FROM ISOLATION TO COLLABORATION:

THE EMERGENCE OF A COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL

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The landscape of American education is constantly changing. The most current trend that is dominating the field is accountability that resonates throughout the entire organization. Accountability becomes one of the six "change indicators" that provide the framework for the study. This study recognizes a middle school that has seen success in changing from what Richard Elmore defines as a "default culture" to one that supports collaboration and a focus on student achievement. The foundation of this study is to analyze the change indicators and to determine their influence on moving the culture of the middle school out of its "crisis" and into its more productive realm. The indicators identified as positive contributors to the cultural transformation are Staff Changes, Accountability Measures, Renovations, Middle School Merger, Leadership and Educational Programming. The use of qualitative research and the semi-structured interviewing process known as Responsive Interview Model highlight the inner most thoughts and feelings relating to the dissertation question. The interview data was analyzed by organizing the responses into unanimous, supported and individual themes. A survey derived

from the probing questions along with a rank order of the indicators provided a triangulation of data that validates the overwhelming results of the study. The value of the leadership is underscored in each data collection and becomes the primary influence in moving the building culture forward. Palestini's "principles of effective leaders" is the framework chosen in the final chapter to highlight the importance of leadership in cultural change as well as depict the strong relationship between the collected data and those identified principles. This study shows a positive correlation of each indicator in the cultural change and supports the abundant research on the role of the leadership as most critical in promoting effective change in any organization.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. CHAPTER

1.1. Introduction

"The traditional institution is designed for continuity…change for the traditional institution is, so to speak, a contradiction in terms"

Drucker

Public educators see themselves as a traditional institution mired in change.   Change can no longer be considered a contradiction in terms.   The challenge has been issued by President George W. Bush and his administration with the enactment of the 2001 reform legislation known as No Child Left Behind.   The reform plan has created accountability never before seen by public education and is demanding that student achievement increase at an acceptable rate or consequences will be in order.   Change is no longer a choice.   It is a built-in expectation to ensure progress.

   "If there is one cardinal rule of change in human condition, it is that you cannot make people change." (Fullan, 1994) This quote by Fullan speaks to the difficulty of moving away from the norm or "comfort zone" and inviting a new, possibly more challenging, way of accomplishing an organization's goals. The appropriate measures must to be taken to provide the foundation for change, including preparation of those that will be doing the changing. Timing may not be "everything" as the saying goes; however, it has a tremendous impact on the successful implementation of change. The time for change was apparent in North Hall – a 7th and 8th grade

building that is part of the McKeesport Area School District. The embedded culture in the building represented a "default culture" (Elmore, 2005) rather than one that promoted and was centered on academic achievement. A default culture is described by Richard Elmore as a culture where there is "teaching in isolation, not in conjunction with what is going on elsewhere in the building. Autonomy is the basis of the practice" (Elmore, 2005). "Imagine an airplane pilot announcing to the passengers that he wanted to try something different on his landing approach…" The pilot states "I am going to attempt to land the plane without employing the landing gear – it is always something I wanted to try." Elmore parallels this scenario with the typical classroom teacher wanting to do their own thing despite overwhelming research pointing to better practices. Elmore maintains that professional practice should be based on a set of agreed upon standards and practices that works to displace the default culture in existence today. Beginning with the 1999-2000 school year, several factors came into play that helped to move the culture of the building into a more productive mode. The change indicators identified for purposes of this study were divided into both external and internal factors.

1.1.1. External Factors

Accountability (No Child Left Behind)
Middle School Merger
Renovation Project

1.1.2. Internal Factors

Staffing Changes
Leadership
Educational Program

1.1.3.   External Factors

1.1.3.1.   Accountability

> Accountability mechanisms are, literally, the variety of formal and informal ways by which people in schools *give an account* of their actions to someone in a position of formal authority, inside or outside the school (Elmore, 2004, p.140).

The accountability system this study refers to is from a position outside the school, namely the federal government and its accountability measures through No Child Left Behind.

> Response to the introduction of an external accountability system would depend upon the degree of alignment between the purposes of the external accountability system and the internal norms of the school (Elmore, 2004, p. 144).

It is this context, the internal norms of the school, which will be the focus of this study.

Educational reform has been a constant part of education over the past few decades. From Madeline Hunter lesson design to cooperative learning to outcomes based education to differentiated instruction, change has always been suggested to improve public education. The No Child Left Behind legislation is no longer suggesting change and improvement, rather it is demanding it. "This new law…contains the most sweeping changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since it was enacted in 1965." The following education reform principles are contained in the act: stronger accountability for results, increased funding and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work. Each state, school district, and school is expected to make "adequate yearly progress" toward meeting chosen state standards. Information from each school is made public and presented via "report cards". Schools that consistently fail to achieve the chosen yearly progress will lose significant funding and can eventually see significant changes in governance such as reconstitution, chartering, or privatization. These consequences can be

financially devastating to schools that are already having tremendous budgetary restraints. "No country has ever made the bold commitment that every boy and every girl will excel – regardless of race, family background, or income." (Paige, 2002) This "bold commitment" has made all levels of public education accountable for student achievement and seems determined to eliminate the contradictory nature of change and traditional institutions. This mandate has virtually every district looking in the mirror and analyzing what changes could be made for improvement.

1.1.4. The Middle School Merger

1.1.4.1. The District

The McKeesport Area School District (MASD) is located in South Western Pennsylvania, approximately 10 miles south of Pittsburgh. It is made up of the City of McKeesport and local communities Dravosburg, Versailles, and White Oak. McKeesport is one of several Monongahela Valley (located along the banks of the Monongahela River) school districts that prospered until the closing of the steel mills in the area. The MASD continues to see a decline in enrollment, a similar trend seen among other Monongahela Valley school districts. The district currently serves 4,717 students in grades K-12, from five economically diverse communities. The Department of Welfare identifies 30% of the district children as living in families receiving Temporary Aide to Needy Families. Of the 27 census tracts located in Allegheny County, having at least 20% of the population living below the poverty level, six of these tracts are located in the City of McKeesport. At its peak in 1964, MASD graduated 977 students as compared to its most recent graduating class in 2004 of 312 students.

The educational program in MASD has been challenged by the guidelines of the No Child Left Behind legislation. One of the schools is in Improvement II, two schools were placed on Improvement I until a last minute appeal gave them back *Warning* status, and the remaining four schools are on the Warning list for either overall lack of Adequate Yearly Progress or for low achievement in their subgroup categories. The concern for student achievement has fueled many changes throughout the district. All-day kindergarten is now provided for all students in MASD, tutoring is available at all levels through the Beyond the Bell initiative and variations of computer-based instruction are available in all levels of the instructional program. The challenging demographics of the district have enabled the district to be eligible for and to receive over $1 million in grant awards that help provide additional programming opportunities.

1.1.4.2. The Middle School

The school district decided to restructure the grade levels. The original grade configuration was K-4, 5-8, 9, and 10-12. District officials contended that there was a better structure to accommodate the academic and social needs of the children. A plan was conceived and the reconfiguration of grades has taken place over a period of years. The first step in reorganizing the grade levels was making the high school grades 9-12. The building that originally housed the ninth grade students then became the 7th and 8th grade building that housed half of the district's students. Three elementary schools were then reorganized into K-3 and 4-6. The final adjustment was to change the remaining two schools that housed K-4 and 5-8. That move occurred in 2004-2005 school year and completed the transformation. This final move then housed the entire 7th and 8th grade into one building.

The final piece of the reconfiguration puzzle (middle school merger) was the most difficult for the district residents to accept. The two schools being merged into the middle school (Founders' Hall) were in stark contrast to one another: one (Francis McClure) is a suburban intermediate program while the other (North Hall) enrolled students primarily from the city of McKeesport. The residents of the community of White Oak were very happy with their schools and did not with to see their children combined with those from the other communities until their high school years.

