadership style, trait, or set of skills works best in all schools. Under-achieving schools and Program Improvement schools need effective leadership that understands their shortcomings and can mobilize the school team in creating increased student achievement. Zander and Zander (2000) suggest that in many cases, it takes more than knowledge, structure or even ability to make precipitating change; it also takes passion.

Leading with Passion

Covey (1991) asserts that only organizations with a passion for learning will have long lasting change. A principal who is passionate about creating lasting student achievement can energize a previously uninspired, apathetic school. This is an essential component for Program Improvement schools where teacher moral might be low, systems may not be in place, and the passion has dwindled. Even with all the mandates for change and reform, the school district, for the most part, leaves it up to the principal to figure out how to implement a reform process. Some theorists believe that this is a grand opportunity for the principal to do something great! Monroe (1997) suggests one who is indifferently supervised has the opportunity do the crazy, unexpected, wonderful thing one has always dreamed of. Principals who lead a school in Program Improvement would be well-advised to take this idea to heart.

Zander and Zander (2000) tell a story entitled "Giving way to Passion," in their book, *The Art of Possibilities*. They describe a one-buttock pianist who showed a great deal of passion while he was playing. When he finally caught the wave of the music and felt the passion within, he was unable to play the piano sitting on both buttocks. He had

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to lean on one buttock as he was playing because the passion was so intense. This story describes the passion with which a principal must lead a school out of Program Improvement. The principal's personal passion must be so intense that it inspires teachers, parents, and students to act in ways they never imagined with an equivalent level of passion. The principal must envision a one-buttock school that succeeds and be able to engage the rest of the staff to make it happen.

School Culture Matters

In order to be successful at culture building, Sergiovanni (2000) argues, "School leaders need to give attention to the informal, subtle, and symbolic aspects of school life" (p. 1). Sunnydale was a beautiful, small, well-maintained, quiet school; upon first glance, one would never know it was in Program Improvement. But in order to build school culture, the school leader needs take time to become cognizant of the subtle, unassuming attributes of his or her school's culture, even though rapid changes are sometimes needed. Raising student achievement has a great deal to do with school culture, which comes from: (a) the beliefs, values and assumptions of the organization's founders; (2) the learning experiences shared by group members as their organization grows and changes; and (3) the new beliefs, values, and assumptions that new members and leaders bring in (Schein, 2004).

Operating in tandem with school culture is school climate: beliefs that form and guide what people in an organization do, subsequently impacting people's values and behaviors, which determine and shape culture. Hoyle, English, and Steffy (1994) believe "school culture may be one of the most crucial elements of a successful school" (p. 15).

Principals also have their own underlying assumptions about new schools to which they are assigned, particularly about low-achieving schools. They might assume it is a school where teachers do not work hard or parents are not involved and that the teachers do not have high expectations for student learning. But those assumptions could be wrong and misguided.

Principals who are leading change must take time to meet with parents, students, alumni and the local community who are part of the school's fabric and who can share information about the history of the school. Those people can shed light on the school's symbols, which are the superglue of any organization. Those symbols embody and express an organization's culture, which encompasses the beliefs, values, practices and artifacts that define for members why they exist (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Schein (2004), reports that an effective leader honors the symbols and artifacts of an organization. Highlighting the symbols and showing value for the individuals who make up the school is imperative in order for the principal to begin a meaningful and conversation with the staff about how to make systemic improvements. Building this kind of awareness of and sensitivity to school culture is vital for principals who are trying to build a strong foundation for change.

Only when schools begin to collaboratively brainstorm how they can make a difference at their own site, will they begin to see reform happen. Collaboration and collegial dialogue are critical for Program Improvement schools that need to engage in looking deeply at data and content standards and reflect on their daily practice to ensure they are heading in the right direction. In order to do this effectively, however, the

principal must have a connection and relationship with every key player in the school's staff and community.

Building School Capacity

The principal is expected to take a dominant leadership role in building school capacity, which refers to boosting school performance in a variety of areas: professional development, teaching and learning and instructional delivery (Lambert, 2003). An additional factor to consider in building school capacity is program coherence. This is when the school's goals are linked to the teaching and learning and continue over a period of time (Newmann, King & Youngs, 2000). One of the challenges in this case study was that not all teachers fully understood the instructional program; as a result, each teacher implemented the instructional program differently. This was certainly impacting the school's ability to raise student achievement.

Developing Relationships

Fullan (2001) asserts that in addition to the principal having a moral purpose, they must also focus on building relationships to grow. When exploring avenues to improve student achievement while implementing standards-based reform, it is vital to acknowledge the importance of relationships. Indeed, Wheatley (1992) argues that relationships are all there is. According to Fullan (2001), relationships are crucial to school success. In essence, principals who see themselves as agents of change must embrace the art of building relationships with their entire staff.

In order for these crucial relationships to form, principals have to get out of the office and be more visible, interacting frequently with teachers, students, and parents (Marzano, 2005). Principals who lead effective change are visible everywhere; they are in

the schoolyard, in the halls, in classrooms, at the front gate, and in the parking lot: just about anywhere, except in the office. Being visible facilitates a variety of situations; it allows principals to settle student problems before they escalate, and talk with teachers in a more informal fashion, and see instruction happening on the spot.

Elmore (2003) argues that leaders should be doing, and should be seen to be doing that which they expect or require others to do. However, it is essential that principals maintain visibility in a supportive, rather than a demeaning, way in order to build connections, help teachers, and provide opportunities for students. In other words, in addition to all the tasks a principal has, building relationships should be priority (Barker, 2000).

A principal should form relationships not only with teachers, but also with all staff and stakeholders, including custodians, office staff and parents. Bolman and Deal (2003) report that cultural heroes and heroines are not concentrated at the top. Rather, there are ordinary people doing extraordinary things at every level, and principals need to be aware of these hidden heroes and heroines. Those individuals are powerful in their own right because they too influence and can have important connections in the community.

Even though creating lasting school reform is the collective work of everyone at the school site, often times the staff is not included in the decision-making and goal setting processes. This is a major reason why relationships between the principal and teachers are also crucial elements of implementing reform. Great leaders can always find a way to engage and involve others (Zander & Zander, 2000). Marzano (2003) adds that real reform occurs when a team works with the principal. Those groups can be leadership

teams, grade level teams, coordinators or teacher leaders. Marzano (2003) describes the importance of leadership teams and how they play an intricate role in the school. Leadership teams have opportunities to include their ideas, suggestions and recommendations for the school. This achieves ownership and not just buy-in from the staff and thereby helps builds school capacity. Accountability and capacity building need to be embedded in the school to create and sustain change.

Lambert (2003) asserts "…the leadership team broadens participation when it leverages opportunities for others to be involved" (p. 14). Leadership team members should be volunteers who feel encouraged to be involved. This is exceptionally critical for underperforming schools, where teachers may have felt left out of the reform process and feel morally driven to help their school transform. "Transformative change implies that the person or group that is the target of change must unlearn something as well as learn something new" (Schein, 2004, p. 320). Studies show a staff that has been engaged and had its ideas valued by the principal is ready to learn new strategies and replicate effective reform practices.

Tenets of Effective Schools

Research on academically effective schools emphasizes the high priority school staff gives to student effort and achievement (Gupton, 2003). In essence, although staff must attend to many important details of a school, teaching and learning are of the most importance and must be given the most attention in order for a school to enhance student success.

Schools in Program Improvement usually face a wide variety of obstacles and challenges that appear to impede their development; Dufour and Eaker (1998) point out

that "organizations often fail to address obstacles that block change" (p. 52). These obstacles are diverse in nature; some school have facilities that are in desperate need of repair, high rates of teacher turnover, declining enrollment and lack of parent involvement. But the research is clear; regardless of other problems facing a school, student achievement must be a priority and lower achieving schools should replicate principles or tenets of effective schools in order to hasten improvement and reform.

Lezotte (1997), the preeminent spokesperson for effective schools research and implementation, identifies seven tenets of effective schools:

1. Safe and orderly environment with a positive school learning climate

2. Climate of high expectations for success

3. Strong instructional leadership and planning

4. Clear and focused mission

5. Opportunity to learn and student time on task

6. Frequent monitoring of student progress

7. Home-school relations (p. 71).

Furthermore, these practices support a new type of movement that places greater emphasis and precise focus on teaching and learning. Out of a desire for all schools to implement these characteristics, the Federal Government has developed a special monitoring tool with the California Department of Education to ensure this takes place. Schools in Program Improvement must use these tools to help monitor their own program for full accountability.

The 90/90/90 Schools

Institutions referred to as "90/90/90 schools are highly unique because their student populations include at least 90% free and reduced lunch students, 90% minority students, and 90% or more students who meet or exceed state academic standards (Reeves, 2001, p. 80). A great deal of research has been done on these schools, and studies show schools like these that are successful in creating high student achievement share several common characteristics:

1. These schools maintained a laser-like focus on student achievement, an issue that dominated every faculty meeting, staff development presentation, and even casual discussions among teachers and administrators. For example, some of the schools' trophy cases proudly displayed exemplary student work, which made their commitment to achievement apparent to anyone who passed by.

2. These schools emphasized student writing, assigning weekly writing tasks that were scored using a common rubric in order to provide clear feedback on student performance. There was also an emphasis on non-fiction writing, a genre that is often under-emphasized by other schools.

3. Teachers in these schools routinely collaborated on scoring so they were able to give uniform feedback to the students. This collaboration was consistent and widespread. Teachers used every opportunity, such as casual conversations, formal staff development, faculty meetings, and planning time, to focus on real student work and collaborate about their expectations for student performance.

4. Students were afforded many opportunities to succeed on assignments.

   Students who did not perform well were given specific feedback and offered

   the opportunity to resubmit the assignment.

These are common characteristics of successful schools in high poverty areas.

However, it is generally understood by researchers that it is impossible for a school to

implement all of these ideas at once. Elmore (1995) says that school reform is a process.

Empowering Teachers/Shared Leadership

With all the demands and mandates placed on today's principals, particularly a

principal leading a school out of Program Improvement, it is essential that principals

share or distribute leadership so they can focus on instruction. Principals cannot lead a

school alone, and in order to "share leadership effectively and develop a cadre of

potential future school leaders, principals have to promote and support the development

of others" (Waters & Grubb, 2004, p. 6). When principals share their leadership, teachers

feel a sense of empowerment and responsibility to help their school grow and succeed.

Teacher leaders have "a positive influence on the school as well as in the

classroom" (Barth, 2001, as cited in Collinson, 2004, p. 363); good teachers positively

impact student achievement. It is critical that school leaders hold shared or distributed

leadership along with the principal; this is a common theme in the education leadership

literature. Schools successfully implement distributed leadership when leaders take

collective responsibility and share knowledge and roles (Elmore, 2000).

According to Fullan (2001), a major requirement for sustaining student

achievement is grooming teachers and other non-principal staff to be leaders; this trend is

at the heart of building capacity, for which the principal is the primary catalyst. When

building school capacity, it is important for principals to remember that leadership means taking chances to move others in the right direction and doing so at the appropriate times (Fullan). Unfortunately, given the high stakes accountability NCLB places on educators, leaders are unable to be extremely cautious due the ramifications of not meeting the required accountability measures.

The Need for Parent Involvement

All schools must have parent involvement in order to be truly successful. In fact, all schools in reform include parents and the community in their decisions. School-wide reform involves all stakeholders, which means more than the teachers and the principal; it means everyone. The school should care about the entire family, not just the student (Epstein et. al, 2002).

Parenting activities increase families' understanding of their children's growth and development. When a school is undergoing reform, parents must be included from the very beginning, understanding and giving input about the school's mission, vision and goals. This is especially important for Program Improvement schools since they have to write a School Single Site Plan, which articulates what the school is going to do to increase student achievement. The intent of this plan is for all stakeholders of the school to meet, collaborate, and share ideas about how they are going to implement best practices, or, in the case of Sunnydale, how they would implement standards-based reform.

Accountability

Different researchers and theorists define accountability in a variety of ways. Fullan (2001) suggests that "…accountability involves targets, expectations, inspections,

or other forms of monitoring along with action consequences" (p. 175). Newmann, King and Rigdon (1997) define accountability as a way for school districts to ensure they have met the required objectives. Regardless of the definitions, standards and accountability are connected (Reeves, 2001). Program Improvement schools are held to the NCLB sanctions and high accountability measures to increase student achievement, as measured by the California Standards test. Every U.S. school system must maintain some sort of accountability, particularly schools that are making large-scale changes. Reeves (2001) argues that a meaningful system of accountability has three key components:

1. It should collect information about student achievement. Effective accountability systems should include several measures of student achievement, including not only test scores, but also student work, teacher assessments and other independent evaluations.

2. A good accountability system should collect information about the underlying causes of student achievement. This includes a wide variety of variables, but at the very least it should include information about student attendance, teacher certification, and curriculum. When researchers study these variables, they can learn what strategies are most effective for improving student achievement.

3. Schools should measure individual progress over time. Performance assessments should be used to measure how students are doing and whether they are reaching proficiency.

Reeves (2001) asserts, that these strategies, if well implemented, are effective with student performance gains. When examining school reform efforts, instruction and formal

tests alone are not sufficient (Goertz, Flodden & O'Day, 1996). The leadership of the principal and his or her ability to build school capacity and accountability are also critical factors in raising student achievement.

In Program Improvement schools where accountability is critical, it is often the case that not all staff members fully understand what accountability truly entails. When exiting Program Improvement, everyone involved in the school must share accountability; the Single Site Action Plans that Program Improvement schools are required to develop must be written in collaboration with all the stakeholders of the school (teachers, parents, principal, etc). The plan is then reviewed and adopted by the School Site Council, which is made up mostly of parents. It is the principal's job not only to get the council members to approve the plan, but most importantly gain their input on the contents of the plan.

Regardless of the additional pressure placed on the principal for accountability, Fullan (2001) believes teachers and principals need to learn as much as they can about data and assessments so they can be effective with improving a school. Although accountability is a critical in school improvement, principals often are transferred from one school to the next, which can drastically affect the support the level teachers had been receiving. This is why building school capacity must also take priority, even though it is a difficult concept for educators to digest because they are constantly being evaluated by the external accountability system of the API and AYP. Leaders must learn how to balance accountability while building capacity at the same time (Fullan, 2001). When adequate accountability measures are in place, effective leaders simultaneously ensure that all students meet expected goals by diagnosing early and often, intervening swiftly

and with certainty, re-allocating resources, and sticking to the established goals (Reeves, 2001).

Conclusion

The literature presented supports the notion that large-scale reform, such as standards-based reform, has changed the leadership role of the principal and requires building school capacity and accountability in order to raise and sustain academic achievement.

The following qualitative, case study will focus on the principal's role in implementing standards-based reform in a Program Improvement school.

According to Newmann et al., (2000), when the school acts as a team to increase academic growth it is building school capacity. That is the central essence of the *Leadership for Learning Framework,* seen in Table 4. This framework practically addresses both the results paradox and the limitations of analytical intelligence.