Francis McClure had a free ─ reduced lunch rate of 47% compared to that of 73% at North Hall. The balance among the minority population was improved through a district-initiated integration plan but the cultural differences were still significant with a 25% minority population at Francis McClure and a minority population of 50% at North Hall. Despite the opposition, the plan continued and became a reality during the summer of 2004.

The challenge seen by many was viewed by the school's leadership team as an opportunity --- an opportunity to move forward and prepare the community, staff and students for changes that would benefit the entire organization. This leadership team recognized this as an opportune time to capitalize on positive change. The external change created an internal "buzz" and an optimism about what could be. The merger combined with the NCLB regulations were a natural recipe for change and improvement.

1.1.4.3. Renovation Project

The decision to merge the 7th and 8th graders into one building demanded either a massive renovation or new construction project. The choice was to renovate the building that served half of the district's 7th and 8th grade students (North Hall) and doubled as the district's vocational

school for its high school age students. The renovation project included both buildings on the high school campus. The fourteen vocational programs were moved to the high school when the construction of the new shops at the high school site was complete. All of the renovation attention then turned to North Hall.

There was quite a bit of excitement surrounding the project. The existing building was erected circa 1935 and was constructed as a vocational technical school. The classrooms were not suited for academic-based instruction, there was no library in the building, the cafeteria was entirely too small to house the number of students and the wiring presented challenges to run the technology programs. The opportunity to update the facilities to reflect the current instructional program created a buzz among the professional staff.

The renovation project was completed in August 2004. Aside from some minor issues to be addressed by district crews, the renovations were a tremendous success. The building now housed classrooms that included multiple computer jacks with network capabilities, a library larger and more current than any other building in the district, a new cafeteria that housed approximately 250 students comfortably and a powerful network pipeline that could handle the technology demands of the building. A dark, antiquated building intended for vocational training was transformed into a bright, spacious building conducive for the instructional needs of the 21st century.

1.1.5.   Internal Factors

1.1.5.1.   Staff Changes

The staff currently in place has been receptive to the existing leadership team and has been actively involved in professional development attached to the school's intense focus on reading

and writing across the curriculum. The current climate within the building suggests that the opportunity to expand the scope of the academic program is at hand. The teachers most recently hired have been screened carefully and made aware of the dynamics of the building and its propensity to change. Of the 63 teachers in the building to start the 2004-2005 school year, 27 are untenured (less than three years experience) and 15 more have between three and five years of service. The majority of the professionals within the building (67%) have less than five years of service. The energy and enthusiasm of the newest generation of teachers has been contagious. A noticeable improvement and willingness to change and use innovative ideas has become apparent.

1.1.5.2.   Leadership

The leadership throughout the district fluctuates on a yearly basis. During the time of the study (1999 – 2005), the district has seen three superintendents in office. One superintendent retired in October 2003, the next December 2004, and the current superintendent took office in January 2005. The central office staff has changed over the years as well, mainly with personnel taking new roles. The current assistant superintendent was in the same role for the former superintendent and prior to that served as the director of curriculum. The existing director of personnel was the former special education supervisor and held his current position under the most recent and previous superintendent. The same business manager has been in place for all three district leaders.

At the building level in Founders' Hall, the core of the leadership has remained the same with additions over the past few years. The building principal and dean of students were in place during the 1999-2000 school year. An additional dean of students was added in December 1999

to assist with the major discipline problems in the building. The latter of the two deans of students became assistant principal and now serves the role as associate principal. An additional dean of students was added to begin the 2003-2004 school year to prepare for the merger of the two 7th and 8th grade buildings. That dean of students became an assistant principal during November 2003 and currently serves in that same role. At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, a fifth administrator was added on a half-time basis to help during the first year of the merger. The leadership team began in 1999 with two administrators and now is up to five (one on a part-time basis). With the infusion of the additional administrators came new ideas and the opportunity to explore new academic programming while minimizing the disciplinary interruptions.

1.1.6. Educational Programming

Every successful organization must "face the brutal facts" (Collins, 2001, p. 13). The school involved in the study (Founders' Hall) has seen some progress in student achievement, but not at the levels suggested by Adequate Yearly Progress standards. The school has used data from PSSA results as well as their local assessment (Terra Nova) to identify weaknesses in the educational program. The results from the 2003-2004 school year indicate that there is more progress needed. The school has only a 17.2% overall proficiency rating in mathematics and a 36.3% proficiency rating in reading, both well below the designated thresholds of 35% and 45% respectively. The school has been on the NCLB warning list for its overall scores and for its IEP students. This data has been shared with the staff and the realization that changes are necessary is evident.

During the 2003-2004 school year, many of the district's efforts focused on creating a successful transition into the new middle school. The school administration realized this time of

external change as the perfect opportunity to lay the foundation for internal change. The particular school that was going to house the entire seventh and eighth grade has carried with it a reputation for being a very "difficult" building with discipline problems and poor student achievement. Approximately 500 of the 800 students (62.5%) and 40 out of the 63 teachers (63%) that make up the new middle school remain from the "troubled" side of the district. The opportunity to create a building culture completely different from what was expected was evident.

The middle school was fortunate to have had a literacy coordinator for the first time during the 2003-2004 school year. The interventions across the curriculum were beginning to make a difference in the discussions and practices of the teachers around the building. Several of the strategies that were implemented during the year were met with some resistance. The program stayed the course and staff meetings began to reveal comments suggesting that the impact on the instructional program was positive. As the year was coming to an end, we were told that the literacy coordinator had taken a position at a local university and would not be returning for the following school year.

The administrative team in the building began to discuss options with the administrative team from central office to continue the success of the initial year. The "team" realized that this was a perfect opportunity to give ownership of the literacy program to the teaching staff that would make up the newly merged middle school. The suggestion was to take the salary of the coordinator and use it in the following manner:

1. Hire content area coaches (math, reading, social studies, science, special education, and specials) from the existing staff that would form a study group and serve as the department liaisons for implementing the school's literacy initiatives. The pay was based on an hourly rate as per contract and the meetings would take place twice per week, two hours per meeting, after school hours.

2.   Schedule substitutes as necessary to allow content coaches to model and assist classroom   teachers in the implementation of chosen strategies.

3.   Provide professional development opportunities to all coaches throughout the school year to enhance productivity.

4.   Provide for bringing the previous year's literacy coordinator back as a consultant to assist the coaches as needed.

The content coaches meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays for two hours after school for a total of four hours per week. During the first two weeks of each month, the meetings are geared toward the selecting, researching, and modeling the chosen reading and writing strategy for the particular month. There is a school-wide faculty meeting that then takes place for one hour in which that information is shared within each department. At the faculty meeting, the coach will share notes from the discussions, the research supporting the strategy, the implementation of the strategy, and provide resources for doing so. During the next two weeks of the month, the content coaches spend time analyzing student work using the chosen strategy and preparing for the implementation of the next month's strategy. The second one hour faculty meeting has the entire staff engaged in the analysis of the student work to identify both strengths and weaknesses of the student body. The data gathered would help determine the direction of the instructional program throughout the school.

The 2003-2004 school year was also a pilot year for the computer-based instructional program called Compass Learning. The program was chosen during the summer of 2003 as a means of helping to improve the reading and writing of the student body. It is an interactive program that allows for the individualization of instruction. Standards-based assessments help to drive the learning paths that each child will encounter. The program was chosen by the literacy coordinator based on the accompanying research and potential interest the students would have in its use. The funding for the program was made available through a partnership with the local

YMCA after-school program called "Art and Soul". The $5,000 enabled the school to buy 50 subscriptions to the program and test it during the 2003-2004 school year. The subscriptions were offered to eighth grade students that scored in the "basic" category in either reading or math on their Terra Nova testing the previous year. Students were asked if they would be interested in working with the program and parents were met with and permission granted to begin an after-school Compass Learning program. Each student came to the computer lab during after-school hours from 3:30 – 6:00 two days per week.

Assessments were created based on the eighth grade standards that needed to be met for the 2004 eighth grade PSSA testing. The students took the assessment and proceeded to work on the individualized learning paths created by the program. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in the spring of 2004. Student opinions relating to the program, individual minutes logged into the program, achievement results based on pre and post-testing, and parental input regarding the home use of the program were all taken into account. Mobile laptops and projectors were purchased through the school budget to allow teachers to experiment with interactive whole group lessons in their classrooms. The evaluation team comprised of teachers, administrators, and the literacy coordinator agreed that the program would be a wise investment for the school.

The school could not afford to implement the program through its budget. A grant writing team was assembled to attempt at securing a competitive technology grant called Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT). The total award was in excess of $125,000 per year for two years if successful. Based on the demographics of the school, the merger of the two seventh and eighth grade buildings, and the plan of use based on the pilot year, Founders' Hall received the full award in May 2004. The plan was to implement the program school wide during the

2004-2005 school year. The plan included individualized computer time for students, differentiated instruction via interactive lessons in the classrooms and home access for improved parental involvement in each child's instructional program. The training dates were set for the summer and the implementation process was set to begin.

These two changes are considered by some as minor and by others as major (first order vs. second order and Type A vs. Type B discussed in Chapter Two). They all represent a focus on academic achievement that has not been apparent at all times within the building. These two changes represent the most significant changes to the educational program. These, along with others that will be identified during the interviews, will help indicate the importance of the changes in the educational programming in relation to the cultural evolution.

A common reference throughout this document is Jim Collins (2001) and his book *Good to Great*. Collins identifies a multitude of concepts that can help move a company forward. "Good is the enemy of great" (Collins, 2001, p. 1) and the six change indicators in the study all reflect some aspects of what it takes to move an organization. The accountability present in today's educational landscape have forced Founders' Hall to "confront the brutal facts" (Collins, 2001, p. 13). The achievement results were not up to standard in the school. No Child Left Behind enabled the school to look closely at what the problems were and what potential solutions there were for systematic improvement. The middle school merger that created Founders' Hall is an indicator of external change that is used in the study. Although Collins (2001, p. 11) maintains that "mergers and acquisitions play virtually no role in igniting a transformation from good to great", it is a major change within the McKeesport Area School District that must be analyzed for its importance in the cultural transformation. "The main point is to first get the right people on the bus (and wrong people off the bus) before you figure out where to drive it." (Collins,

2001, p.44) The staffing changes that occurred over the five year period form 1999-2004 were significant. Of the current staff of 63 teachers, only eight remain from the original staff at Founders' Hall (previously named North Hall). "All good-to-great companies had Level 5 leadership at the time of transition" (Collins, 2001, p. 22). The indicator of leadership, then, is a critical one as well. "Much of the answer to the question of good to great lies in the discipline to do whatever it takes to become the best within carefully selected arenas and then to seek continual improvement from there" (Collins, 2001, p.128).   The changes in educational programming at Founders' Hall were based on improvement in areas that desperately needed so. The successes of these changes are part of the study due to their potential impact on the cultural transformation.

1.1.7.   Statement of the Problem

What change indicators are identified as the most prominent in the transition made from a "default culture" to one that works collaboratively toward student achievement?

The middle school has made great strides in transforming its culture to a more productive and achievement oriented culture. The move from a "default culture" to one where teachers work collaboratively toward the overall goal of improving student achievement can be a daunting task. Where did this cultural change come from? Many factors over the past five years have been instrumental in this transition. This study depicts input from a variety of perspectives centering around six change indicators apparent during the time of the change:

- Accountability Measures
- Middle School Merger
- Renovation Project
- Staffing Changes
- Leadership
- Educational Programming

1.1.8.   Research Questions

1.   How have the changes in staff played a role in the cultural change in the school?

2.   How have the accountability measures now facing schools played a role in changing the culture?

3.   What role did the renovation project have in moving the building forward culturally?

4.   What role did the middle school merger play in the cultural transition?

5.   How has the leadership played a role in changing the dynamics of the school's culture?

6.   What role have the changes in the educational program played in the transition?

7.   What other factors were instrumental in improving the culture?

1.1.9.   The Study

The six change indicators (*Accountability Measures, Middle School Merger, Renovation Project, Staffing Change, Leadership, and Educational Programming*), along with others factors that may surface during the interviewing process, help to provide a clear picture of the cultural evolution process in the middle school. The six change indicators are analyzed to determine their overall role in the cultural change that has apparently taken place in the Founders' Hall building. The focus of the study is on the changes and their affect on the outcome (cultural change). The naturalistic inquiry process used in the study lends itself to uncovering the thoughts of the school personnel relating to each of the identified indicators. Other factors not implicitly identified by the interview questions will also be uncovered through the process. A content analysis was done on the qualitative data to uncover *unanimous, supported*, or *individual themes* (see Chapter III). A survey was then created from the responses gathered during the inquiry portion of the study and completed by all participants to help solidify the claims made during the interview process. A ranking of the six indicators was then used to provide a

triangulation of data that definitively identified the most influential among the change indicators in the study.

1.1.10. Operational Definition of Terms

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Educational reform passed by President George W. Bush's Administration in 2002. The reform calls for increased accountability for student achievement and higher academic standards.

External Factors – Factors affecting the operations of the school and district that are not directly based on decisions or occurrences from within the school.

Internal Factors – Factors affecting the operations of the school that are directly based on decisions or occurrences within the school.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – Percentage of expected growth that must be displayed by schools based on the regulations of the NCLB regulations.

Report Cards – Informative documentation of a school districts achievement with comparisons to state expectations that are made available to members of the school community.

Improvement II – The third year of not meeting AYP based on NCLB standards. Districts under Improvement II must offer students from low-income families free tutoring services from approved providers (known as "Supplemental Educational Services").

Warning – First level of consequence continuum for schools in relation to NCLB standards. The school is placed on notice at this initial level.

Beyond the Bell – Tutoring service made available to schools through state funding.

Reconfiguration – Adjusting the grade levels among buildings in the district (i.e. the district was configured K-4, 5-8, 9-12; it is now K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12).

Intermediate – School housing grades 4, 5,and6.

Bidding Out – Each year, teachers have the opportunity to bid into open positions in the district, which is based on seniority.

PSSA – Pennsylvania System of School Assessment

Terra Nova – Local assessment used by grade levels in the school not tested on the PSSA.

IEP – Individualized Education Program

<u>Literacy Coordinator</u> – Professional that served the role of coordinating the school's literacy focus throughout the instructional program.

<u>Content Coaches</u> – Lead teachers from each instructional department (i.e. social studies, science, reading, language arts, math) that research best practice and disseminate strategies and information to others in their department.

<u>Compass Learning</u> – Computer-based instructional program purchased to assist student achievement mainly in the areas of reading and mathematics.

<u>EETT</u> – Enhancing Education Through Technology – Grant that was awarded to the school to improve technology in the instructional program (the funding from EETT helped to fund the purchase of Compass Learning).

1.1.11.   Summary

Educational reform is at its peak as evidenced by federal government's involvement through the passage of NCLB. This period of reform has many districts and schools scrambling to make changes that improve student achievement and keep their schools in the public's favor and away from government intervention. The school in the study (Founders' Hall in the McKeesport Area School District) is one of these schools that are making changes that will fuel an atmosphere and instructional program more conducive to improved student achievement.   The six change indicators that direct the study are envisioned as ones that have positively impacted both the culture of the building as well as individual instructional practices.