Table 2

Leadership for Learning Framework (Reeves, 2006)

Lucky High results. Low understanding of antecedents	Leading High results High understanding of antecedents Replication of success likely
Losing Low results Low understanding of antecedents Replication of failure likely	Learning Low results High understanding of antecedents Replication of success likely

Antecedents of Excellence

The *Leadership for Learning Framework* views principal leadership as central to a school earning the designation "leading." Principal leadership is the thread that runs through all dimensions of school capacity: hence, the focus on the leadership role of the principal in building school capacity and accountability to sustain academic growth.

Summarizing recent research, the Institute for Educational Leadership (2000, as cited in Hale & Moorman, 2003) claims schools of the 21st century will require an instructional leader who strengthens teaching and learning, builds capacity, allocates resources, and emphasizes professional development, data-driven instruction, and accountability. Effective principal leadership also provides opportunities for teacher collaboration, learning, and time for reflection (Stoll, 1999). Elmore (1995) says that real change starts within a school.

Bolman and Deal (1997) argue that real change is a mindset of core beliefs. Through examining the leadership role of the principal, this qualitative case study will add to the research on strategies for principals about how to raise academic achievement. Many researchers have studied what is needed in order to achieve successful principal leadership, but the specific leadership role, style and characteristics of the principal have changed dramatically with the implementation of standards-based reform and Program Improvement, which this case study will attempt to reveal.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

Restatement of Problem and Purpose

As accountability measures for schools to increase academic achievement, the role of the principal in building school capacity raising student achievement grows even more vital. Using a qualitative case study approach, this study will examine the leadership role of one principal in building school capacity and accountability to implement standards-based reform to raise student achievement in a Program Improvement school in Los Angeles, California.

Statement of the Problem

As previously mentioned, this case study focuses on the role of the principal in leading standards-based reform to raise student achievement in a Program Improvement school. A review of literature revealed that, at present, there is little to no research detailing precisely how school leaders implement reform in a Program Improvement school. This case study aims to fill this sizeable knowledge gap.

Research Questions

1. How has the leadership role of the principal changed with the implementation of standards-based reform?

2. How does the principal engage teachers in the process of implementing standards-based reform?

3. What key strategies does the principal employ to raise academic achievement?

4. How does the principal hold individuals accountable for implementing

    standards-based reform in order to raise and sustain academic achievement?

Design of the Study

The research was placed into the appropriate framework through the following

steps: (a) selection of a qualitative study and (b) choice of a case study. McMillan &

Schumacher (2001) define qualitative research as inquiry in which researchers collect

data in face-to-face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings (e.g.,

field research). "The researcher interprets phenomena in terms of the meanings that

people assign to them. Qualitative studies are important for theory generation, policy

development, improvement of educational practice, illumination of social issues, and

action stimulus" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 315).

Research role. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001), qualitative

researchers become immersed in the situations and the phenomena studied. The research

role varies from the more traditional neutral stance to an active participatory role,

depending on the selected research approach.

Selection of qualitative method. First, there was a strategic approach for

employing a qualitative case study. McMillan and Schumacher stated this form of

research was important "for theory generation, policy development, education practice

improvement, illumination of social issues, and action stimulus" (p. 395). A second

reason for selecting a qualitative study came from Creswell (1998) who cited specific

reasons for its selection: (a) the nature of the research questions uses "how" or "what";

(b) the study explores and identifies variables, behaviors or developed theories;)c)

presents a detailed view of the subject; (d) examines the subjects in the natural setting; (e)

uses a literary narrative in describing the findings; (f) sufficient time and resources spent in the field; (g) the audience is receptive to a qualitative study and finally, and (h) the researcher is an active learner rather than an expert.

Selection of the case study. The researcher decided to use the qualitative case study approach to study a single phenomenon, which was one principal at one school that exited out of Program Improvement. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001), in a case study design, the data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, as Sunnydale Elementary School, which the researcher selects to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites or participants for the study. The one may be, for example, one administrator, one group of students, one program, one process, one policy implementation, or one concept (p. 316).

An initial plan is necessary to choose sites and participants for beginning data collection. The plan is an emergent design in which decisions are based upon earlier ones. The emergent design, in reality, may seem circular, as processes of purposeful sampling, data collection, and partial data analysis are simultaneous and intertwined rather than discrete sequential steps. Qualitative researchers investigate in-depth small, distinct groups, such as faculty in an innovative school, all the students in a selected classroom, or one principal's role for an academic year, as in the case of the principal at Sunnydale Elementary.

McMillan & Schumacher (2001) refer to these studies as single-site studies, in which there is a natural socio-cultural boundary and face-to-face interaction encompassing the person or group. To plan a case study design involves selecting the general research question and incorporating components that add to the potential

contributions of the study. Case study design is appropriate for exploratory and discovery-oriented research. Qualitative studies can provide detailed descriptions and analyses of particular practices, processes, or events. A series of qualitative studies over a span of years may contribute to knowledge through the preponderance of evidence accumulated. In this case study, there was data collected over a span of four years.

The researcher found that the qualitative case study design was the most appropriate approach to use. McMillan & Schumacher (2001), enumerated key reasons for case study selection: (a) it uses an integrative open ended approach to discover complex patterns of anticipated and unanticipated relationships in all the subjects and issues understudy; (b) it is an in-depth description of a program in its historical and organizational context; and (c) uses a holistic approach and obtains central themes; and (d) employs multiple methods to obtain information. Creswell (1998) noted the analysis was constructed by layering themes from the general to ending with specific lessons when no previous in-depth examination of a program existed. A case study usually focuses on fewer areas and seeks to gain in-depth information. Patton (2002) describes qualitative methods thusly:

> Qualitative methods permit inquiry for selected issues in great depth with careful attention to detail, context, and nuance; that data collection need not be constrained by predetermined analytical categories contributes to the potential breadth of qualitative inquiry (p. 227).

To gather the data for this case study, the researcher: (a) distributed a demographic survey to 18 teachers and 1 principal at Sunnydale Elementary School; (b) contacted the prospective interviewees via email to set the day and time for an interview; and (c) conducted the 19 interviews to understand how they perceived the administrator in leading standards-based reform and the necessary steps she took to raise student

achievement at Sunnydale Elementary School. The case study approach provided an in-depth perspective on the principal's ability to build school capacity and raise and sustain academic growth as well as the change in the principal's leadership role as a result of the implementation of standards-based reform. The data generated by this qualitative research methodology were then used to help answer the following research questions: (a) how had the leadership role of the principal changed with the implementation of standards-based reform, and (b) how had the principal built school capacity and accountability to raise and sustain academic growth?

Research site

This qualitative case study was conducted at Sunnydale Elementary School, which is located in Los Angeles, California in the Compton Unified School District. Sunnydale has approximately 381 students in grades PreK-5, 18 teachers, 1 counselor, 1 reading coach, 1 principal and a small support staff. Sunnydale operates on a traditional school-year calendar. The school has 21 permanent classrooms and seven portable classrooms in use on the campus. The school also has a parent center, a computer lab, a science lab, and a counseling/intervention center.

Sampling

The aim for this qualitative case study is to provide strategies and information about how the leadership role of the principal has changed since the implementation of standards-based instruction, and how the principal built school capacity and accountability to raise and sustain student achievement. Therefore, the basic unit of analysis will be people focused. Through a self-selection process, the sample in this study

consists of 1 principal and 18 teacher's and a few parents at Sunnydale Elementary School.

Although standards-based reform and school capacity may redefine the leadership role of the principal, it is through building school capacity and accountability that the principal will have the greatest effect on student achievement (Newmann et al., 2000).

This qualitative case study focuses specifically on the skills the principal used to implement standards-based reform and raise student achievement in a Program Improvement school. Regarding sampling in qualitative research, Patton (2002) argues, qualitative inquiry usually focuses on small samples or single cases. Sunnydale will provide rich information on the administrator and what she did to build school capacity and accountability to raise student academic growth in one school.

When sampling, a researcher must decide what the unit of analysis will be. Patton (2002) asserts is that the central issue is to determine what one wants to learn or gain at the end of the study.

Description of Population

This case study focused on 19 individuals (1 principal and 18 teacher's) at one elementary school. The researcher of this case study was the principal. The participants were voluntary and it was mandatory that they currently worked at Sunnydale. According to the National Commission on Education Standards and Testing (1992, as cited in Briars & Resnick, 2000), the research currently suggests that standards-based reform is a key to increasing student achievement. Therefore, the principal must have been in education for at least 10 years in order to discuss the change and redefining leadership role of the

principal prior to standards-based reform and the new accountability system of NCLB. The principal of Sunnydale Elementary School met this standard of qualification.

The researcher was able to access the population of all 18 teachers and the principal at Sunnydale Elementary School. The variables included: (a) educators who worked at Sunnydale and (b) a principal who worked at Sunnydale for at least three years. The researcher was also provided additional insight by three parents who gave their perceptions of the school leadership and the reform process.

Selection of Participants

Prior to being interviewed, participants (teacher's and principal) were given a consent letter to read and sign at Sunnydale (see Appendix D), which guaranteed the confidentiality of their identities, assuring that all names and places would be assigned pseudonyms for use in the dissertation itself. Additionally, they were reminded that participation was completely on a voluntary basis and they could change their minds at anytime.

Instrumentation

Research instruments included a demographic survey of 19 participants and semi-structural interviews of the same respondents. A survey was used to collect demographic data for the purpose of identifying a sample diverse population. The semi-structured interviews ensured adequate depth and breadth of the data collected.

The primary investigator used a demographic survey (see Appendix E) to collect research data. The primary investigator received permission from the Compton Unified School District (CUSD) superintendent to conduct the case study with the principal and teachers at Sunnydale Elementary School (see Appendix H). Once the surveys were

completed, the primary investigator prepared to interview all 18 teachers and the 1 principal at Sunnydale Elementary School. The interviews were conducted at Sunnydale Elementary School. Prior to each interview, the researcher discussed the issue of informed consent with each participant in detail, with an emphasis on confidentiality.

In addition to posing the research questions, the researcher had a more informal discussion with the participants to get to know about them personally. These conversations allowed the researcher and the participants to become more relaxed and authentic. Since the primary investigator was the principal at Sunnydale, a research assistant also interviewed the participants for reliability and validity. The research assistant was an educator who completed a course in IRB and received a certificate for conducting research with human subjects at Pepperdine University. This method was used to remove any bias and to keep the interviews objective. The demographic surveys were administered in hard copy form to all 19 participants.

The teachers and the principal received a letter from the researcher (Appendix C), which described the study, outlined what their participation entailed and detailed their rights as a case study participant. Further, participants were informed that the interview would be taped in order to accurately capture their words for data analysis. The interview sessions ranged from 30-45 minutes, depending on the degree of elaboration and number of clarifying questions asked. During this time, each participant filled out the survey and was interviewed using the protocol form. The interviewers asked the participant to respond to open-ended questions (see Appendix D & E) regarding principal leadership and implementing standards-based reform. If a participant was unclear about the meaning of the question, it was clarified and restated. Using phrases such as, "Can you elaborate

further?" and "What do you mean?" were asked to encourage the participants to speak more about questions that were not adequately addressed or whose responses were ambiguous in nature.

The role of the interviewer was to put the participants at ease and make them feel comfortable discussing their points of view honestly. The researcher paid close attention to the participants by nodding, being attentive, making good eye contact and using appropriate facial expressions to encourage interviewees to elaborate as needed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis served as an effort to gather crucial information about Sunnydale's story (qualitative research often times is referred to as "telling a story" (Creswell, 1998). Next, the data needed to be examined and interpreted. It is important that data are clear and well organized. The qualitative phases of data collection and analyses are interwoven and occur in overlapping cycles.

McMillan & Schumacher (2001) describe effective data analysis in five phases: *Phase 1: Planning.* Analyzing the problem statement and the initial research questions will suggest the type of setting or interviewees that would logically be informative. In this phase, the researcher gains permission to use the site or network of persons. *Phase 2: Beginning data collection*. Researchers obtain data primarily to become oriented and to gain a sense of the totality of purposeful sampling. Researchers also adjust their interviewing and recording procedures to the site or persons involved. *Phase 3. Basic data collection*. The inquirer begins to hear and see what is occurring, which goes beyond just looking and listening. Choices of data collection strategies and informants continue to be made. Tentative data analysis begins as the researcher mentally processes ideas and

facts while collecting data. Initial descriptions are summarized and identified for later corroboration. *Phase 4: Closing data collection*. Ending data collection is related to the research problem and the richness of the collected data. More attention is given to possible interpretations and verifications of the emergent findings with key informants, remaining interviews, and documents. Lastly, *Phase 5: Completion*. Completion of active data collecting blends into formal data analysis and construction of meaningful ways to present the data.

In this qualitative case study, the following methods of data analysis were performed:

Analysis of the written questionnaire/survey responses entailed the researcher providing the voluntary participants the demographic survey. The survey was completely anonymous and only required them to place pseudo names on them for data trustworthiness. The researcher, research assistant, as well as two trained coders who reviewed the responses and formed categories, discovered patterns, sorted categories for patterns and identified themes.

Analysis of the interview responses entailed the primary researcher, research assistant and two trained coders who transcribed the information from tapes. Each participant was interviewed for approximately 45 minutes by the primary researcher. As the data were read, certain words and phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' way of thinking, and events may have been repeated and emphasized.

Analysis of the artifact notes entailed the researcher and research assistant, as well as several staff members of the school who worked at the school for more than five years to review which specific artifacts led to the improvement of the school and which ones

were implemented. Staff members were questioned by the primary researcher which led

to a list of artifacts from 2004 – 2008. The questions were decided upon by the researcher

and research assistant. Although the primary researcher and research assistant reviewed

the data, it was crucial for the researcher to have trained coders assist her with coding the

raw data.

Trained Coders

Coding is an activity that qualitative researchers engage in to organize data

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Two trained coders assisted the primary researcher to sort,

code, and organize the data retrieved from the interviews. As the data were read, certain

words and phrases, patterns of behavior, subjects' way of thinking, and events may have

been repeated and emphasized. The coding system involved the researcher: (a) searching

through data for regularities and patterns and (b) writing down key words and phrases

that represent these topics and patterns. These are referred to as coding categories, which

were developed after the data were collected (Bogden & Biklen). After the coding was

completed, the data that came from surveys, interviews and the artifacts needed to be

triangulated to find regularities in the data.

Triangulation of Data

Researchers use triangulation, which is the result of various ways to gather data,

time frames and theory. To find regularities in the data, the researcher compares different

sources different sources, situations, and methods to see whether the same pattern keeps

occurring (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001, p. 374). The primary researcher in this case

study utilized interviews, surveys and artifacts to determine triangulation for logical

patterns. These patterns concluded a clearer picture of Sunnydale Elementary and how it

made gains over the years of 2004 – 2008. "In a case study design, the data analysis

focuses on one phenomena, which the researcher selects to understand in depth regardless

of the number of sites or participants for study" (McMillan and Schumacher, p.316). In

this qualitative case study, it was imperative, even with understanding a single school,

that the researcher triangulate the data to better understand how this school increased

student achievement and implemented best practices.

Trustworthiness

In an effort to establish trustworthiness, verification of data was necessary.

Verification is "a process that occurs through data collection, analysis, and report writing

of a study and standards as criteria imposed by the researcher and others after a study is

completed" (Creswell, 1998, p. 194). The researcher used triangulation and

acknowledgement of researcher bias to establish trustworthiness. Triangulation consisted

of using various forms of data, such as interviews and surveys to gather rich data,

develop codes and establish themes.

Ethical Considerations

High ethical standards were used throughout all phases of this case study. The

rules and regulations as specified by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Pepperdine

University were honored and followed using the highest ethical standards possible. All

participants were informed up front regarding the purpose of this case study. Participants

understood that participation in this study was strictly voluntary and were able to

withdraw at any time during the process. Each participant signed a consent form before

the data collection process began, and all information obtained was kept confidential. The

researcher was committed to keeping an open mind throughout this study.

IRB Requirements/Human Subjects

This qualitative case study complied with the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, DHHS (CFR), Title 45 Part 46 (45 CFR 46), titled protection of Human Subjects, and Parts 160 and 16. The researcher applied to the IRB for an expedited review process. This method was chosen because the case study presented minimal risk to the participants. Additionally, the research was limited to a small group of 19 voluntary participants. A demographic survey and interview protocol were utilized.

The formal application for IRB approval was submitted to Dr. Stephanie Woo, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional School (GPS) IRB Review Board for Pepperdine University. Upon review of that application, the IRB determined this case study met the federal requirements for exemption and approved the proposed research protocol. An approved protocol number was assigned to this case study.

Summary

The researcher investigated current perspectives on principal leadership and their involvement in leading a Program Improvement school through a standards-based reform in order to raise and sustain student achievement. The researcher accomplished this by conducting in-depth interviews with 19 voluntary survey respondents and scrutinizing the interview data for themes. Finally, the data obtained from the literature review surveys, and interview themes were triangulated. The results of this data integration are presented in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER 4

Data Collection and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter describes the results of the analysis of the data collected from interviews and artifacts. A timeline of data collection in relation to program implementation is provided in this section (see Table 5). The chapter concludes with a Summary of Findings that weaves together assessments, observations, and recommendations from experts into emerging themes that address the research question.

Data Analysis Strategies

Dissecting and categorizing. This chapter will present the results of data collection and an analysis of the data in the context of the dissertation research questions. All data referred to in this chapter were drawn from the program-related documents as noted above, and the group and the individual interviews conducted (See Table 5 for timeline of data analysis).

Two basic strategies were utilized in the data analysis process. The first strategy involved dissecting and categorizing the data into themes that mirrored the themes of the research questions. The themes were developed with the assistance of two coders who met with the researcher and brainstormed about the major issues the study needed to address. It soon became evident that themes sought to answer the research questions would focus the data analysis (See Appendix J for data analysis codes and themes). In some areas, tables and figures were developed for the artifacts and interview data, and the information was reported in numbers by categories.

Categorizing aggregation and content analysis. Using categorical aggregation, "the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge" (Creswell, p. 154). Through categorical aggregation, the researcher conducted content analysis of artifacts and data gathered through group and individual interviews conducted.

Content analysis is a process through which the data is reviewed and reduced to identify relationships and themes (Creswell, 1998). A word/phrase/metaphor search was utilized to assist in formulation of theme identification. The data from interviews was transcribed and themes were formulated and coded for each research question. The identified themes served as a lens through which the data could be analyzed by using a categorical aggregation approach guided by the research questions. The researcher and two coders identified the following seven themes that address the research questions directly: Principal's Role; Accountability; Positive School Culture; Professional Development; Targeted Interventions; Common Assessments; and Student Recognition.

Analysis of Demographic Data from Participants

The researcher administered a demographic survey (see Appendix G) to a total of 19 participants at Sunnydale Elementary School in the Compton Unified School District. First, the researcher identified the 19 participants' responses to each of the survey's eight demographic questions:

1. Total number of years of teaching experience

2. Number of years teaching grades K-5.

3. California teaching certificates held.

4. Completion of coursework in educational leadership.

5. Total books read on leadership in the last year.

6. Whether participant had served as a grade level chair.

7. Whether participant had served on a leadership team.

8. Leadership positions held in professional, community, or religious organizations.

The researcher then organized these data in a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet.

Coders' Training

Two coders selected by the researcher were independently assigned to code the data. The intent was for the two coders to obtain consistent results from the data. One coder had doctorate degree and both had substantial skills in coding data. One coder had extensive experience as a principal and a leader in educational institutions. The other is currently an Associate Superintendent of research and evaluation. Both coders were extremely knowledgeable and well qualified to assist in this qualitative case study.

Inter-coder Agreement

The identity of all participants was kept strictly anonymous throughout this case study. The coding process allowed coders to compare the data on the same questions from one interview to another, and to compare data and themes on the same interview by two different coders (see Appendix L). It also allowed the researcher to identify patterns, themes and similarities and make conclusions based on those trends.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The researcher developed a standardized protocol for the semi-structured interviews. Interviews were taped with a recorder and later transcribed by the researcher.

Participants were given an opportunity to view the written interview transcriptions to clarify any words and thoughts that may have been misrepresented by the transcriber.

Every transcript was thoroughly read by the researcher, research assistant and coders to search for themes, patterns, and categories embedded in the data. The data collected from the interviews, surveys and artifacts were analyzed for triangulation of a logical pattern.

Open Coding

Open coding is the process of identifying, naming, categorizing, and describing a phenomenon that emerges from the data. To implement this process for this qualitative case study the researcher provided both coders with a packet of folders containing the interview questions. While reviewing the interview data, each coder used highlighters to identify common words or themes that emerged.

Thematic Findings from Interviews

Introduction. The interview sessions allowed the participants to reflect on their own involvement and engagement in raising and sustaining student achievement in their Program Improvement school. After careful analysis of the data, the researcher was able to discern several prominent themes (see Appendix J). The main themes extracted from the interviews were: (a) the principal's background, training, and experience; (b) the principal's role; (c) accountability; (d) rigorous, standards-based instruction; (e) positive school culture; (f) high quality professional development; (g) targeted interventions; (h) and common assessments.

Principal background, training and experience. Dr. Smith, the principal at

Sunnydale Elementary School, has developed a positive school culture for teachers and students to excel. Dr. Smith has an extensive background in education; she has been in the field for 17 years and is completing her fourth year as principal at Sunnydale. After working as a special education teacher, curriculum specialist, assistant principal, principal at another elementary school and a district program coordinator overseeing after-school programs, Dr. Smith stated, "I know that I am divinely called to be a principal" (personal communication, June 30, 2008). Most of the teachers interviewed believe that Dr. Smith's knowledge of curriculum, leadership and ability to develop partnerships with local businesses have given her additional skills that have allowed her to contribute positively to the culture at Sunnydale and succeed as its leader. One teacher voiced this opinion thusly; "Dr. Smith is a laser-focused leader. She knows what it takes to move a school and uncover the problems" (Teacher 8, personal communication, June 28, 2008).

Principal's role. All 19 respondents agreed that the leadership of the principal is critical to successfully implementing school reform. The principal of Sunnydale maintained a culture of high expectations by sharing her goals and vision with staff, students and parents. One teacher said, "Although our principal is busy, she takes time to lead a morning assembly with the entire school and has them repeat our school goal (750 or higher), the Sunnydale school creed, the Sunnydale school song and the character word for the month" (Teacher 6, personal communication, June 28, 2008). Dr. Smith also writes a weekly teachers' bulletin that always displays the school's mission and vision, as well as the academic focus for the month, which could be vocabulary, reading comprehension, or other areas in need of improvement. Another teacher noted,

> Our principal is passionate about the school. The academic focus helps us to key in on a certain skill or strategy that she wants us to get better at. This is also a skill that we discussed in detail in during our professional development meetings. She is focused and observes our instruction and gives us feedback so we can master that particular skill. There is high accountability and we know what she is looking for when she pays us a visit (Teacher 7, personal communication, June 29, 2008).

Banners and signs conveying the school's expectations can be seen hung all around the campus. These colorful reminders display the school mission, vision, goals and many other expectations of which the school wants parents, students and visiting community members to be aware. At the beginning of each year teachers at Sunnydale are given a staff handbook that has been reviewed in detail by the principal. The parents are given similar materials that denote the academic expectations throughout the year as well as a calendar of activities.

> Over the years, our staff handbook has become more specific and useful as well. It consists of the mission, vision, goals, samples of effective lesson plans, our professional development calendar, the homework and discipline policies, and much more. It is not just a book of rules. All the materials she provides are helpful for us so we can all be on the same page (Teacher 3, personal communication, June 29, 2008).

Even though the expectations are rigorous, teacher stability at Sunnydale is high. All 18 teacher respondents agreed that the principal is visionary and direct. The principal visits classrooms regularly and can pop in at any time. One teacher voiced her feelings about the principal thusly:

> Dr. Smith, although direct, is very positive. She does not belittle you if you are not teaching to her expectations. She believes in collaboration and gives us immediate feedback so we can get better (Teacher 2, personal communication, May 15, 2008).

> *Accountability.* At Sunnydale, accountability is perceived as support, not as an "I

gotcha" (Teacher 6, personal communication, July 14, 2008). The principal holds

everyone accountable, but teachers also hold each other accountable for the overall

success of the school. During an interview, a teacher relayed:

> I really don't worry so much about Dr. Smith as I do about my own grade level.
> They are very competitive and want to do well. We check up on each other, share
> information and challenge each other everyday. This is how it is here. I know I
> won't be as good as some of my colleagues, but I am striving each day to be half
> as good. It feels good that teachers are self-motivated (Teacher, personal
> communication, July 14, 2008).

At the beginning of each staff meeting, the principal shares her expectations for

academics, classroom environment, and management of students. She reviews

Sunnydale's mission statement and has the entire teaching staff openly recite it each

month because she believes it will help the school's mission move from their heads to

their hearts.

> I have read that organizations should read the mission statement each month to
> remember it. I want us to keep our eye on the ball. As a Program Improvement
> school, we can't afford to waver, get relaxed or get off target. Time is a big factor
> (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Rigorous, standards-based instruction. Anyone who enters Sunnydale

immediately knows that he or she has entered a standards-based school; this fact would

be evident from the many banners lining the walls that proclaim grade level standards and

expectations. Every day, the standard and lesson objective must be written on each

classroom's blackboard and discussed with the class.

Each teacher is expected to teach the standards rigorously. Dr. Smith does not

believe the students will magically understand the necessary information on their own;

she expects teachers to explain the standard at the beginning of the lesson and base their

teaching on background knowledge the students have already learned.

I am very passionate about the teachers having an opening discussion of the standards with their students. They need to know what they are about to learn if they are to grasp the gist of the lesson (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Teachers are given a variety of standards-based instruments to help them unpack and teach the standards, including curriculum maps, and power standards. The backwards map is a form that help teachers think about what each standard is asking students to know and be able to do. All Sunnydale teachers have a copy of the standards and are asked to complete a Standard Classroom and School Checklist created by Reeves (1997) semiannually (see Tables 2 and 3). Dr. Smith notes that the checklists are designed to make the teachers aware of standards-based expectations. She states, "I want my staff to be reflective and monitor their own standards-based effectiveness. Then they have more ownership of it" (personal communication, July 14, 2008). A teacher added,

Dr. Smith gives us these checklists twice a year. We don't just check off items, we talk about how we measure up. It reveals what we are doing right and shows us where we can do better (Teacher 16, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

At Sunnydale, in addition to attending conferences, teachers are also given opportunities to observe effective, standards-based instruction in action. Dr. Smith provides substitutes each month so that teachers can observe and holds collegial reflection dialogue meetings afterwards. Dr Smith says, "I think it is valuable time spent when teachers observe and learn from one another" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

All the classrooms at Sunnydale have common themes throughout them to highlight the standards. Every blackboard has the standards, objectives and date written on them. It is a requirement of Dr. Smith so each class has the same expectation. "We all must write the standard and objective, as well as explain it to our students before we

begin to teach. In fact, anytime Dr. Smith enters, we are expected to review the objective of the lesson so the observer knows what is occurring at the moment and she also says it is a good reminder to the students" (personal communication, July 14, 2008).

At Sunnydale, rigor, relevance and relationships are the three R's that are repeatedly discussed at every staff meeting to keep teachers aware of the focus. "I expect teachers to know their grade level standards and be able to teach them rigorously each day. Without such, we are only teaching at the basic levels (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

To ensure that teachers are knowledgeable of the standards, the principal meets with each grade level to review the standards as well as select power standards they agreed to teach throughout the year. These meetings are crucial, according to the principal, because she says that it makes everyone aware. "It has come to the place where I simply have to have these meetings. They are more and more effective each year we do this. Teachers do most of the talking and I do most of the listening. We have deep conversations about what Power Standards are and what Reeves (2001) intended them to be used for. It takes a lot of time to meet with each grade level, but it is imperative for us because at the end of the day, we all are aware of what the standards are asking students to know and be able to do" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Reading coaches are utilized to assist all teachers with implementing standards-based lessons on a daily basis. They work with teachers daily to observe, provide demonstration lessons and give teachers feedback to guide them. The principal says the coaches also work directly with students, where the help is needed most so the school can raise student achievement at a faster rate. "Although I coach teachers, Dr. Smith expects

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us to work directly with students. We are not allowed to just walk the halls. For three

days a week, I work with small groups of students who are struggling with reading and

provide them strong dosages of rigorous instruction to bridge the gap for learning."

(Reading Coach, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

   Positive school culture. "Leading in a culture of change means creating a culture

(not just a structure) of change" (Fullan, 2001, p. 44). Dr. Smith comments, "I had a

vision when I first arrived at Sunnydale, but my real work came when I had to develop it

with the staff" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 2, 2008). During an interview,

the principal shared a story about a "mission, vision and goals retreat" she tried with the

staff.

> One weekend, the entire staff, and some parents came together to develop the
> mission and vision of our school. Thinking back, I was overzealous. I really
> thought we would come out of that retreat with the answers in our hands. We
> looked at the old, long, vague mission and vision statements and I asked them to
> discuss it and come back with some changes. Instead, they took one hour and I
> heard little talking about the mission. They didn't know how to condense it or
> where to begin. Instead of the rich dialogue I was hoping for, I got nothing (Dr.
> Smith, personal communication, July 2, 2008).

According to Schein (2004), espoused beliefs and values often leave large areas of

behavior unexplained, leaving organization members with a feeling that they understand

a piece of the culture but still do not have a complete picture of it in hand. Today's

principals have to be innovative and visionary in order to create a vibrant, effective

school culture. This means adopting new structures, beliefs and value systems in order to

raise student achievement. To this end, Dr. Smith ultimately had to find more innovative

ways to enlist the staff in reexamining Sunnydale's school culture. The principal did this

by telling stories about Sunnydale and showing relevant artifacts; in this way, teachers

and staff could begin to share what they valued and found important about their school.

Schein (2004) says members of an organization can collectively achieve insight if they come together to examine their culture and redefine some of its cognitive elements. At Sunnydale's next staff meeting, Dr. Smith posed a new question on the overhead which said, "Tell me about Sunnydale." I asked them to form triads and have a brief, yet thoughtful dialogue about this question. From the look on their faces, they couldn't wait to begin. Then I asked them to post their ideas on large chart papers I had around the room. They were to select a timekeeper, facilitator, recorder and reporter for this activity. I allotted 15 minutes to complete this before we came back together to share.