The review of literature that follows identifies several facets of change that must be considered when implementing a successful process in schools. Each of the accompanying sections is vital to capturing the entire essence of change in any organization, then more specifically, schools. The *History of Change* gives a brief overview of the phases of change in relation to education in the United States.   *Types of Change* then differentiate between complexity of changes and their individual affect on people in the organization.   Valuable lessons for any organization going through a change process are evident when reading the

section *Corporate Change*. Although change occurs in a different context in the corporate world, many of the themes and practices of the change agent can be directly related to their plight. *Educational Change* identifies the cynicism within the profession and the reluctance to change. Lessons for change agents are provided to guide their thought process when instituting a change in an educational atmosphere. *Implementation of Change*, seen as the area where most change "falls apart", identifies some common traps and suggestions to avoid disaster during the implementation phase. A successful change process requires the proper leaders. The section *Leaders of Change* defines leadership and a framework that can help leaders understand their role in changing an organization. *Defining Culture* provides a variety of working definitions for culture and what it means in relation to an organization. *Cultural Change*, the most difficult of changes to implement, is discussed through the lens of a cultural evolution. *Staff Development and its Role in Changing Culture* depicts the importance and value of building the capacity of members within the organization and how it impacts the culture of an organization. Because it does not happen immediately, the research looks at the patient process required in implementing a successful change in culture. The sections of this review represent the areas of change that have been prevalent during the cultural transition that is taking place during the five year period of the study. Each section helps to illuminate the change process and how it could have affected both the previous and existing culture in the building.

This analysis of the changes culminating in the cultural change in a building over a five year period will reflect what Rough (1997) refers to as either a "manageable change" or a "self-organizing change". A manageable change is described by Rough (1997, pp. 1-2) as follows:

> It holds that extrinsic forces, or causes, make change happen. Because of this change can be predetermined, measured and controlled. This model views the universe as though it is a giant machine following natural laws. Goals can be set and procedures followed to achieve the goals. Ultimately this view means

accepting the idea that the universe is predetermined. Our culture views this Newtonian model as truth, common sense.

A self-organizing change, however, reflects the facilitation that can be traced to within an organization and built upon for years to come. Examples of self-organization are:

> . . . new insights where problems are spontaneously solved; changes of heart where the trust level shifts and adversaries become friends; a shift from dependency to empowerment; a change of management style, from control to self-management; people discovering what they really want instead of what they thought they wanted (Rough, 1999, p. 1).

Rough sees these changes as almost magical because of the mechanistic paradigm we live in. His description of self-organizing change (1999, p. 2) is as follows:

> Self-organizing change is more like a garden than a machine. Things are growing all the time by themselves, drawn out by an inner life quest for quality and efficiency. This growth is transformational, things can radically change their course spontaneously. Aspects can be planned, and growth can be anticipated, but fundamentally, this change process is not plan able. Type 1 (manageable change) methods are used, but it is recognized that they are not always applicable. In this model, success is sought in the quality of the relationship with nature, now power over it.

The data collected during the study will help to determine whether the cultural change within Founders' Hall supports the theory of manageable change or adheres to the concept of self-organizing change. As the building moved from "Isolation to Collaboration", the six change indicators previously outlined (*Accountability, Middle School Merger, Renovations, Staffing Changes, Leadership, and Educational Programming*) are analyzed to depict the thoughts of members of the organization in relation to the cultural change.

2. CHAPTER

2.1. Review Of The Literature

> It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, it is the one that is most adaptable to change.
>
> Darwin

2.1.1. History of Change

The study of the history of educational change is relatively young. The work of Michael Fullan (1991) outlines four phases in the evolution of educational change and how it works in practice. The phases provide an historical framework of what educational change represented over the past 40 years. Fullan's four phases of "planned educational change" are as follows:

- Adoption Phase – *1960's*
- Implementation Failure Phase – *1970-1977*
- Implementation Success Phase – *1978-1982*
- Intensification v. Restructuring Phase – *1983-1990*

From the 1990's to the present, a new dimension in educational change has arisen. I will call this the *Accountability* Phase. Although the time periods are "loosely represented around the margins", Fullan points out that the distinct themes are evident.

In the *Adoption* era of the 1960's, the more innovations that became a part of the educational arena, the better. Large-scale curriculum innovations, inquiry-oriented instruction, student-centered instruction and individualized instruction all became the order of the day. The overwhelming response to adopting innovation without a vision for sustaining its success led to

the *Implementation Failure* era of the 1970's. "Change for the sake of change" became commonplace without any forethought to follow-through. This phenomenon led to failure of many innovations. Researchers during this time period consistently wrote of the lack of success of the changes, thus referring to it as a failure. Although not a resounding success universally in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the progress of educational change was apparent. This time period of *Implementation Success* brought about many stories from a variety of researchers documenting the positive advances along with a list of key factors for it. Internationally, American education became known for its "quick fix" philosophy and preoccupation with ad hoc, small-scale, piecemeal innovations. This thought, along with landmark documents such as *A Nation at Risk (1983), A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, and *A Time for Results* led to more comprehensive reform measures than ever before. Reforms that were being addressed were labeled by Fullan as "*Intensification*", while school-based management, teachers in instruction and decision making and enhanced roles for educators (among others) became known as "*Restructuring*". The "tug-of-war" continues to this day between philosophers of both schools of thought.

The *Accountability Phase*, now apparent through a sweeping reform legislation known as No Child Left Behind, is picking up steam and appears to be the most influential educational reform to date. Although not formally named in research as such, this term appears to fit the current landscape of education. The repercussions for districts, individual schools, and the personnel within are becoming more and more stringent. The data provided from state-wide testing identifies schools as failing, improving, or meeting yearly adequate progress. Schools that are identified as failing or "improvement" schools must show immediate progress within state-mandated guidelines or they can suffer severe financial consequences. The individual teachers

within the schools are being observed more stringently than ever before as witnessed by the evolution of the new 426 and 427 evaluation forms (Pennsylvania). These observation forms are more detailed and offer a more complete picture of a professional educator. The accountability standards have also made a tremendous impact on the power of teacher unions. The days of protecting a teacher for marginal performance are nearly a thing of the past. Professional educators not performing at a level of "proficiency" or established level of acceptance are finding union officials pushing them to improve or even in some cases helping to counsel them into another profession. The stakes are high for everyone involved in education, and each individual is being held accountable for improved student achievement. This phase seems poised to continue until at least 2014 (mandated time frame for 100% proficiency).

As change continues to be a part of the educational organization's landscape, it becomes apparent that identifying types of change and their potential impact on stakeholders is essential. Change is seen through many different lenses. Understanding the multiple perspectives within an organization relating to the change effort can help shape the intended outcome.

> The theoretical literature on leadership, change, and the adoption of new ideas makes the case that not all change is of the same magnitude. Some changes have greater implications than others for staff members, students, parents, and other stakeholders.
>
> - Marzano et. al.

2.1.2.   Types of Change

Every change is in and of itself unique. Some, however, can prove to be more complex than others and can be more far reaching in their scope. Marzano, McNulty, and Waters (2003), identify the magnitude or "order" of change in their *working paper* at the Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel).

Although there are a variety of labels given to differing magnitudes of change (technical vs. adaptive challenges, incremental vs. fundamental, continuous vs. discontinuous), we have used the terms 'first order' and 'second order' change to make this distinction (Marzano, et.al. 2003, p. 6).