I noticed some very interesting things. The teachers were very engaged this time. They began to talk about the past, fun events and even sad times. They felt they were teaching me about Sunnydale and I loved learning. This was a more innovative and different way going about it, but it worked. Then I continued asking more detailed questions that focused on our vision. After all the stories, laughter and dialogue, we were finally able to decide what Sunnydale needed to do to increase student achievement. I felt this was the first effective staff meeting we had (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 2, 2008).

As Bolman and Deal (1997) suggest, vision is vital to the ongoing success of contemporary organizations. School culture, as a specific manifestation of vision, emphasizes what teachers, students, and the school as a whole is expected to do in order to support student success. Dr. Smith states that Sunnydale's culture "was collaboratively developed and now we spend time reviewing it and tweaking it to focus on instruction and how we do things to support student achievement" (personal communication, July 2, 2008). One teacher sums up the relationship between vision, culture, and leadership this

way: "Our mission and vision are clear because we developed it. But without strong leadership, the mission is in vain" (Teacher 15, personal communication, June 30, 2008).

Family and community involvement. A large part of developing a positive school culture for Sunnydale was to develop relationships with the parents in such a way that they felt valued and appreciated. The principal wanted to create a family friendly environment that was conducive to student achievement. The principal believed that there was a strong link to parent engagement and academic growth. "We needed to make the parents feel welcomed everyday. It was important for me to hire the right person to help me with this task" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 2, 2008).

The principal hired a Community Liaison to help her build the parent center and make it a viable place for parents. She spent many months interviewing until she found the right person. "I needed to find someone who was warm, caring, knowledgeable and resourceful. This person needs to help me recruit parent volunteers and develop a family friendly environment" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 2, 2008).

"As soon as I was hired, I began working on building a positive environment for the parents and the students. Dr. Smith gave me a lot of latitude and allowed me to decorate the parent center, try new ideas and implement new and innovative workshops I felt would work" (Community Liaison, personal communication, June 30, 2008). One parent volunteer said she felt wanted at Sunnydale. "I am able to help students with testing as well as help the teacher with other tasks. They treat me like a staff member and I like it" (Parent, personal communication, June 30, 2008). The PTA president shared the similar remarks. "There is a positive feel at Sunnydale and everyone works together. There is a positive feel here and we feel welcomed. We like all the improvements

because it is for our school. Now we have tennis courts, playground equipment and it looks like a real school" (Parent, personal communication, June 30, 2008).

High quality professional development. Teachers at Sunnydale are immersed in ongoing professional development to help them unpack and teach the standards. Dr. Smith allocates two hours every Wednesday for teachers gather by grade level and collaborate, reviewing and discussing standards, and decide how they are going to implement them. Teachers use this time to dialogue, plan and review data from the prior week. During the meetings, they take minutes and turn them in to Dr. Smith. At each session, Dr. Smith gives the teachers several copies of state standards, a backwards map, curriculum guides, lesson plans and other helpful items. Teachers are asked to respond to a set of reflection questions that prompt them to think about the delivery of their lessons. Dr. Smith feels that giving teachers these kinds of tools greatly helps their discussions and makes them more focused on the topic at hand. She feels collaboration is essential in implementing standards-based reform, stating, "I can't expect for my teachers to implement what they don't know. Reform is a process and this time allows us to collaborate without distractions" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008.) Teachers at Sunnydale also have similar opportunities to collaborate as a whole staff.

Dr. Smith strongly advocates the value of these staff development meetings: "Our meetings are dynamic and allow us to talk to each other about our own teaching. I also learn from my colleagues and what they are doing that seems to work for them" (Teacher 5, personal communication, July 14, 2008). She remembers, however, that the meetings were not always this helpful:

> I can remember when our meetings would include me giving announcements, directives and we rarely had time for real teacher collaboration. That was not

effective. When we began this method, I saw better instruction in the classroom (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Dr. Smith acknowledges that she owes a lot of Sunnydale's achievement to ongoing high quality professional development of this sort. Professional development does not just occur at Sunnydale's monthly staff meetings. Teachers also frequently attend lesson study and collegial reflection protocol meetings. Lesson studies consist of each grade level observing a lesson taught by an effective teacher, either live or on video, and discussing what they saw. Teachers recognize the powerful impact this type of training has on their teaching skills: "This is so much more than what we used to do. Seeing is believing. These meetings help me to be a better teacher" (Teacher 6, personal communication, July 14, 2008). Another teacher added, "Being video taped makes me more cognizant of how I am teaching and how the students are learning" (Teacher 3, personal communication, July 14, 2008). Teachers also receive demonstration lessons and visit high achieving schools to observe effective instruction so they can replicate those best practices.

Administrators and coaches provide on-site professional development, assistance, and mentoring especially for new teachers. All new teacher respondents felt that the mentoring provided helped them get through their first year. New teachers are also paired up with a more experienced teacher via a "buddy system." The principal feels that this helps new teachers build more collegial relationships and have another source from which to learn. Dr. Smith knows it is her job "to develop teachers, but I am not the only person on the campus that can achieve that" (Dr. Smith, personal conversation, July 14, 2008).

Further supporting teacher performance and development, Sunnydale also has a Reading Coach on site. She visits classrooms with the principal several times through the week and meets with Dr. Smith to discuss interventions for teachers. The principal states that it is important for the teachers to view the coach as a support and not a "tattletale" to the principal.

> We make sure to tell the teachers that the coach is a support to them and not to me. My purpose is to help develop their skill level and help them grow as a teacher. Our coach has a wonderful relationship with each teacher and I think that is what makes the mentoring work at our school site (Dr. Smith, personal conversation, July 14, 2008).

The reading coach not only observes and provides feedback, but she also offers demonstration lessons, individual lesson planning assistance, and also holds teachers' classrooms while they visit other effective teachers' classes. Teachers truly appreciate this additional support: "I am grateful for our coach. I have been teaching over 18 years and I am still learning new things that our coach is teaching us" (Teacher 15, personal conversation, July 14, 2008).

Targeted interventions. Dr. Smith, along with her leadership team, developed a myriad of "safety nets" to catch struggling students and help them reach their goals. The interventions go beyond the traditional after-school program. "All of our kids have different needs that require a different approach. This is where we [the staff] had to think outside the box and target exactly what they need" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

The intervention programs range from homework clubs, computer classes, science club, music classes and drama. There is also a reading intervention substitute that comes twice a week (during the day) to teach students who struggle with reading in grades 2-5.

Teachers truly appreciate this safety net: "The intervention substitute really helps our students a lot. This allows us to teach the other students additional skills" (Teacher 8, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Dr. Smith feels it is essential for students to have access to a variety of interventions: "We have different interventions because we have to. The most important aspect is having a qualified, energetic teacher who can teach them" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008). For example, the Gentlemen Scholars after-school program is geared to African American and Latino males. They meet once a week and discuss issues about race, identify, leadership, self-esteem and personal goals. They also review homework skills and test-taking strategies. Another successful program is the weekly Parent Homework Club, in which parent volunteers help struggling students with their homework. Volunteer parents are provided with materials and training from the staff to prepare them for participating in this intervention. Teachers responded very positively to this program: "We love how the parents got involved and took action to help no just their own kids, but other kids too" (Teacher 15, personal communication, July 14, 2008). Sunnydale's various intervention programs are targeted to the diverse subgroups of students and their academic needs. The instruction that goes on in the intervention programs is just as rigorous as daily classroom instruction.

Dr. Smith says that she monitors the safety net interventions just as closely as she observes daily instruction. The Sunnydale staff takes interventions seriously, believing to be the key that can unlock the door to many of their students' hopes and dreams. Sunnydale teachers know they cannot accomplish all of that alone, so Dr. Smith makes it her personal mission to enlist as many business partners as she can to make those dreams

come alive. "We can't do all this work alone. We need to come together with the community and see how they can use their talents to help us reach every child" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Common assessments. In addition to rigorous, standards-based instruction, using data to make decisions is common practice at Sunnydale. Common assessments are given every Friday in language arts and math classes and used to provide teachers with information on student mastery of content standards.

Teachers use the data to drive their instruction and fill in gaps and/or re-teach content standards if needed. Instead of prepared tests given to teachers, the principal allows teachers to create their own grade level assessments so they can focus on the standards their students are expected to master. Dr. Smith believes that teachers who create their own assessments forge a more personal connection to the standards:

> I know my teachers are definitely more involved by creating their own assessments because it forces them to unpack the standards and determine mastery. This gets them to think about the standards (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

A teacher added, "Being engaged with creating the tests makes me think. I have to know the standard I am teaching" (Teacher 8, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Data and research consistently help Dr. Smith make important decisions, using them in brainstorming with teachers, her administrative team, and other key individuals. One teacher noted, "The data tells us specifically which student's need interventions" (Teacher 14, personal communication, July 14, 2008). Sunnydale's students often need additional help to learn and perform, and Dr. Smith ensures that effective interventions are in place to catch students falling through the cracks. Data is also used in grade level

meetings, and the principal makes a point to share the school-wide results to everyone at the weekly staff meetings.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the data provided strong evidence of how the principal empowered her staff to implement standards-based reform to raise and sustain student achievement and exit Program Improvement. Furthermore, the teachers and principal were able to identify the changes that needed to take place in order to accomplish these reforms. Through their reflective responses, the participants revealed key practices and behaviors that helped support standards-based reform and their student achievement.

These findings were clearly articulated in teacher and principal responses to the questions regarding standards-based reform. The following provides a description of how the research questions for this case study were addressed through qualitative analysis and thematic findings.

Research question 1. How has the leadership role of the principal changed with the implementation of standards-based reform? All 19 respondents agreed that the role of the principal is presently more focused on instruction rather than being a manager of a school. Specifically, 50% of the respondents agreed that Dr. Smith has a laser focus on instruction with high expectations for implementing it effectively.

One teacher comments, "Dr. Smith is very standards-based and expects us to unpack standards so we can know what is expected for students to know and be able to do" (Teacher 16, personal communication, June 30, 2008). During classroom observations, the researcher and research assistant noted that teachers: wrote the standard and objective on the board; reviewed and discussed the standards to be taught during the

opening remarks; posted daily agendas; presented standards-based instruction; displayed

standards-based bulletin boards; and successfully engaged students in their daily lesson.

The notion of focused, standards-based instruction was best described by a

teacher who said, "If you don't tell the students the standard you are going to teach, they

won't be on the train that you are driving" (Teacher 17, personal communication, June

30, 2008). Focused instruction requires principals to become stronger curricular leaders.

Over the years and with the implementation of NCLB, principals have been forced to

lead and think differently. They no longer could simply manage a school; rather, they had

to become instructional leaders. Dr. Smith believes her role as a principal entails more

leadership than management. When asked in an interview about how she perceives the

principal's changing role in leadership since NCLB, she replied:

> I think change is a good thing. With all the differences of opinion about NCLB
> and the sanctions, one good thing is that it has caused us as educators to ramp up
> what we have been doing. No one can argue that we are thinking more
> academically, focused on teaching and learning and how to meet our AYP and
> API. School reform is the new conversation. At Sunnydale, I am aware of the
> many tasks I have, but my most important one each day is making sure rigorous
> standards-based instruction is occurring in every classroom. If it takes sanctions
> and NCLB to do that, so be it (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 2, 2008).

At Sunnydale, Dr. Smith is responsible for emphasizing the staff's collective role and

responsibility in improving student achievement. She repeats it at each staff meeting and

over the intercom throughout the week. The leadership role, characteristics, and style of

today's principal have undergone some distinct changes since the implementation of

standards-based reform. Sunnydale teachers agree that Dr. Smith has successfully

navigated this change: "Dr. Smith promotes a common vision, includes us as teachers and

empowers us to do the job" (Teacher 1, personal communication, June 30, 2008).

Research question 2. How does the principal engage teachers in the process

of implementing standards-based reform? Sunnydale's principal has empowered teachers through collaborative decision-making and establishing relationships and trust. She is consistently transparent in sharing knowledge, data analysis and her expectations. Communication is greatly valued at Sunnydale. The principal spends most of her time talking and listening to her staff to see if they really understand standards-based reform and what it entails. "Communication allows me to really understand what they know and need to know. These discussions are powerful and can't be replaced by a survey or a check sheet. So we talk, talk and talk about it" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 2, 2008).

Findings supported that teachers regularly spent time talking and sharing with one another and assisting the principal with various school-wide decisions. Collaborative decision-making is commonplace at Sunnydale, a practice that greatly empowers teachers. The staff is aware that running the school is not a solo performance, but rather is a team effort. The principal encourages teachers to be at the helm and give their input. "At Sunnydale, it is vital that we [teachers] are apart of the reform process and are included with making decisions that relate to what they will be expected to do" (Teachers 15 & 16, personal communication, July 3, 2008).

At Sunnydale, teachers may join a variety of committees and teams they can voice their opinions, ideas and suggestions. For example, Sunnydale's leadership team consists of teachers, support staff, parents and a student. At the end of each leadership team meeting, staff are asked and reminded to give their ideas, opinions and suggestions. In fact, the leadership team – and not only the principal – develops each meeting's agenda. This practice promotes open communication and encourages grade level leaders to

collaborate by taking the information back to their grade levels for additional input. After information is gathered and discussed with all grade levels, it goes to the whole faculty at a meeting and is discussed to gain consensus and understanding.

Decisions, particularly instructional decisions, are brought to the staff so may have opportunities to give input. Of this practice, Dr. Smith notes, "It is easier to hold [teachers] accountable for implementation because they agreed on it, in fact they also helped make the decision" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008). One teacher commented, "Being involved on that level of decision-making makes me feel valued and that my ideas are valued" (Teacher 18, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Although decisions at Sunnydale are made collaboratively, the teachers know that implementing standards-based reform is still expected. Teaching standards is not optional, but how they teach them is up to the individual. Dr. Smith tries to "let [the teachers] be innovative in how they deliver instruction so students can be engaged and the teachers too" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Findings also showed that Sunnydale's teachers and its principal share a bond of mutual trust. Empowerment in decision-making has increased trust among teachers and enhanced their willingness to collaboratively make decisions supporting student learning. Dr. Smith trusts the teachers' "judgment and what they say they are going to do. It has become a part of our culture" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Lambert (2006) asserts that when mutual trust is shared between teachers and the principal, decision-making, building school capacity and accountability are all enhanced. Dr. Smith adds, "You have to trust the people you hired and then get to know them" (Dr.

Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008). Dr. Smith further empowers teachers and enriches their relationships by hosting staff retreats, lunches, and holiday parties at her home. She believes these group activities create a bond that cannot be accomplished at the school site alone.

After several interviews with staff, it is evident that teachers feel this bond and believe it is genuine. "Dr. Smith loves to sit with us and talk about other things than school. She is genuinely interested in our personal lives, families and personal health. She even encourages us to continue to revive ourselves so we can be productive at school. She always says family comes first" (Teacher 3, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Research question 3. What key strategies does the principal employ to raise *academic achievement?* The main strategy Sunnydale's principal used to achieve this goal is recognition and celebration of student and teacher achievement. Seventy percent of teachers agreed both student and teacher recognition helped Sunnydale enhance student performance. Dr. Smith calls these "quick wins." Student and staff recognition exist in many forms at Sunnydale. Teachers are acknowledged in written form and orally in staff meetings. Dr. Smith makes a concerted effort to highlight teachers during her "Sweet Spots" section of faculty meetings. The principal highlights all the great things she observes in these teachers' classrooms and encourages other teachers to visit them to gain ideas. Dr. Smith states:

> The first item on the agenda is what I call "Sweet Spots." This is an opportunity for me to highlight various teaching strategies and excellent instruction I have seen. This also allows me to recognize different teachers that are doing very well. I will not only talk about instruction, but I will also discuss classroom environment, student work and student engagement. I talk about teachers' strengths and their innovative teaching styles. Since we have our meetings in various classrooms, we also give sweet spots to that teacher as well. It is a nice

way to open the meeting and these are quick wins to get staff moving (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Teachers appreciate public acknowledgement and perceive it as validation for their hard work. Dr. Smith hopes it also motivates and challenges other teachers to strive harder.

Sunnydale also uses recognition and celebration of student achievement as a motivational tool. Each month, students who receive 80% or higher on the weekly skills tests are rewarded with a certificate at the Principal's Academic Excellence Assembly. Parents are invited to these special events, adding to the excitement by bringing gifts and balloons. The PTA shows its support by bringing refreshments and decorations. Several of the school's restaurant partners brings coupons for every student who reached that goal. It is an exciting event where students receive hard-earned rewards.

In addition to the Academic Excellence Assembly, Sunnydale rewards the Scholars of the Month, best readers, mathematicians, students with perfect attendance and much more. Teachers feel these incentives help them in the classroom: "I love having these celebrations because my students look forward to winning. I think it is even more effective because our principal is always there as the mistress of ceremonies and it underscores the entire event" (Teacher 13, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Even though the principal admits that it can be challenging to remember to celebrate staff and students because of all the other things she has to do, but she works hard to makes it a priority. "It's a lot to do with all my other tasks, but it is valuable time well spent and it goes a long way" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Dr. Smith also makes sure that the school staff has plenty of uninterrupted preparation time, further enabling them to focus on enhancing student achievement. Accepting leadership roles often requires additional time on campus for teachers and

planning requires time for teachers to collaborate. Teachers and administrators at

Sunnydale are often still on campus long after the school day has ended, busy with grade

level lesson planning, leadership team meetings, tutoring, mentoring, providing

interventions for struggling students, coordinating events and assemblies, or developing

agendas for future meetings. Teachers are given uninterrupted time from the principal to

plan lessons, unpack standards and share ideas. Dr. Smith feels it is necessary to provide

this uninterrupted time so teachers can feel free to teach during the day and give their

best. Teachers find this extra time invaluable: "We always need more time as teachers. I,

personally appreciate it very much because there is so much to do in a day, and there

aren't enough hours in a day" (Teacher 9, personal conversation, July 14, 2008).

Research question 4. How does the principal hold individuals accountable for

implementing standards-based reform in order to raise academic achievement?

Sunnydale's principal holds individuals accountable by upholding clearly defined

expectations, monitoring classroom instruction frequently, maintaining a direct leadership

style, and making an effort to build school capacity and sustain student achievement. All

interviewees could clearly articulate Dr. Smith's expectations for staff, students, parents,

and teachers. Respondents described the high expectations Dr. Smith has for herself,

stating:

> She [Dr. Smith] has extremely high expectations for herself and her staff and
> expects everyone to give 100% all the time. It is everyone's responsibility to get
> Sunnydale out of Program Improvement, not just the principal. It doesn't matter
> what position you hold, everyone at Sunnydale knows the mission and the vision
> and is expected to implement it (Teacher 7, personal communication, July 14,
> 2008).

When holding individuals accountable, teachers report that Dr. Smith's high expectations

have made them better, more effective teachers:

When Dr. Smith visits our classrooms, she is expecting direct instruction that is explicit and easy to understand. She expects us to review the standard and the objective to ensure that all the students got it. I am certainly not the same teacher I was when I first came to Sunnydale (Teacher 4, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

All expectations revolve around the common vision that all Sunnydale students will be proficient or advanced by 2014. Due to the explicit expectations defined for all stakeholders, there is an understanding that Dr. Smith will directly address staff members who are not meeting those agreed upon expectations offer support in bringing up his or her performance. Regarding this practice, one teacher commented:

As a new teacher, it was challenging and sometimes overwhelming meeting all the expectations the first year. But she will let you know if you are not making it and will always offer support to assist you in meeting the expectations (Teacher 11, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

The principal also holds teachers accountable by monitoring classroom instruction. Dr. Smith sets clear expectations at the beginning of the year in the staff handbook and at the first staff orientation meeting. The expectations about lesson delivery, classroom environment and classroom management have been discussed and agreed upon in the leadership team meetings. Dr. Smith visits classrooms on a daily basis and expects teachers to teach standards-based lessons, students to be highly engaged, and teachers to assess for mastery of content standards.

She visits about 4-8 classrooms a day. Sometimes I will drop by for a quick visit, other times I will go in as a follow up with a teacher I have been talking to or observe the entire lesson (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

Dr. Smith uses self-developed observation forms that reflect the academic focus of each month and other expectations that she has discussed and looks for each time she comes. In creating these forms she discusses with and asks for feedback from her leadership team and staff so they can know what is expected from the start. Teachers report that if Dr.

Smith does not see what is expected on a visit, she will return later. If upon her next visit she does not see what is expected again, that teacher will be held accountable to answer to the principal. The principal maintains high visibility and accessibility for teachers who need to talk to her about their lessons. One teacher said, "She [Dr. Smith] is everywhere. She is not an office principal" (Teacher 7, personal communication, July 14, 2008). The principal believes she must maintain a high degree of visibility in order to stay on top of instruction.

The principal has a reputation for being a very direct, yet respectful leader, which further helps her maintain accountability. One teacher comments, "Dr. Smith knows what she wants and is clear about it to everyone. At the same time, she listens and supports what we need to get the job done" (Teacher 3, personal communication, July 14, 2008). During a teacher interview, one teacher recalls:

> Dr. Smith was very clear about Sunnydale and where it needed to go. She explained to me that if I was selected, I would have to get on the boat to help row it to its destination. She [Dr. Smith] was clear about the mission and spoke straight from the hip. She was very clear about our roles and responsibilities. She then asked me if I wanted to take that challenge. I like her enthusiasm, but I like her passion for the school's success even more (Teacher 1, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

If teachers do not live up to her expectations, Dr. Smith believes in speaking her truth, as she puts it. "No one can deny the truth, if said respectfully. So I am very clear and honest with my entire staff. I want to be transparent" (Dr. Smith, personal communication, July 14, 2008). Teachers at Sunnydale believe that clearly defined expectations, frequent classroom observations, common assessments, and the direct leadership style of the principal support high accountability.

As previously stated, building school capacity is the process of giving school staff the training, resources and opportunities to pursue complex tasks (namely implementing standards-based reform) and then to hold them accountable for the school's performance (Fullan, 2001).

By definition of her leadership role, the principal is responsible for building school capacity. Principal leadership is sometimes viewed as the fifth dimension of the Building School Capacity Model, which is the main thread that runs through all four other dimensions: teachers' knowledge, skills and disposition; professional community; program coherence; and technical resources (Newmann, King & Youngs, 2000). Ninety-five percent of this study's respondents agreed that principals should focus on empowering their staff and build capacity so the school can work as a team, and Dr. Smith's colleagues agree that she has successfully developed teachers' skills and knowledge, as well as program coherence.

At Sunnydale, Dr. Smith endeavors to engage teachers in every aspect of school life. She seeks out their ideas, input and even criticism. "I don't want people around me to say yes to everything I ask. I need people to help me think and I need different perspectives." One teacher agreed strongly with this sentiment: "I am just not a yes person, so I am glad Dr. Smith encourages difference of opinions and I must say she takes it rather well" (Teacher 17, personal communication, July 14, 2008).

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Discussions, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

This chapter forms the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of this case study, beginning with the summary of the problem and the purpose of this study, followed by a review of the research methodology, and closing with conclusions and implications for future research.

Statement of the Problem

This qualitative case study examined the role of the principal in raising student achievement in a Program Improvement school. At present, there is minimal research examining the role of the principal and how he or she leads standards-based reform to raise and sustain student achievement in order to exit Program Improvement. The sample in this case study consisted of 19 school staff members; 1 principal and 18 teachers. Analysis of information gathered via individual interviews, classroom observations, campus observations, and artifact reviews suggest the leadership role of the principal had a positive effect on student achievement at Sunnydale Elementary School. Using Reeves' (2006) *Leadership for Learning Framework* (See Table 4) as a guide for improving student achievement, the findings from this qualitative case study provide insight into how the principal created a collaborative culture, empowered teachers, and created an intense focus on student growth.

Statement of Purpose

As education continues to change and evolve over time along with the leadership role of the principal, the pressures for principals in Program Improvement schools to raise and sustain academic growth remains a challenge. This qualitative case study aims to contribute to the current understanding of the successful implementation of standards-based reform. It also examines the leadership role of the principal leading standards-based reform to raise and sustain student achievement in a Program Improvement school. According to Reyes and Wagstaff (2003, as cited in Hale & Moorman, 2003), "The leadership ability and the leadership values of the principal determine, in large measure, what transpires in school" (p. 7).

Research Methodology

The design of this study was a qualitative case study. In conducting this, case study the researcher: (a) distributed a demographic survey to 18 teachers and 1 principal at Sunnydale Elementary School; (b) contacted the prospective interviewees via email to set the date and time for an interview; and (c) conducted the 19 oral interviews to determine the participants' perceptions of the principal's leadership role in implementing standards-based reform to raise and sustain student achievement in this Program Improvement school.

Discussion

Over the years, a number of research studies have examined the role of the principal and the pertinent leadership characteristics necessary for principals to be successful leaders. However, since the implementation of standards-based reform,

research has shifted its focus from what principals need to do to increase student achievement to examining how the leadership role impacts students' achievement.

Past literature and research show that students from low socio-economic backgrounds had lower achievement than their peers in high socio-economic backgrounds. Today, NCLB mandates that "all students are to reach proficiency by 2014" (Department of Education, 2002, p. 138). Success is measured by specific content standards that indicate what students should be able to master at each grade level.

In this section, the researcher relates the findings to the reviewed literature, which largely supports the findings. In addition, the information obtained from this case study clearly describes how the principal at Sunnydale Elementary School successfully raised student achievement in a Program Improvement school.

In this qualitative case study, the researcher examined a high poverty, Program Improvement School that is making incremental growth each year using the main research question: What is the leadership role of the principal in building school capacity and accountability to implement standards-based reform to raise and sustain academic achievement in a Program Improvement school? The findings concluded that Dr. Smith has achieved success in implementing standards-based reform, demonstrated strong principal leadership using a combination of styles, has built capacity and accountability, has passion for teaching and learning, uses data to drive instruction, provides high quality professional development, collaborates with local businesses, and has successfully sustained and improved student achievement each year, as measured by the AYP and API.

Significant Findings

Demographics. The results of the demographic survey administered at Sunnydale *Elementary School revealed common findings among respondents. All 19 respondents participated on a volunteer basis. In all, 5 of the 19 respondents were grade level chairs; 10 have served on a school leadership team or served in a leadership position; and 6 have read books on leadership. Furthermore, of the 19 participants, 19 hold bachelor's degrees; 5 hold master's degrees; and no participants had a doctorate degree. Of the 19 participants, 3 were male and 16 were female. The responses from the individual interviews will be summarized together by research question. Respondents were asked to share their beliefs about the main research question and to the additional sub questions about their principal.*

Research Questions

Research question 1. What is the leadership role of the principal in building school capacity and accountability to implement standards-based reform in a Program Improvement school?

Research question 2. How has the leadership role of the principal has changed with the implementation of standards-based reform? All of the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that the leadership role of the principal has changed dramatically. Specifically, all respondents reported that the administrator is more focused on raising test scores, meeting accountability and being more of an instructional leader rather than a manager. Furthermore, all of the participants felt the principal was more collaborative and consistently involved staff in decision-making, which was not the case before NCLB.

Research question 3. How does the principal engage teachers in the process

of implementing standards-based reform? Respondents demonstrated a significant amount of involvement with the implementation of standards. All respondents demonstrated varied levels of involvement depending on their level of expertise and teaching experience. Findings illustrated that more experienced teachers established specific strategies and skills they used to implement standards-based reform.

Experienced teachers were more astute with unpacking standards, teaching with rigor, having high expectations for meeting those standards and completing standards-based lesson plans with ease. However, 30% of the teachers, who have taught five years or less, had limited content knowledge and skill ability with implementing standards. Their ability to articulate standards is less and they were not as confident with the implementation of them. All respondents reported that the principal ensures that teachers are included in the conversation of standards-based reform on different levels. They are asked to give their input as well as make various decisions about how to implement reform school-wide.

Research question 4. According to teachers, what key strategies does the principal employ to raise and sustain academic achievement? Seventy percent of respondents felt that the principal implements systems, rituals and routines. Ten percent pointed to the fact that she takes time to celebrate student achievement each month, including, scholar of the month, Principal's Excellence Assemblies and other award ceremonies. All of the respondents agreed that the principal has a strong leadership style with a laser focus on instruction and accountability. They report that she visits classrooms frequently and provides immediate feedback on what she observes. All respondents felt that the principal believes in and creates a positive, collaborative school culture where

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teachers and administration work together as a team to move the school forward. Forty percent of the respondents reported that Sunnydale's use of data and quarterly data-driven team meetings are significant strategies for raising student achievement. Lastly, 90% of respondents felt that more Program Improvement schools should focus on creating a positive, collaborative school culture, where teachers are engaged in high quality professional development and feel valued for their contributions.

Practical Implications

Findings from this qualitative case study revealed many practical implications for site principals and principal training programs. Specifically, findings revealed key insights into how vital the principal's is for leading change and implementing standards-based reform in a Program Improvement school. Principal leadership is a complex set of skills that is essential in supporting teachers and improving student achievement. Leaders have to be guided by more than position, but by moral purpose and an inner will, which Fullan (2001) asserts leaders must possess in order to be effective in complex times. He adds that "moral purpose cannot just be stated, it must be accompanied by strategies for realizing it, and those strategies are the leadership actions that energize people to pursue a desired goal" (p. 19).

The following practical implications can be gleaned from this qualitative case study's findings:

1. *Principals should consider collaboratively establishing high expectations for teachers, students, and parents to support the vision of success for all and should not waver in spite of daily distractions.* All stakeholders must be relentlessly driven to remain focused on what matters most; student success.

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2. *Schools should be flexible and creative in their implementation of standards-based reform practices.* Although standards-based reform mandates a particular end result of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level, how students get there requires creativity, flexibility, belief, support and effective principal and teacher leaders. Principals should consider educating their staff on the standards and how to unpack those standards. They should empower teachers to integrate their own skills, abilities and talents in their teaching to create high student engagement.

3. *Providing high quality professional development for teachers and staff can contribute to enhancing student success.* Principals should consider allowing quality time for teachers to collaborate and share ideas about state standards and teaching, learning and instructional strategies in lieu of meetings that mainly focus on district business or general announcements. Teachers desperately need this valuable time to communicate and get better at their craft. This type of communication and learning can occur during grade level meetings, demonstration lessons or observations of other effective teachers or schools.