The impact of the change can vary from individual to individual. What is a "first order" change for some may be a "second order" change for another. It is recommended by the authors that the style of leadership must reflect the magnitude or "order" of the change that is being led. The following Table 2.1 is provided to distinguish between the two "orders" (Marzano et.al. 2003, p. 7):

Table 2.1: Types of Changes

First Order Change	Second Order Change
An extension of the past	A break with the past
Within existing paradigms	Outside of existing paradigms
Consistent with prevailing values and norms	Conflicted with prevailing values and norms
Focused	Emergent
Bounded	Unbounded
Incremental	Complex
Linear	Nonlinear
Marginal	A disturbance to every element of a system
Implemented with existing knowledge and skills	Requires new knowledge and skills to implement
Problem- and solution-oriented	Neither problem- nor solution-oriented
Implemented by experts	Implemented by stakeholders

The authors define a second order change as something that is not obvious as to how it will "make things better for people with similar interests, it requires individuals or groups of stakeholders to learn new approaches, or it conflicts with prevailing values and norms" (Marzano et.al. 2003, p. 7).

When viewing the entire scope of a change through multiple perspectives, it becomes apparent that change can be a problem to some while considered a solution to others. Marzano

et. al (2003, p. 8) explains that there are several current examples in education that point to this caveat.

> The role and use of content standards, high-stakes testing and accountability, adjustments in school days, weeks, and years, non-graded classrooms, home schooling, and school vouchers are for some educators, policymakers, and parents, first order changes; they are appropriate responses to what these individuals see as problems with the schools.

There are other educators, policymakers, and parents, however, that view these changes as dramatic and "undesirable breaks with the past, which conflict sharply with their prevailing values and norms". This simply means that not everybody views these changes as solutions; some see them as problems having far greater implications for students and stakeholder groups.

Second order changes can "confront group identities, change working relationships, and challenge expertise and competencies" (Marzano, et.al, 2003, p. 8). None of these conditions are beneficial to any educational atmosphere. Times exist, however, that call for a challenge to the status quo and the leader must know when those time are and how to go about implementation. The authors of the *Balanced Leadership* point out that the literature is

> replete with examples of bright, powerful, well intentioned leaders who fail in their leadership initiatives because they simply did not understand what they needed to know, how to proceed with implementation, or when they needed to use various practices and strategies (Marzano, et. al. 2003, p. 13).

Sarason (1996) refers to changes as Type A and Type B changes. "Changes that in one way or another require a change in power relationships, be they student-teacher, teacher-administrator, administrator-board, parent-school relationships" can be termed Type A changes (p. 345). He further explains them as

> explicitly intended to alter what people say, do, think, and feel not only as individual actions but in combination. More concretely, imagine that these changes have truly taken hold - they have not, but let us imagine that they have – and let us also imagine that our 1970 Martian has returned when they have taken hold. How different would the scene look to him? (p. 345)

Type B changes, on the other hand, are not intended to be systemic ones. Since Sarason's

first book in 1970, many Type B changes have taken place.

> The introduction of computers, team teaching, assessment of teacher competencies, increasing the length of practice teaching, increasing class time devoted to the 'basics', more and more careful monitoring of homework, raising standards for and expectations for students, more ethnically, racially, and gender-sensitive curricula – these are examples of what I call Type B changes (p. 345).

All of these examples are intended to change and inspire something, but not necessarily the

school system itself.

Marzano et. al. (2003) and Sarason (1996) take different approaches to defining change.

There is a common theme, however, in both. Some changes are "easier to digest" than are

others. Some changes (second order or Type A) are complex and can challenge the foundation

of what has always been or what is comfortable. Other changes (first order or Type B) can take

place without as much potential for debate or lasting affects. One important realization for

anyone enacting a change is to understand the multiple perspectives that exist within an

organization. Some people may view a change as Type A or second order while others may

view the exact same change as Type B or first order. Practically every member in the

organization is at a different level of their professional and personal lives. Understanding the

context the organization is in and how it directly affects the clientele can help "make or break"

the change effort.

Every organization operates in a different context. There are, however, similarities for

anyone enacting change and lessons (either good or bad) can be learned from other organizations

that have undertaken such a process. Educators trying to meet the new demands and

accountability measures apparent through change can view the successes and failures of the

corporate world to aid their cause.

Don't wait until an industry is about to collapse to make crucial changes…Read the tea leaves early on and watch for danger signs.

<div align="right">Augustine</div>

2.1.3.   Corporate Change

Although change can be generalized for any organization, some of the most powerful arguments made either for or against change come from the corporate world. Many of the principles used in an educational setting are derived from innovative ideas and solutions that originate in corporations. There are many lessons to be learned in the field of education from what has occurred and is continuing to occur in the corporate setting. The outlook on change from the eye of the corporations will be synthesized with that of change experts in education in a summary of the literature. John P. Kotter (1995, p.7) outlines eight steps to help transform an organization in need of change:

2.1.3.1.   Eight Steps to Transforming Your Organization

1.   **Establishing a Sense of Urgency**—examining market and competitive realities; identifying and discussing   crises, potential crises, or major opportunities.

2.   **Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition**—assembling a group with enough to lead the change effort; encouraging the group to work together as a team.

3.   **Creating a Vision**—creating a vision to help direct the change effort; developing strategies for achieving that vision.

4.   **Communicating the Vision**—using every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision strategies; teaching new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition.

5.   **Empowering Others to Act on the Vision**—getting rid of obstacles to change; changing systems or structures that undermine the vision; encouraging risk taking and nontraditional ideas.

6.   **Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins**—planning for visible performance improvements; creating those improvements; recognizing and rewarding employees involved in the improvements.

7. **Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Changes**—using increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that don't fit the vision; hiring, promoting, and developing employees who can implement the vision; reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents.

8. **Institutionalizing New Approaches**—articulating the connections between the new behaviors and corporate success; developing the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

Kotter contends that there is a general lesson to be learned from the various successful corporations and throughout their change processes. Kotter states the following in his work *Leading Change* (1995, p. 3):

> …the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time. Skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result. A second very general lesson is that critical mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating impact, slowing momentum and negating hard-won gains. Perhaps because we have relatively little experience in re- newing organizations, even very capable people often make at least one big error.

Collins and Porras (1996) are among many other corporate change researchers that agree with the notion presented by Kotter, however, use their own variations of addressing the potential caveats of change. They too point to an overall vision that is essential to successfully change an organization. The "prescriptive framework" outlined by Collins and Porras (1996, pp. 21-22) has two principal parts: *core ideology* and *envisioned future*:

> Core ideology combines an organization's core values and core purpose. It's the glue that holds a company together as it grows and changes. Core values are an organization's essential and enduring tenets – the values it would hold even if they became a competitive disadvantage; core purpose is the organization's fundamental reason for being. The second component of the vision framework is the envisioned future. First, a company must identify bold stretch goals; then it should articulate vivid descriptions of what it will mean to achieve them. Henry Ford set the goal of democratizing the automobile, then told the world, "When I'm through…everyone will have one. The horse will have disappeared from our highways - an imaginative stretch for the time.

Collins and Porras (1996, pp. 50-54) provide several examples of corporations that have established such an ideology and envisioned future. Walt Disney, for example, has the following established as their core values:

- No cynicism
- Nurturing and promulgation of "wholesome American values"
- Creativity, dreams, and imagination
- Fanatical attention to consistency and detail
- Preservation and control of the Disney magic

The Sony Corporation has established the following as their core values:

- Elevation of the Japanese culture and national status
- Being a pioneer – not following others; doing the impossible
- Encouraging individual ability and creativity

Core purpose, a company's "reason for being", is generally comparable to an educational organization's mission statement. The following corporations have established the accompanying statements as their core purpose:

- 3M—To solve unsolved problems innovatively.
- Nike—To experience the emotion of competition, winning, and crushing competitors.
- Sony—To experience the joy of advancing and applying the technology for the benefit of the public.
- Walt Disney—To make people happy.