4. *Principals need to improve their instructional leadership skills.* If principals are to be instructional leaders and successfully lead their schools through a reform process, they should be engaged in research-based professional development in the areas of curriculum and instruction to support teaching and learning.

5. *Establishing positive, transparent communication between the principal and teachers can strengthen relationships and improve trust.* Having a clear understanding of where the school is going promotes a culture of shared leadership and collective responsibility. When principals and teacher communicate openly and effectively and present a united front, students stand to benefit greatly.

6. *Monitoring instruction is vital for student success.* When principals "inspect what they expect," teachers become more focused to ensure quality instruction. Principals have a greater impact when they are highly visible, frequently visit classrooms, and acknowledge good teaching. This monitoring is not only beneficial for the teacher, but it also provides the principal with first-hand knowledge of what is and is not going on in the classroom.

7. *Regular teacher and student recognition to highlight successes boosts morale and enhances performance.* This can be accomplished at regularly held individual and group recognition and celebration activities, which empower and motivate all involved. Acknowledging students and staff at high payoff, simple programs yields big dividends for principals. These types of celebrations often times perpetuate effective practices and are positive ways to hold individuals accountable for "doing things right." All people, whether leaders, teachers, or students, take comfort in knowing both their strengths and areas needing refinement.

8. *Principals should consider using data-driven when determining whether students are reaching mastery.* Data that are simply reviewed will not yield

any useful information. But data that is reviewed, discussed, and monitored will educate the principal and teachers on how individual students are doing and what needs to be re-taught. Engaging teachers in developing common assessments and data analysis forces them to look at the needs of subgroups and individual students so they can adjust their teaching as needed. This is also a way for principals to monitor student mastery and success, teacher by teacher.

9. *Principals should consider using targeted interventions to catch students who are falling through the academic cracks.* "One size fits all" is not an effective strategy in an educational setting. Students come from different backgrounds and struggle for vastly different reasons. Effective schools have interventions in place for students who are falling behind. Providing these interventions (during the day and after school) is another strategy to help these students catch up and keep up.

10. *Principals should consider developing relationships with outside partnerships and businesses to establish resources and opportunities for the students.* Although it is a team effort, this study showed that the principal is a key player in mobilizing outside agencies to move in the school's behalf because they can best articulate the mission and vision of the school. The relationships that are built are valuable because they are able to assist the schools in ways that the district simply cannot.

Recommendations for Future Research

Findings from this qualitative case study suggest possibilities for ongoing research on how the principal raises academic achievement in a Program Improvement school. This qualitative case study focused on 1 principal and 18 teacher's in a high poverty Program Improvement School. It is clear there is still more to learn about what other successful principals do. In order to learn more on principal leadership, the researcher suggests further case studies be conducted in similar settings where principals have had an obvious impact on academic growth in Program Improvement schools.

1. More in-depth study of principal leadership in other schools of high poverty schools in Program Improvement is needed to determine what common leadership styles the principal and teachers exhibit and how these styles is developed.

2. Creating total curricular alignment and expectations from the state, district, and site and classrooms may enhance programs and develop leaders who have the ultimate goal of improving student achievement.

3. More research is needed to understand the academic background, training, and experienced of current site principals. This case study has shown that the curriculum experience and strength of instruction of one principal may have contributed to a strong leadership style and increased credibility among teachers.

4. Lastly, further study may be needed in examining standards-based reform being implemented unsuccessfully in Program Improvement schools. Therefore, future research would not be complete if leaders did not consider

studying schools in Program Improvement that are facing or have faced

sanctions and the strategies they plan to use to exit Program Improvement.

Conclusions

Although there are many factors that determine student success, effective

principal and teacher leadership is complex, and there is no "one size fits all" to

improving student achievement. This qualitative case study and the supporting literature

clearly affirm that principals who are strong leaders and empower teachers directly

impact student achievement. Building school capacity and accountability are other factors

of principal leadership that impact teaching and learning.

School leaders are challenged to conquer the demands and sanctions of NCLB via

competent leaders who empower and engage teachers, and in turn motivate students to

achieve. Even principals who lead schools in poverty and in Program Improvement can

inspire those who have taken the challenge to help the school with them. As Fullan

(2001) puts it, change is a messy process.

Final Thoughts

This qualitative case study focused on how school principals lead standards-based

reform to raise student achievement in a Program Improvement school. The principal is

the key in leading standards-based reform and is paramount in helping students

experience and maintain higher academic success. To implement such a large scale

reform takes the effort of more players than the principal. Rather, this kind of change

includes all the school's stakeholders: staff, students, parents and students. The principal,

the lead instructional leader, must include their stakeholders in collaboration, input and

shared decision making in order to facilitate such change. The purpose of this research is

to assist school leaders in meeting the academic needs of students as well as providing

research-based best practices for exiting Program Improvement.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Protocol for Principal

In the implementation of Standards-based reform: What is the Leadership Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a Program Improvement school?

1. How has the leadership role of the principal changed with the implementation of standards-based reform?
    a. How long have you been in education?
    b. What positions have you held?
    c. How long have you been the principal here?
    d. What is the status of your school's Program Improvement?
    e. What strategies did you implement to meet your AYP?
    f. What is your AYP, API and school-wide goals?
    g. How would you define the leadership role of the principal today, as compared to before Program Improvement?
    h. What is or has been the most challenging aspect of implementing standards-based reform?
    i. How much time to you spend at school/district?

2. How have you engaged your teacher's in the implementation of standards-based reform?
    a. How have you facilitated the development, articulation and implementation of a school wide vision of learning?
    b. How do you use your Wednesday professional development time for teachers to collaborate about standards?
    c. How do you build trust and develop relationships with your teachers?
    d. What role does the leadership team have with implementing standards-based reform?
    e. What support is provided for teachers for learning, unpacking and teaching standards?

3. How does the principal hold individuals accountable for implementation of standards-based reform to raise and sustain academic achievement?
    a. What artifacts are in place that teachers use to inform you they are teaching to the standards?
    b. How do you insure that each teacher is teaching to the standards?
    c. What method is in place for monitoring individual performance and feedback?
    d. What school-wide goals are in place for students and staff?

4. What has the principal done to build school capacity to raise and sustain academic achievement?

a. How do you engage the community and local businesses/partners to raise student achievement?
b. How do you distribute leadership at your school?
c. What key strategies did you use to engage all your stakeholders in the school mission and vision?

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol for Teachers

Leading Standards-based Reform: What is the Leadership Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a Program Improvement school?
A case Study from 2004 – 2008.

1. *What **key strategies** did the principal use to raise and sustain academic achievement?*
   a. What is standards-based reform to you?
   b. How long have you been in education?
   c. What is your current teaching assignment?
   d. Please describe the principal before you and the current connection to standards based reform.
   e. What has your principal done to implement standards based reform in your school?

2. How has your principal engaged teachers in the implementation of standards-based reform?
   a. How has your principal changed/affected the implementation of standards-based reform? Principal's job changed
   b. How have you participated in the development, articulation and implementation of a school wide vision?
   c. What are the biggest challenges you face as a teacher with implementing standards-based reform?
   d. What do you attribute to your success to raising student achievement?
   e. How do you translate standards to classroom practice?
   f. How do you use your Wednesday professional development meetings to collaborate about standards?

3. How does the principal hold individuals accountable for implementation of standards-based reform to improve and sustain academic achievement?
   a. What does the principal expect from teachers with implementing a standards-based classroom?
   b. What method is in place for monitoring individual performance and feedback?
   c. How do you assure the school goals are met?
   d. Are the school goals clear and measurable?

APPENDIX C

Cover Letter and Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Date

Dear Colleague,

My name is Jacqueline Sanderlin. I am a doctoral candidate at Pepperdine University, Malibu California working under the direction of Dr. John Fitzpatrick. I would like to ask for your assistance in conducting a research case study focusing on *leading standards-based reform: raising student achievement in a Program Improvement* schools. The dissertation based on this research will be submitted as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy.

To insure the integrity of the data, all information will be securely kept in the strictest confidentiality and all participants will remain anonymous. Participation is voluntary. At that time I will be happy to discuss the research with you in detail. If you choose to participate you will have an opportunity to request a copy of a profile of your responses and/or a private consultation to review your personal data and the group data at the conclusion of the study.

All information gathered will be kept in strict confidence. Only group data will be shared. No individuals will be identified. Each questionnaire will have a space for you to record an alpha numeric code. This alpha numeric code will be known only to you. It is a compilation of the first three letters of your mother's maiden name and the last four digits of your home phone number. No names will be used. The researcher will keep all information on a flash drive in a locked and secure location to keep the anonymity of all participants. Original tapes of interviews and duplicate results will also be stored in a locked cabinet accessible only to the researcher.

Please read the attached 'INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.' There are two copies of the form. One is for you to keep. Feel free to ask any questions you may have. If you are prepared to participate in the research described in the form, please sign the form and complete the survey packet provided with the consent form. When you are finished please return the consent form to the box marked consent form and the survey box marked survey. If you choose not to participate please return the blank consent form and survey packet in the same manner. You can also make an appointment with me to complete the survey privately.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Sanderlin

APPENDIX D

Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities

Participant: _____

Principal Investigator: Jacqueline Sanderlin

Approval Date: May 1, 2008   Expiration Date:
April 30, 2008

Title of Research Study: ***Leading Standards-based reform: A Case Study on the
                                Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a
                                Program Improvement school from 2004-2008.***

1. I _____, agree to participate in the dissertation
    research case study being conducted by doctoral student Jacqueline Sanderlin,
    from the Educational Leadership and Policy Program at Pepperdine University
    Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I understand that I may contact
    Dr. Fitzpatrick. If I have questions or concerns regarding this study.

2. I understand that the overall purpose of this study is to study the opinions of
    principal and teachers implementing Standards-based Reform at Sunnydale
    Elementary School. By signing this form I am consenting to participate in the
    research described in this form as well as granting permission for the data to be
    used as dissertation research.

3. I understand my participation will involve the following:

    I will complete a questionnaire regarding the implementation of implementing the
    standards-based program, be observed in class and in staff/grade level meetings,
    complete a questionnaire describing demographic data and complete an interview
    with the researcher. My responses will be analyzed to identify patterns. At the
    completion of the study I can request a printed profile, a personal consultation
    regarding my responses, and a summary of all data collected.

4. My participation in this study will encompass approximately 45 minutes. The
    study shall be conducted at Sunnydale Elementary School, Los Angeles,
    California.

5. I understand that possible benefits to society or me from this research are that I
    will have an opportunity to express my views and contribute to the body of

knowledge around education reform. I understand that I may benefit from having my personal data presented to me. If I do not choose to request my personal data, then there may be no direct benefit, other than to provide anonymous information to the school administration that will enable them to make necessary changes and address overall concerns.

6. I understand that the researcher will work with me to ensure there is minimal risk, discomfort, and inconvenience, identifying and addressing any concerns I may have. I understand that harm to human subjects is not limited to physical injury, and that there are certain risks and discomforts that might be associated with research. These risks may include: psychological, social, economic, and legal risks. Physical risks may be fatigue. Psychological risks may include boredom, embarrassment, and anxiety. I believe the risks of this study are minimized and are reasonable in their relation to the anticipated benefits of the study. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question, and to discontinue participation at any time. I understand that in the event of physical injury resulting from the research procedures in which I am to participate, no form of compensation is available. Medical treatment may be provided at my own expense or at the expense of my health care insurer which may be or may not provide coverage. If I have questions, I should contact my insurer.

7. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate and/or withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I also understand that the researcher may find it necessary to end my participation in this study.

8. I understand that the investigator will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of my records and my identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this project. The confidentiality of my records will be maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. If findings of the study are published or presented to a professional audience, no personally identifying information will be released. I understand that the interviews will be tape recorded only with my permission prior to each interview. The raw data gathered will be stored in locked cabinets to which only the investigator will have access. The possibility exists that the data may be used in future research. If this is the case, the data will be used without personally identifying information so that I cannot be identified, and the investigator listed above will supervise the use of the data. The raw data will be maintained in a secure manner for three years at which time the raw data will be destroyed. I understand the researcher does not anticipate the need to share uncoded data with others, and would do so only with my permission.

9. I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Jacqueline Sanderlin at 323-242-0070 or at jacquelin.sanderlin@pepperdine.edu. I

understand that I may contact Chair, Dr. John Fitzpatrick at Pepperdine University (310-568-5622). If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I understand that I can contact Dr. Stephanie Woo, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional Schools IRB, Pepperdine University, (310) 506-8554.

10. I understand that I will not receive any compensation, financial or otherwise, for the participation in this study.

11. I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have a received a copy of this informed consent form that I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

_____

Participant's Signature

_____

Date

_____

Witness

_____

Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

_____   _____

Principal Investigator   Date

APPENDIX E

Pepperdine University Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Demographic Survey

1. Alpha Numeric Code ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
(First three letters of your mother's maiden name, last four digits of your home phone number.)

2. Age: _____

3. Gender: Male _____   Female _____

4. Total number of years of teaching experience: _____

5. Number of years teaching grades K-5 _____

6. Please list your current California teaching certificates:

7. The following questions refer to your previous leadership training and experience:

8. Have you successfully completed undergraduate or graduate coursework in personal or organizational leadership? Yes ___ No ___
If yes, how many undergraduate units/hours? ____
If yes, how many graduate units/hours? ____

9. How many books focusing on leadership have you read in the last year? _____

10. Have you served as a grade level chair? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, how long did you serve? _____

11. Have you served on the leadership team? Yes ____ No ____
If yes, how long did you serve? _____

12. Have you served in a recognized leadership position in a professional organization, community organization or church?
If yes, how long did you serve? _____

APPENDIX F

Email to Experts for Validation of Interview Protocol

Hello (Name)

I hope all is well.

I'm writing to ask you to serve on an expert panel that will validate the survey and interview protocol used in my dissertation. Should you accept this invitation, the following will be required:

- Review of an emailed version of my interview protocol for the teachers and principal.

Your assistance would be greatly appreciated; however, I understand if your busy schedule does not allow you to accept this invitation. Please let me know if you are available. The working title is, *"Leading Standards-based Reform: A Case Study on the Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a Program Improvement school from 2004-2008."*

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Sanderlin
jacquelin.sanderlin@pepperdine.edu

APPENDIX G

Email to Teachers Requesting Participation in the Interview Protocol

and Demographic Survey

Hello (Name)

I hope all is well.

I'm writing to request your participation in the survey and interview protocol used in my dissertation. Should you accept this invitation, the following will be required:

- Review of an emailed version of my interview protocol and demographic survey for teachers.

Please understand your participation will involve the following:

- Complete a questionnaire describing demographic data
- Complete an interview with the research assistant. Responses will be analyzed to identify patterns. At the completion of the study you can request a printed profile, a personal consultation regarding your responses, and a summary of all data collected.

Your participation in this study will encompass approximately 45 minutes. The study will be conducted at Sunnydale Elementary School. Your participation would be greatly appreciated; however, I understand if your busy schedule does not allow you to accept this invitation. Please let me know if you are available. The working title is, *"Leading Standards-based Reform: A Case Study Examining the Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a Program Improvement school from 2004 – 2008."*

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Sanderlin
jacquelin.sanderlin@pepperdine.edu

APPENDIX H

Email to Superintendent Requesting Approval to Interview and Survey Teachers at

Carver (Sunnydale) Elementary School

Hello Dr. Burnside

I hope all is well.

I'm writing to request your approval to survey and interview my teachers for my research project/dissertation. This is a case study about Carver Elementary and the strategies implemented that contributed to incremental growth over the last three years. The working title is, *"Leading Standards-based Reform: A Case Study Examining the Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a Program Improvement school from 2004 - 2008."*

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Sanderlin

Approval:

_____
Dr. Kaye E. Burnside, Superintendent, Compton Unified School District/Designee

APPENDIX I

Email to Principal Requesting Approval to Interview and Survey Teachers at

Carver (Sunnydale) Elementary School

Hello.

I hope all is well.

I'm writing to request your approval to survey and interview the teachers at Sunnydale Elementary School for my research project/dissertation. This is a case study about (Carver) Sunnydale Elementary and the strategies implemented that contributed to incremental growth over the last three years. The working title is, *"Leading Standards-based Reform: A Case Study Examining the Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a Program Improvement school from 2004-2008."*

Thank you in advance for your consideration,

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Sanderlin, Researcher
Catrisa Booker, Research Assistant

Approval:

_____

Principal, Sunnydale (Carver) Elementary School, Compton Unified School District/Designee

Data Analysis Codes/Themes

Leading Standards-based Reform: A Case Study Examining the Role of the Principal in Raising Student Achievement in a Program Improvement school from 2004-2008.

Principal's role
- Established high expectations
- Creates a culture
- Holds everyone accountable
- Instructional leader
- Implements standards-based reform
- Very passionate about leading
- Knowledge of curriculum
- Monitors instruction
- Up to date on research
- Visionary leader
- Highly visible
- Inspires others/empowers teachers
- Driven
- Collaborative
- Shared decision-making
- Communicates effectively
- Direct leadership style
- Frequent classroom visitations
- Determined
- High expectations

Accountability
- Provides support
- Clear expectations
- High visibility
- Reviews lesson plans
- Reviews weekly assessments
- Holds data conferences
- Monitors interventions
- Utilizes standards check-off lists

Positive School Culture
- Accountability
- Positive
- Collegiality

- Partnerships
- Data driven
- Focused
- Goal oriented
- High expectations
- Interventions
- Relationships
- Teamwork
- Strong leadership team
- Mutual respect
- Everyone knows the goals
- Standards-based
- Highly motivated teachers
- Well rounded child
- Everyone on the train
- Sustain student achievement through culture

Professional Development
- High quality
- Time
- Based on staff needs
- Observations
- Demonstration lessons
- Grade level collaboration
- Unpacking standards
- Reviewing data
- Re-teaching and pre-teaching

Targeted Interventions
- Specific to needs
- During the day and after-school programs
- Monitoring of programs
- High accountability
- Parents homework club
- Music and visual and performing arts
- Well-rounded
- Science lab
- Computer lab
- Individual tutoring
- Connected to the school day

Common Assessments
- Using data to drive instruction
- CST release test questions

- Sets clear goals
- Pacing guides
- District benchmarks
- Multiple measures
- Standards-based instruction
- Teacher assessments
- High expectations
- Friday Skills Tests
- School-wide report
- Celebration of student achievement – 75% or higher
- Principal's academic excellence list
- Teachers create assessments
- AYP focus lists
- Assess/re-teach

Student Recognition
- Assemblies
- Principal's Academic Excellence List
- Student centered
- A big deal
- Certificates
- Teacher praise
- Attendance awards
- Rally's
- Scholar of the month
- Good citizen dances
- Caught you being good

APPENDIX K

Data Analysis Tables

Position	Gender/Years	Principal's Role	Accountability	Culture
Teacher 1 and 2 (Interviewed two teachers at once)	Female, 3rd year in education, 2nd grade All at Sunnydale Female 2nd year in education, 2nd grade All at Sunnydale	Visionary, high expectations, focused, bright leader, passionate about exiting program improvement, driven, high accountability, supportive to teachers and new teachers, provides materials for teachers,	Follows through, accountable to herself, clear with teachers about our role, knows what is going on in the classrooms, sets the vision, has teachers submit reports, organized.	Positive learning environment, time for teacher collaboration, rituals and routines, systems in place, everyone knows what to do at Sunnydale, we are on autopilot, her leadership is in us, focus on kids, a lot of partnerships.
Teacher 3	Male, 4th year in education, 4th Grade All at Sunnydale	Supporting teachers, protects instruction, laser focused on standards, expects teachers to memorize standards, makes decisions with faculty, extremely passionate, knows AYP/API expectations, allowing teachers to teach,	Accountable, high standards, high work ethic, reviews documents, clear expectations.	Maximize instructional time, everyone on the train, standards-based, bulletin boards, standards posted over work, rituals and routines, systems in place.
Teacher 4 and 5 (Interviewed two teachers at once)	Female, 3rd year in education, 3rd grade All at Sunnydale Female 3rd year in education, 3rd grade All at Sunnydale	Extremely involved, laser focused, instruction is priority, believes in unpacking standards, believes in developing teachers, student achievement is number one, principal empowers teachers.	Follows through, makes vision clear to all, students cannot slip through the cracks, monitors interventions, reviews lesson plans, very detailed.	Great with parents and bringing in partners, passion is contagious, positive environment, students want to achieve, principal takes pride in school, and celebrating student achievement is big at Sunnydale, minimal turnover.

(Table Continues)

Teacher 6	Female, 1st year in education, 3rd grade, All at Sunnydale	Guides new teachers, lead professional developer, aware of what is going on in the classrooms and the school, very direct, listens, supports teachers and provides us with a lot of materials.	Makes students and teachers accountable for teaching and learning, sets the bar, monitors the bar, clear, direct, routines in place, we know what to do.	Pleasant atmosphere, beautiful school, teachers help each other a lot, everyone works together.
Teacher 7	Male, 2nd grade, 7th year in education, All at Sunnydale	Supportive in a lot of ways, interested in teachers gifts, abilities and talents, let's teacher's know when they need to change, very focused.	No one can slip through the cracks, monitors instruction, provides detailed feedback, and asks questions.	Not a lot of turnover, stable, teacher's want to do well, a peaceful campus, a lot of innovative programs, things for the whole child to be well-rounded.
Teacher 8	Male, 5th grade, 13th year in education Positions held: 4th grade, 7th grade, 9th grade, 11th grade.	A lot of respect for the principal, driven, motivated, wants to guide the staff, visionary, resourceful, out of the box leadership.	Raises the bar, principal sets the tone, teachers embrace it, kids benefit, interventions beyond the school day, expects teachers to use data to drive instruction, students expected to learn and teachers are expected to teach.	We are like a magnet or a private school, school is neat, clean and like a park, classrooms have a lot of materials, technology is huge, teachers have access to computers, students have four or more computers in the class, teachers are encouraged to use technology to teach.
Teacher 9	Female, 1st year in education, 4th grade All at Sunnydale	Standards-based, school plan is given to everyone, brainstorms with staff, develops goals with teachers, principal does not mince words, direct, clear expectations, shows us how to teach.	Persistent and determined to do the best, requires teachers to submit information to her, lesson plans are checked, the entire school day is broken up into an opening, work period and closing, high expectations, clear	Constant reevaluation and review of plan and procedures, repeats and reviews mission with staff each month, strong leadership, excellent with gaining partnerships with the community.

			with the staff, humorous but serious about what she wants.	
Teacher 10 and 11 (Interviewed two teachers at once.)	Female, 2nd year in education, Kindergarten All at Sunnydale Female, 1st year Kindergarten All at Sunnydale	Keeps teachers up on the latest research, book clubs, standards and assessment, great leader, has a vision, clear vision, out of the box kind of principal.	Set guidelines, visits classrooms and leaves a copy of the check sheet with the teacher, walks have a purpose, academic focus is listed on the observation form, teachers help develop observation form, professional development calendar is given to everyone.	Everyone is expected to teach without question, high rigorous teaching is expected and said by the principal, leadership changed the culture, principal set the bar high and we are expected to reach it.
Teacher 12	Female, 3rd year in education, Kindergarten All at Sunnydale	Takes obstacles away from teachers, expects us to have an opening, work period and closing, guides us as teachers, develops us as teachers, funny and humorous.	Expects grade level chairs to keep teachers on their grade level on task, strong leadership team, teachers are expected to take minutes from the grade level meetings, and questions are provided grade levels to guide their conversations in meetings.	Collaborative, funny, focused, calm, wonderful place to work, everyone works hard, focused on kids and student achievement.
Teacher 13	Female, 4th grade, 1st year in education, All at Sunnydale	Respected leader, very credible, knows what she wants, listens to teachers, supports teachers	Pops in on classroom instruction, clear about goals, laser focused, expects forms or documents handed in to her, expects teachers to memorize the mission statement.	Must have enthusiasm to increase student engagement, must have rigorous instruction at Sunnydale, makes expectations clear, reviews lesson plans.
Teacher 14	Female, 5th grade, 8th year in education	Trusts her staff, shows them what she wants, to the point	Reads teachers lesson plans, visits classrooms, pop in	Great place to work, routines in place, we know what to do,

	Positions held: 3rd grade, 4th grade	type of principal, high quality professional development, brings in partners and resources, doesn't wait on the district.	visits, monitors interventions, clarity, develops teachers, homogenous classrooms.	high work ethic, focused on standards and assessment, belief in all kids.
Teacher 15 and 16	Female 1st grade, 40 years in education, All at Sunnydale Female 1st grade, 3rd year in education All at Sunnydale	Told me about her expectations from day one, strong leader, different from the many leaders I taught under for many years, hard working, very organized, great communicator, energized, a lot of pride for the school, made the school beautiful, collaborative, up on the latest research.	Makes it clear to the staff about her expectations, accountable, care for students, know they are being watched, repeats expectations to the staff, vision, and reviews documents like lesson plans.	Combination of being focused, knows the goal and articulates the goal, keeping the focus, all teachers working together, technology driven, trickle down system, rituals and routines in place.
Teacher 17	Female, 1st grade, 1st year in education. All at Sunnydale	Genuine in nature, cares about us, lets me learn new things, encourages us to be a life long learners, insists that we believe in our kids, wants us to refer to each student as a scholar.	Extreme accountability, but I need that, checks on me, does not leave us out there to do our own thing, has a major accountability system, routines in place.	
Teacher 18	40 years in education, al at Sunnydale, Reading Coach. Positions held: Taught all grades K-12.	A strong principal, knows what she wants, very resourceful, instructional leader, has a lot of vigor and enthusiasm, has high expectations for staff, includes all staff, likes to be a principal, supports others ideas and	High accountability, wants everyone on the train before pulling off, accountability for student success, celebration of student achievement.	Brings everyone together, let's us do our job, trusts us with mutual trust and respect, secure, positive learning environment, peaceful, everyone works hard, motivated, inspired, empowered.

		allows them to be innovative, likes to test the limits and see how far the school can go.		
Principal 1	Female, 14 years in education, 4th year at Sunnydale Positions held: special education teacher, curriculum specialist, assistant principal, principal (K-8 magnet), program coordinator at district, back to principal.	Vision, include the staff in the development of the goals, objectives, mission and vision, supporter, remove any obstacles from teachers, provide teachers with a lot of materials to do the job, lead more than manage, know curriculum, develop relationships with staff, be human, be clear about your mission and the schools mission, delegate but don't abdicate, follow up, follow through, be consistent, trust your people, build and empower your leadership team, make decisions with input from your staff, spend time in classrooms, believe in those you hire, make standards-based reform real.	Set high guidelines, data team meetings, standards-based meetings, be clear about expectations, review goals and mission each month, have teachers submit lesson plans, give feedback from visits immediately, praise the good stuff, be honest about what is not happening, set guidelines, rituals, routines and systems for the school.	Make the school a pleasant place to work, find partnerships to help beautify the school, engage parents and staff, shared decision making, listen to staff, love kids, call students scholars, must have enthusiasm and a passion for teaching and learning.

APPENDIX L

Research Questions and Themes

Sub-question 1: *How has the leadership role of the principal changed with the implementation of standards-based reform? (**roles, style/characteristics/visionary**)*

Themes:
1. The principal has established high expectations for students, staff, parents and all stakeholders.
2. The principal is perceived as knowledgeable of curriculum, AYP and API and accountability measures.
3. The principal is perceived as an instructional leader who is driven, focused and passionate about student achievement.
4. The principal spends the majority of her time planning, organizing, leading and monitoring instruction with focused tools to assist her for immediate feedback.

Sub-question 2: *How does the principal engage teachers in the process of implementing standards-based reform? (**decision making/teachers as leaders**)*

Themes:
1. Through teacher input, the principal develops teams, shared decision-making and leadership opportunities.
2. Using data, the principal has established teams to develop assessments and create multiple measures to determine mastery.
3. The principal encourages teachers to present in professional development meetings, provide demonstration lessons and observe each other so they can replicate best practices.
4. The principal engages teachers to help develop the mission, vision and goals.
5. Veteran teachers and teachers who have been teaching a while are utilized as buddy teachers for the new teachers. They become mentors so the principal can spend time supporting teachers.

Sub-question 3: *What key strategies does the principal employ to raise and sustain academic achievement? (**culture, program coherence**)*

Themes:
1. The principal uses data and research to determine the needs of professional development.
2. The principal urges teachers to provide rigorous, standards-based instruction.
3. The principal holds a morning assembly with all students and has them repeat the goal of 750 or higher!
4. The principal utilizes a reading coach to assist teachers who are struggling.
5. The principal holds data conferences with each grade level so they can be aware of students levels and needs as well as teacher needs.
6. The principal provides many resources for teachers to implement effective instruction.
7. The principal makes relationships with local businesses to update the look of the school to motivate students and staff.
8. Mission and vision is posted all throughout the campus and on every classroom door.

Sub-question 4: *How does the principal hold individuals accountable for implementing standards-based reform to raise and sustain academic achievement? (**assessment/interventions/accountability**)*

Themes:
1. Clearly defined expectations, consistency, follow through and high principal visibility.
2. The principal meets with each grade level to review data, standards and grade level goals.
3. Each teacher must complete an AYP focus list that lets him or her know which students to focus on.
4. Grade levels are expected to meet each Wednesday to review data, unpack standards and complete a grade level lesson plan.
5. Interventions are monitored and taught by experienced teachers.
6. The principal provides support, instead of an "I gotcha."
7. Teachers are expected to submit a re-teach form and administer a skills assessment each Friday.
8. Grade levels are expected to fill out a meeting minutes form to share with the principal.

Major Themes from Literature:
- Principal is responsible for implementing standards-based reform goals: high academic standards, academic focus, accountability, and embraces change.
- Accountability is essential for all individuals: information about individual performance, rituals and routines, systems in place and standards for judging success and interventions.
- Principal is responsible for creating a positive learning environment that is conducive to learning: culture, input, visibility, resources, relationships, mutual trust and respect.
- Transformational leadership/shared leadership are promoted by the principal: Engager, inspirer, empowers teachers.
- Communication and celebrating student achievement are vital roles for the principal. Affirmation and celebration of student achievement are important factors in promoting and sustaining academic growth.