The envisioned futures, or bold-stretch goals of the corporations, are referred to by Collins and Porras (1996, p. 52) as BHAG's (Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals) which are intended to aid their long-term vision. Some BHAG's can be quantitative or qualitative, such as Wal-Mart's vision of becoming a $125 billion company by the year 2000. Some use the common-enemy approach such as Nike's Crush Adidas goal of the 1960's. Others attach themselves to successful companies such as Giro Sport Design's 1986 goal of becoming the Nike of the cycling industry.

Jeanie Daniel Duck (1993) discusses some of the same major themes associated with creating the proper environment for change in her work *Managing Change – The Art of Balancing*. She contends that

> managing change is like a mobile. Achieving this critical balance means managing the conversation between the people leading the change effort and those who are expected to implement new strategies; creating an organizational context in which change can occur; and managing emotional connections, which have traditionally been banned from the workplace but are essential for a successful transformation (Duck, 1993, p. 56).

Duck supports the notion of creating a Transition Management Team (TMT) that has eight primary responsibilities to help include the entire organization in the reformation. Those eight primary responsibilities are as follows:

- Establish context for change and provide guidance
- Stimulate conversation
- Provide appropriate resources
- Coordinate and align projects
- Ensure congruence of messages, activities, policies, and behaviors
- Provide opportunities for joint creation
- Anticipate, identify, and address people problems
- Prepare the critical mass

Peter Senge (1999) devotes one of the sections of his book *The Dance of Change* to a profound thought relating to changing an organization – the power of learning. He refers to the many large companies such as Coca-Cola, First National Bancorp, Chevron, Mead Industries, Shell Oil, and Tenneco that have established "learning organizations". (Senge, 1999, p. 22) This commitment to learning brings about a distinct advantage that no other competitor can tap into. Senge (1999, p. 22) describes this competitive advantage as such:

> These and other corporate statements echo the theme that learning is the only infinitely renewable resource. Competitors can gain access to other resources: capital, labor, raw materials, and even technology and knowledge (for example, they can hire away your people). But no one can purchase, duplicate, or reverse-engineer an organization's ability to learn. While the gains from downsizing, reengineering, and 'slash and burn' retrenchments often fail to sustain themselves,

the gains from enhancing learning capacity have proven to be sustainable, cumulative, and self-reinforcing.

This opportunity to engage in meaningful learning gives many members of an organization a sense of being valued by management and built a mutual trust among the many members of the "team". Rather than telling people what to do, many managers are realizing the power in asking others in the organization what they think we should do. One manager commented that "It's enthused a lot of people who have not been enthused at this company for 20 years" (Senge 1999, p. 24). Senge's work has mostly been linked to the corporate world, however, has tremendous value as well in managing people in an educational setting. As pointed out by Deal and Peterson (1999, p. 1), "If only schools would behave more like businesses." Although there are obvious differences between the two, it does not hurt to take a close look at the statement. "Parents, teachers, and administrators need to take a look at their local traditions and ways" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 2).

Senge (1999) outlines the many phases of implementing change that relate to any organization. His work gives many examples and gets into great detail about four main topics: Getting Started, The Challenges of Initiating, The Challenges of Sustaining Transformation, and The Challenges of Redesigning and Rethinking.

> Most advocates of change initiatives, be they CEO's or internal staff, focus on the changes they are trying to produce and fail to recognize the importance of learning capabilities. This is like trying to make a plant grow, rather than understanding and addressing the constraints that are keeping it from growing (Senge, 1999, p. 9).

"Sustaining any profound change requires a fundamental shift in thinking" (Senge, 1999, p. 10). These hints on enacting successful change are intended for the corporate world. Change, however, is general in its context and has similar challenges in every field. Different organizations must react in different manners based on the external change they are

experiencing. The internal change, however, of changing practices, views and strategies relies heavily on the leadership's capability to engage its organization in learning and building capacity for doing things in a new way.

Norman Augustine (1997) detailed the survival story of a defense company that resulted from a merger of two companies in 1995 to form Lockheed Martin. It is stated that two important lessons became self-evident: "there are only two kinds of companies – those that are changing and those that are going out of business" (Augustine, 1997, p. 162). Following the merger, Lockheed Martin was in survival mode and had to make appropriate changes to simply exist. Augustine offers insight into the tactics employed by the officials at Lockheed Martin. The following suggestions were offered:

- Read the tea leaves
- Have a road map even where there are no roads
- Move expeditiously
- To think outside the box, get outside the box
- Benefit by benchmarking
- Don't lose sight of day to day business
- Focus on the customer
- Be decisive
- Create one culture for one company
- Remember that your real assets go home at night
- Communicate, communicate, communicate

Duck (1993, pp. 77-80) describes the creation of a Transition Management Team (TMT) that would have the responsibility of helping a smooth and productive change. The TMT would have eight primary responsibilities in the preparation and guidance of the organization. They are as follows:

- Establish the context for change and positive guidance
- Stimulate conversation
- Provide appropriate resources
- Coordinate and align projects
- Ensure congruence of messages, activities, policies, and behaviors

- Provide opportunities for joint creation
- Anticipate, identify, and address people problems
- Prepare the critical mass

Strebel (1996), Schaffer and Thomson (1992), Martin (1993), and Goss, Pascale, and Athos (1993) are among a multitude of authors that have addressed the change process in the corporate world. Their "recipes" differ in wording, but have similar resounding themes. Creating a collective vision, establishing universal buy-in for that vision, communicating consistently with all stakeholders, and providing appropriate support for sustaining the innovation or change are overriding themes woven into each author's description of successful transformation.

Researchers on change in the educational field identify similar methods of achieving success. There are still stakeholders to contend with, a product is still being produced, and profit can be measured through student achievement. Educational change reflects corporate change in many ways. Many of the authors cited throughout the section *Educational Change* have researched the practice over a period of decades and have related their findings to the educational change climate both then and now.

> "One of the most fundamental problems in education today is that people do not have a clear, coherent sense of meaning about what educational change is for, what it is, and how it proceeds."
>
> - Fullan

2.1.4. Educational Change

The problem of meaning is central to making sense of "educational change" (Fullan, 1991, p. 4). There are a multitude of perspectives on change and the change process within an educational organization. Education is, after all, a "sociopolitical process" (Fullan, 1991, p. 4). It is crucial that everyone involved in a situation where change is evident are fully aware of what the change is, how it will occur, and how it will benefit the overall goals of the organization.

Virtually every change has its consequences and affects many people. "Solutions must come through the development of *shared meaning*" (Fullan, 1991, p. 5). This "interface" that occurs on a consistent basis in an educational atmosphere is where the change process either "stands" or "falls". When referring back to the section entitled the *History of Change*, it is apparent that shared meaning was not common in the history of educational change. The "Adoption" era quickly reacted to change based on the "innovation of the day" without careful thought to the process as a whole. The "Implementation Failure" period brought about change simply for the sake of change, with not much forethought given to follow-through and consequences of those involved in the change. There were lessons learned from these two periods that were succeeded by a time of implementation success. Those lessons and research on successful change since must be paramount in guiding the change agent in one of the most difficult organizations – education. Researchers have realized that changes in the educational system can be derived from quality educational systems worldwide.

Stigler and Hiebert (1999) use evidence from the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) to shed light on the cultural differences in teaching that have American education lagging behind. A quick-fix philosophy that has been so apparent in U.S. educational institutions without noticeable impact has led to studying the progress of international competitors. One powerful observation that arose during a 1994 meeting with distinguished researchers and educators from Germany, Japan, and the United States was described by Stigler and Hiebert (1999). One of the participants, who had been relatively silent throughout the day, was asked if he had any observations he would like to share. His response was as follows:

> Actually, I believe I can summarize the main differences among the teaching styles of the three countries. In Japanese lessons, there is the mathematics on one hand, and the students on the other. The students engage with the mathematics, and the teacher mediates the relationship between the two. In Germany, there is

the mathematics as well, but the teachers owns the mathematics and parcels it out to the students as he sees fit, giving facts and explanations at just the right time. In U.S. lessons, there are the students and there is the teacher. I have trouble finding the mathematics; I just see interactions between students and teachers (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, pp.1-2).

Stigler and Hiebert maintain that the changes that have taken place in American education have, historically, been futile at best. They simply do not have any impact on the quality of teaching inside the classrooms. The teaching, they argue, is cultural and there is no apparent system in place to make it better. Whereas this study focuses on the improvement of one individual building culture, Stigler and Hiebert contend that there is a much larger change necessary, the entire culture of teaching in the United States.

The undertaking of a change is to effectively replace existing "structures, programs, and/or practices with better ones" (Fullan, 1991, p.15). Change for the sake of change, as was the practice during the 1970's, does not help. It can, however, be devastating to the climate of a building and can have long-term effects on the improvement of an educational program. Fullan (1991, p.15) entertains a powerful question in relation to changing without a shared meaning: "What if the majority of educational changes introduced in schools, actually made matters worse, however unintentionally, than if nothing had been done?" During the mid to late 1990's, many districts were pushing Outcomes Based Education (OBE) as a means of solving the nations educational woes. As a beginning educator during that time period, I took the time to understand what was being asked of us in relation to student achievement. I attended the in-service days, employed the initiatives in my classroom, and monitored the student results. Approximately one year later, OBE was phased completely out of the district's vision and never to be heard of again.

Many of my colleagues, including myself, were perplexed at the immediate dismissal of what was so forcefully being touted for the previous year. This lack of communication and follow-

through along with the disintegration of shared meaning left the staff hesitant to eagerly digest changes proposed thereafter. This "failure" of educational change is related to the fact that the reform was never fully implemented in practice; "i.e. real change was never accomplished" (Fullan, 1991, p. 15). This is an example of what clouds the educational field with "*change survivors*". Jeanie Duck (1993, p. 63) defines the *change survivors* as "cynical people who've learned to live through change programs without really changing at all. Their reaction is the opposite of commitment." Duck (1993, p. 70) further points out that "trust in a time of change is based on two things – predictability and capability". Uncertainty is not considered a positive attribute of implementing a successful change. One of the most difficult challenges facing education today is combating the fears that have been realized by the *change survivors* over their years in the field.

Paul Strebel (1996) identifies difficulties from the employees point of view in relation to change within an organization in his work *Why Do Employees Resist Change?*. Although some of his comments are directed at corporations, they are general in terms of employee's attitudes toward change and make a tremendous parallel to the educational field. Martin contends that

> Executives and employees see change differently. For senior managers, change means opportunity – both for the business and for themselves. But for many employees, change is seen as disruptive and intrusive (Martin, 1996, p.139).

Managers must, in Martin's eyes, "put themselves in their employees' shoes to understand how change looks from that perspective" to fully comprehend the impact of the change. To reference the earlier example of OBE, the management team (administration) did not fully comprehend the impact of asking for a manner in which to assess and teach children from the traditional ways. In return, the employees (teaching staff) made a major adjustment (from their perspective) only to have it disappear shortly thereafter. The staff had to then readjust their ways

to accommodate the passing fad of OBE. Strebel (1996, pp. 142-143) offers four questions that could help an educational leader understand the employee's perspective when instituting a change. He maintains that commitment comes from understanding the following questions:

- What am I supposed to do for the organization?
- What help will I get to do the job?
- How, when, and in what form will I be evaluated?
- What will I be paid? Is the pay related to performance?

Quite often the employees "misunderstand, or worse, ignore the implications of change for their individual commitments to the company" (Strebel, 1996, p. 145).

Michael Fullan (1993) identifies eight basic lessons of what he refers to as the "new paradigm of change". He arranges a series of thoughts crucial to any change agent with intent on implementing a successful change. During the interview process, the following lessons by Fullan (1993) will help to guide the probes and follow up questions:

- **<u>Lesson One</u>**:   **You can't mandate what matters**—(The more complex the change, the less you can force it) (p.21).

- **<u>Lesson Two</u>**:   **Change is a journey, not a blueprint**—(Change is non-linear, loaded with uncertainty and excitement and something perverse) (p.21).

- **<u>Lesson Three</u>**:   **Problems are our friends**—(Problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them) (p.21).

- **<u>Lesson Four:</u>**   **Vision and strategic planning come later**—(Premature visions and planning blind) (p.21).

- **<u>Lesson Five</u>**:   **Individuals and collectivism must have equal power**—(There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink) (p.21).

- **<u>Lesson Six</u>**:   **Neither centralization nor decentralization works**—(Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary) (p.21).

- **<u>Lesson Seven</u>**: **Connection with the wider environment is critical for success**—(The best organizations learn externally as well as internally) (p.22).

- **Lesson Eight**:   **Every person is a change agent**—(Change is too important to leave to the expert's personal mind set and mastery is the ultimate protector) (p.22).

Regardless of the organization enacting change, the most difficult period in the process is the implementation. Even those that follow the lessons of others relating to planning and including all stakeholders, both educational change experts as well as corporate change experts agree that the change effort will fall apart during the implementation of the innovation if special care is not taken. Researchers from all organizations provide advice on handling the implementation phase of change.

> Managing change is like balancing a mobile. Achieving this critical balance means managing the conversation between the people leading the change effort and those who are expected to implement the new strategies; creating an organizational context in which change can occur; and managing emotional connections, which have traditionally been banned from the workplace but are essential for a successful transformation.
>
> Duck

2.1.5.   Implementation

Establishing a vision and gaining support from those that will be enacting the change establishes the proper change context. This context not always translates into successful implementation of any particular innovation. "One of the main consequences of introducing innovation is career advancement for the sponsor and subsequent failed implementation of the innovation" (Fullan, 1999, p.20). The implementation process is inundated with pitfalls that can destroy a change initiative. Drucker (1999, p.86) identifies three common traps that must be avoided during the implementation process:

1.   Make sure the innovation is in tune with *strategic realities.*
2.   Do not confuse "novelty" with "innovation".
3.   Do not confuse "motion" with "action".

Drucker cautions that these traps are so attractive that many change leaders can expect to fall into one of them – or all three – again and again. His suggestion is to "organize the introduction of change" or to pilot the innovation. Drucker (1999, p. 88) points out the following in relation to successfully piloting a project or innovation:

> If the pilot test is successful – if it finds the problems nobody anticipated but also finds the opportunities that nobody anticipated, whether in terms of design, of market, of service – the risk of change is usually quite small. And it is usually also quite clear where to introduce the change, and how to introduce it, that is, what entrepreneurial strategy to employ.

The pilot year for the Compass Learning program in the school and the use of the literacy coordinator were encouraging and the signs pointed to the risk of full implementation as feasible. These signs align with Drucker's (1999) philosophy on introducing change and the acceptance of the change effort based on a successful pilot. Although both programs will be quite different from their initial year, the staff has exhibited acceptance and willingness to incorporate the two programs into their instructional "toolbox". This pilot success helps to solidify changes in the instructional program as one of the major factors to consider in the transformation of the culture.

Martin (1993, p. 116) argues that "companies don't make the most of new opportunities because they're making the most of old ones". Martin (1993, p. 123) further states "In short, people in corporate crisis are in no frame of mind to learn new facts of life, which is just what they need to do." Although the reference is made to the corporate world, the thought resonates throughout organizations and runs parallel to the shortcomings in the educational field. Throughout the implementation process, there are four stages that Martin contends can either make or break a company (Martin, 1993, pp. 117-125). The first, the articulation of a *founder's vision*, refers to being organized to make the best of an opportunity. The second, the consolidation of *steering mechanisms*, relates to a collective sharing of processes, rules, and

behaviors that are woven into systematic choice at all levels of the organization. The third, disruptive *feedback*, puts the organization in danger of an obsolete steering mechanism and can turn an opportunity into useless noise. The fourth, the proliferation of *defensive routines,* occurs when the world of the organization becomes impervious to learning of every kind.

Michael Fullan (1991, pp. 21,22) also contends that there are several reasons for failure to occur during the implementation of a change. During this pivotal time period, he refers to the following as problems that commonly occur:

- District tendencies toward fads and quick fixes
- Too many competing demands or overload
- Failure to understand or take into account differences among schools
- Under funding projects
- Trying too much with too little

Fullan also points to his effective schools research done throughout the 1980's that provides several other suggestions to help avoid failure during the implementation process. Included among these are strong leadership focusing on instruction, high expectations for students, clear goals, an orderly atmosphere, frequent monitoring, parental involvement, and school improvement teams (Fullan, 1991, p. 22).

An earlier work by Silberman (1970) titled *Crisis in the Classroom* identifies one of the problems with implementation as too much "expert" direction from university authorities on education. "Faulty and overly abstract theories not related to practice, limited or no contact with and understanding of the school, ignorance of the lessons of experiences of the reformers in the 1920's and 1930's, and above all the failure to consider explicitly the relationship between the nature of the proposed innovations and the purposes of schools" assisted in the failed reform movements of the time (Silberman, 1970, p.182). Each and every building has needs unique to them. The context of each building and each district help to shape the foundation for

implementing a successful innovation. Research helps to drive decisions made in each organization, but cannot dictate each step of the way. University authorities and "experts" on education provide valuable data to consider through any change effort, however, cannot provide a recipe for success that is to be followed by each organization. Fullan also cautions the change leader and the fallout in the organization when political motives are the impetus behind the movement. "One of the main consequences of introducing innovation is career advancement for the sponsor and subsequent implementation of the innovation (Fullan, 1991, p.20)." This adds to the list of reasons for hesitation on the garnering support from those within the organization.

Fullan (1991, p.18) illustrates implementation success in a simple picture of four possible outcomes. The "*Actual Implementation*" refers to whether or not there has been a real change in practice while "*Value and Technical Quality*" refers to whether the program has been technically well-developed or not.

		Actual Implementation of the Change	
		Yes	No
Values and Technical	Yes	I	II
Quality of the Change	No	III	IV

Fullan (1991, p.18) points out that *Type 1 Changes* represent what we are presumably striving for (the actual implementation of a quality program that we value). *Type II Changes reflect* a planning problem that in a valued, technically sound program is not being implemented for certain reasons. *Type III Changes* are not technically well developed or are not valued by whatever reference group being used (basically, a bad change is being introduced). *Type IV Changes* reflect a form of success in that a poorly valued or poorly developed change is being rejected in practice. Fullan (1991, p. 27) continues to point out that there are several important

questions to consider when adopting a new innovation to help avoid typical implementation failures:

- What values are involved?
- Who will benefit from the change?
- How much of a priority is it?
- How achievable is it?
- Which areas of potential change are being neglected?

Types of change, implementation pitfalls, and other elements are important. However, one aspect of change means the most to help ensure success – the change leader. Sometimes it is one individual and other times it is the collection of the management team that helps to move an organization forward. The interview process (detailed in 3.0 Chapter) allows the interviewee to explore every aspect of leadership in the district and to identify what they feel has been the positive influence in changing the school's culture. The bottom line is student achievement. The school needed to make the transition from one of "surviving" to one of "thriving". The literature points to the leadership element as one of the major factors in moving an organization forward and improving the culture of a building. The leadership element, then, can be viewed as one of the major factors responsible for the cultural change.

> Management exists for the sake of the institution's results. It has to start with the intended results and has to organize the resources of the institution to attain these results. It is the organ to make the institutions, whether business, church, university, hospital or a battered women's shelter, capable of producing results outside of itself.
>
> <div align="right">Drucker</div>

2.1.6.   Leaders of Change

Successful change requires the proper leader. The successful change leader encompasses a multitude of qualities that enables the process to take place. Fullan (2001) dedicates his entire work *Leading in a Culture of Change* to defining his framework for leadership. In defining a

leadership framework, Fullan realizes that several things must come together simultaneously and

it certain individual characteristics are necessary to enact positive change. There is a "formula"

to ensuring that more good things happen and fewer bad things happen during a change process.

The premise of Fullan's framework is as follows:

> Leaders will increase their effectiveness if they continually work on these five components of leadership – if they pursue moral purpose, understand the change process, develop relationships, foster knowledge building, and strive for coherence – with energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness. If leaders do so, the rewards and benefits will be enormous. It is an exciting proposition. The culture of change beckons (Fullan, 2001, p. 11).

Change is a delicate process and can be stifled if delivered in the wrong context. Rosabeth

Kanter (1983, p. 101) introduces a cynical, yet realistic view of how the climate established by

the leader can determine a change effort's outcome. Kanter states "Imagine something like this

hanging on an executive's wall…right next to the corporate philosophy":

1. Regard any new idea from below with suspicion – because it's new, and because it's from below.

2. Insist that people who need your approval to act first go through several other levels of management to get their signatures.

3. Ask departments or individuals to challenge and criticize each other's proposals. (That saves you the job of deciding; you just pick the survivor.)

4. Express your criticisms freely, and withhold your praise. (That keeps people on their toes.) Let them know they can be fired at any time.

5. Tread identification of problems as signs of failure, to discourage people from letting you know when something in their area isn't working.

6. Control everything carefully. Make sure people count anything that can be counted, frequently.

7. Make decisions to reorganize or change policies in secret, and spring them on people unexpectedly. (That also keeps them on their toes.)

8. Make sure that requests for information are fully justified, and make sure that it is not given out to managers freely. (You don't want data to fall into the wrong hands.)

9. Assign to lower-level managers, in the name of delegation and participation, responsibility for figuring out how to cut back, lay off, move people around, or otherwise implement decisions you have made. And get them to do it quickly.

10. And above all, never forget that you, the higher-ups, already know everything important about this business.

This type of attitude displayed by the leadership and culture evident within the organization make it unattractive and difficult for people to take initiative and support any change endeavor. Sarason (1996) realizes that the principal wants to be and feel influential. "The dilemma begins when the principal realizes that words and power, far from guaranteeing intended outcomes, may be ineffectual and even produce the opposite of what is desired (Sarason, 1996, p.60)." Sarason (1996, p. 335) continues with the description of the "dilemma" of power later in the book:

> The problem of change is the problem of power, and the problem of power is how to wield it in ways that allow others to identify with, to gain a sense of ownership of, the process and goals of change. That is no easy task; it is a frustrating, patience-demanding, time-consuming process. Change cannot be carried out by the calendar, a brute fact that those with power often cannot confront.

Michael Fullan (2001) outlines six basic functions that can help a leader of change create a climate supportive of the endeavor. Albeit a challenge for the leader described by Sarason (1996), Fullan provides a format comprised of themes mentioned by a multitude of other change authors, among them Kotter (1995), Duck (1993), and Augustine (1997). The six functions that are suggested by Fullan (2001) are:

Function I: Developing