Three Transcribed Interviews from Teacher's X, Y, and Z:

Question 2: *How does the principal engage teachers in the process of implementing standards-based reform?*

Teacher X: "Mrs. Sanderlin really tries to engage teachers and seek our input as much as possible when she makes decisions around the school. Our principal develops many different teams and develops teachers as leaders. She let's us get involved with the many aspects around the school. She really encourages us to help her with putting on professional development meetings and asks us to present at workshops. Some teachers are asked to do demonstration lessons and show off their skills, as she puts it. We also develop the agendas for the meetings and lead it for the entire hour. We do this so we can replicate best practices in every classroom" (personal interview, Teacher X, July 14, 2008).

Teacher Y: "Our school uses data a lot to guide our instruction. Instead of using books and so forth, our principal encourages the teachers to create them and develop common assessments. This was hard at first, because none of us knew how to make tests. We always relied on books and test prep books. But for the last three years, we have been making these assessments for our tests every Friday. These tests make us focus on what the standards are asking kids to know and be able to do. It also makes us know them even more because we have to teach what they will be tested on, so we have to know them. She lets us discuss the standards and then we have to unpack them. She gives us time in our grade level meetings so we can find the best way to teach the standard and make it engaging for our students" (personal communication, Teacher Y, July 14, 2008).

Teacher Z: "Well, in the beginning, when Mrs. Sanderlin first came, she included teachers in writing the mission and the vision statement. We had never been involved like that before and now we were talking with the principal a lot about what we wanted our school to do. I really liked this because I felt like my ideas were valued. We talked a lot about standards and unpacking them. We also talked about what a standards-based school is and used Doug Reeves as a guide. We didn't agree in the beginning and it was difficult coming to a consensus, but we finally did. Each year, it got easier and then we created goals. To me, this was very engaging and it gave the leadership team a voice. We shared our opinions and met twice a month. I think this was the most engaging activity I have been apart of" (personal communication, Teacher Y, July 14, 2008).

APPENDIX M

Timeline of Data and Artifacts Collected During the Case Study

Table 3.

School Systems and Structures

Date	Program Implementation	Data Collection
	Year 2004	
September	No morning assemblies were done, the leadership team did not meet regularly, there were no rituals and routines or structures in place, professional development was sporadic and unfocused, there was no discipline plan, and there was no staff or parent handbook that guided all the stakeholders of the school.	Teacher and parent surveys
October	Morning Assemblies: Carver School Song/Creed	Staff agendas Leadership team planning agendas Minutes
October	The leadership team was developed. The principal asked for volunteers and met with them to gain input and buy in. They established rituals and routines of how the school was going to work.	Agendas Minutes
October	The leadership team established the mission/vision and goals and reviewed them with staff.	Agendas Minutes
October	The leadership team met with the principal to develop a meaningful Staff Handbook that would be beneficial to teachers.	Agendas Minutes Staff Handbook
October	Established clear rituals and routines and systems	Agendas Minutes
October	Weekly professional development meetings were held on curriculum and teaching best practices	Agendas Minutes
October	Team Building and committee development	Minutes
October	Discipline Plan: signaling for students to stop and freeze.	Agendas

Date	Program Implementation	Discipline plan
October	School Brochures were created so visitors could know about the school when they come into the office. This helped parents gain insight to what they offered. The parents and teachers developed them.	School Brochures Agendas Minutes
November	School safety monitors were developed to help monitor behavior.	Agendas Minutes
December	Daily Behavior Report: the principal and staff decided to develop a daily behavior report to go home to develop more communication.	Daily Behavior Report Forms Agendas Minutes
	Year 2005	
January	Student walk areas were being developed.	Discipline Committee Agenda and Minutes
January	30/15 minute rule: students were no longer allowed to walk out of class during the first 30 minutes and the last 15 minutes of school. This was to help keep the hallways and campus clear of stray walking.	Discipline Committee Agenda and Minutes
January	School-wide enforcement of school uniform policy	Discipline Committee Agenda and Minutes
February	Establishment of school clubs: Gentlemen Scholars, Ladies of Excellence program	Flyers Parent Notices Banners
February	Parent and student newsletters: Ongoing Communication to parents about the school.	Flyers Parent Notices Banners
May	Improving Parent Center: Computers	Flyers Parent Notices Banners
	Year 2006	
October	Parent Center Grand Opening/Ribbon Cutting	Flyers Parent Notices Banners
	Year 2007	
January	Placement of Banners/Communication	
	Student/staff attendance recognition	Agendas Flyers
January	Student Council Programs	Agendas

		Flyers Program
	Year 2008	
September - December	Student Incentives: Scholar of the Month	Flyers
September	Back to School Rally to motivate students for the upcoming year	Flyers Rally Program
October	Student Council Programs: President, Vice President, etc.	Student surveys
October	Began brainstorming about developing school partnerships	Staff Meeting agendas Partnership newsletter

Improvement of Facilities

Date	Program Implementation	Data Collection
September	Year 2004	
September	No grass/flowers/trees	Parent/teacher surveys
September	Old classrooms	Parent/teacher surveys
September	No computers or lab	Parent/teacher surveys
September	Minimal playground equipment	Parent/teacher surveys
September	Cracked asphalt/unleveled ground	Parent/teacher surveys
September	No tennis court	Parent/teacher surveys
September	No intervention center	Parent/teacher surveys
September	Library was placed in back of school – old and limited books	Parent/teacher surveys
	Year 2005	
September	Complete school remodeling	Agendas Monthly Parent Newsletter
October/November	Professional Development Center	Agendas
September - June	New library with new books	Agendas
November	Computers in all classrooms	Flyers
December	New science lab	Agendas
December	New playground equipment	Blueprints
	Year 2006	
September - June	New Science Lab with materials	Agendas Flyers
January	Flowers/trees/shrubs	Flyers
July/August	New classroom furniture (desks, tables, chairs, etc.)	Agendas

	Year 2007	
September	Computer lab with 45 new computers for students to research information and learn technology.	Agendas Flyers
October	4 computers were installed all classrooms	Agendas
	Televisions were placed in all classrooms.	Flyers Minutes Agendas
November – December	New windows and doors throughout school	Agendas
	Year 2008	
September	School was painted	Agendas
October - December	Murals around the school	Agendas
November	Tennis Court	Agendas
December	New Asphalt	Agendas
December	Playground Equipment	Agendas
October - December	Development of Staff Lounge	Agendas
October - November	Remodeling of cafeteria to the Carver Café	Agendas
November - December	Intervention Center with new wall built for privacy.	Agendas
January	More landscaping around school.	Agendas
February	Music Hall with instruments/furniture/classes	Music Hall Attendance List
March	New science Lab for students to use daily.	Science class calendar
April	Kindergarten playground equipment installed.	Blueprints
May - June	Creation of Professional Development Center: this allowed teachers to prepare for class effectively.	Flyers Agendas Minutes

Standards-based Instruction Reform

Date	Program Implementation	Data Collection
	Year 2004	
September	Limited continuity of instruction, best practices were not implemented, teachers did not post standards on the	Lesson plans Observations

130

	boards, no common assessments in place, no reading coaches hired, and no demonstration lessons provided to show what effective teaching looks like.	
October	Leadership team met weekly to prepare lesson plans and develop common assessments	Agendas Minutes Lesson plans Common assessments
October	Principal worked with teachers and leadership team to define the mission and vision of the school	Agendas Minutes Single Site Plan
October - November	Principal met with grade levels to review standards they would teach.	Agendas Minutes Power Standards Chart
December	Banners of the mission, vision and school-wide goal are posted around the school	Banners on walls Agendas Minutes
November/December	Quarterly Data/Standards team meetings were held with each grade level to focus on the power standards they were expected to teach.	Agendas Minutes Power Standards Chart
	Year 2005	
September - November	All teachers attended conferences and workshops to increase their knowledge of curriculum and instruction. Demonstration lessons were provided, teachers observed other effective teachers, reading coaches assisted teachers with the execution of effective instruction and the principal provided support and immediate feedback to guide teachers.	Agendas Minutes Flyers Observation forms
December	Bulletin boards and classroom environment expectations were implemented in all rooms. Standards were posted and teachers were expected to write and explain the standards daily.	Agendas Minutes Standards from CDE
January	Professional development meetings held to review standards and instructional expectations.	Agendas Minutes Standards from CDE
February	Principal held long hours to meet with the leadership team and organize the school to be standards-	Agendas Minutes

	based.	
	Year 2006	
September - December	All teachers attended high-quality professional development workshops on rigorous, standards-based instruction.	Agendas Minutes Professional development Calendar
September - June	Principal observed instruction for two hours a day and provided immediate feedback to teachers.	Observation forms Feedback conference forms
October	Teachers were engaged with creating common assessments that mirrored the California State Test (CST) and administered them weekly.	California State test release Test questions Weekly assessments by grade level Agendas and Minutes
	Year 2007	
September	Coaches provided demonstration lessons and observations as well as immediate feedback	Observation forms Demonstration lesson request forms
September	Teachers submitted grade level standards-based lesson plans that highlighted the standards and assessments.	Lesson Plans
September	Uniform design for bulletin boards and student work to be posted was strictly enforced.	Pictures Agendas Minutes
October	Reading Coach and principal spent extra time on campus after-school to meet and assist with teachers.	Observation forms Flyers
November	All teachers were trained on how to use data and how to use it to improve instructional practice.	Agendas Minutes Professional development flyer Professional Development Calendar
	Year 2008	
January	All grade levels provided common assessments to identify students areas of strength and weaknesses.	Assessments Agendas Minutes
February	The leadership team planned a summer staff retreat to review goals and the school vision.	Assessments Agendas Minutes
July	The principal and staff went on a retreat to discuss plans for the year and collaborate about the mission, vision and goals.	Agendas Minutes Flyers
September	Data/standards team meetings were	Agendas

	held each quarter. Review AYP/API data with all grade levels.	Minutes Flyers
October	Teachers completed their class AYP focus lists and calculated how many students they had to move from basic to proficient in order to meet the AYP.	Agendas Minutes

Family and Community Partnerships

Date	Program Implementation	Data Collection
	Year 2004	
September - June	The parent center was dull, drab and had limited resources for parents. There was minimal furniture and no computers for parents to gain access to information. Workshops were not provided, committees were not formed and there was poor attendance to any council meetings. There were a small number of parent volunteers to help in classrooms and parents were not motivated to help out at the school. The former principal rarely met with parents and there was a lack of communication between the school and parents. Parents were not informed of the daily activities of the school because there was not a parent newsletter.	Parent/Teacher surveys Agendas Minutes Flyers
	Year 2005	
September	The parent center was remodeled with new furniture and materials.	Flyers Parent Newsletter
October	Computers were placed in the parent center for job searching and information.	Agendas Minutes Computer sign-in form

	Computer classes were offered.	Flyers
October	Monthly parent workshop calendar was created.	Agendas Minutes Parent workshop calendar
November	A monthly parent newsletter was created to inform parents of activities.	Parent newsletter Flyers Agendas
November - June	Regular parent meetings were conducted with the principal heavily involved to gain parent participation and involvement.	Parent newsletter Flyers Agendas
	Year 2006	
January - June	Parent fieldtrips were attended and parent potluck parties were done quarterly to increase unity and positive relationships.	Parent newsletter Flyers Agendas
July	Principal met with Leadership team to plan the staff handbook and put structures and systems into place for the upcoming year.	
September – December	Principal called various local businesses and CEO's to partner with the school.	Phone logs Partnership letters
	Year 2007	
January - May	Local businesses began working with the school and providing resources to teachers, students and parents.	Partnership Meetings Agendas Board Agendas Minutes
January	The Parent Homework Club was developed to assist struggling students.	Agenda Minutes Sign-in/out forms
February	Parent newsletter was created.	Parent Newsletter Flyer
	Year 2008	
April	New Community Liaison was hired to direct the parent center.	Agenda Minutes

May - June	Parent meetings/committees were organized with new leaders.	Agenda Minutes Flyers
September	Local business partners were brought in by the Community Liaison to provide workshops to empower parents and provide resources.	Agendas Minutes Flyers
September	Systems, structures and protocols were put into place by the Community Liaison for parent activities.	Agendas Minutes Flyers
September	The Community Liaison aggressively sought out parent volunteers and workshop presenters to present.	Agendas Minutes Flyers
September	A Back-to-School Rally was held to highlight the many partnerships the school accumulated over the past year.	Back-to-School Rally Program Official Partnership List Agendas Minutes
October	Principal/Parent Roundtable meetings were conducted to develop stronger communication and positive relationships between parents and the school.	Agendas Minutes Flyers
October	Recognition ceremonies are conducted to acknowledge parent volunteers and local business partners for collaborating with the school.	Agendas Minutes Flyers

Table 4

Standards Implementation Classroom Checklist (Reeves, 1997)

Professional Practice	Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing	Remarks
1. Standards are highly visible in the classroom. The standards are expressed in language that the students understand.				
2. Examples of "exemplary" student work are displayed throughout the classroom.				
3. Students can spontaneously explain what "proficient" work means for each assignment.				
4. For every assignment, project or test, the teacher publishes in advance the explicit expectations for "proficient" work.				
5. Student evaluation is always done according to the standards and scoring guide criteria and never done based on a "curve."				
6. The teacher can explain to any parent or other stakeholder the specific expectations of students for the year.				
7. The teacher has the flexibility to vary the length and quantity of curriculum content on a day to day basis in order to insure that students receive more time on most critical subjects.				
8. Commonly used standards, are reinforced and integrated in every subject area.				
9. The teacher has created at least one standards-based performance assessment in the past month.				
10. The teacher exchanges the				

student work (accompanied by a scoring guide) with a colleague for review and evaluation at least once every two weeks.				
11. The teacher provides feedback to students and parents about the quality of student work compared to the standards – not compared to other students.				
12. The teacher helps build a community consensus in the classroom and with other stakeholders for standards and high expectations of all students.				
13. The teacher uses a variety of assessment techniques, including (but not limited to) extended written responses, in all disciplines.				
14. Other professional practices appropriate for your classroom:				

Standards Implementation School Checklist (Reeves, 1997)

Professional Practice	Exemplary	Proficient	Progressing	Remarks
1. A Standards/Class matrix (standards across the top, classes on the left side) is in a prominent location. Faculty members and school leaders discuss areas of overlap and standards that are not sufficiently addressed.				
2. Standards are visible throughout the school and in every classroom.				
3. The school leaders use every opportunity for parent communication to build a community consensus for rigorous standards and high				

	expectations for all students.
4.	Information about rigorous standards and high expectations is a specific part of the agenda of every faculty meeting, site council meeting, and parent organization meeting.
5.	The principal personally evaluates some student projects or papers compared to a school-wide standard.
6.	The principal personally evaluates selected student portfolios compared to a school-wide standard.
7.	Examples of "exemplary" student papers are highly visible.
8.	Job interview committees explicitly inquire about the views of a candidate about standards, performance assessment, and instructional methods for helping all students achieve high standards.
9.	A "jump start" program is available to enhance the professional education of new teachers who do not have an extensive background in standards and assessment techniques.
10.	Every discretionary dollar spent on staff development and instructional support is specifically linked to student achievement, high standards, and improved assessment.
11.	Faculty meetings are used for structured collaboration with a focus on student work.
12.	The principal personally reviews the assessment and instructional techniques used

	by teachers as part of the review and evaluation process.
13.	Other professional practices appropriate for your school: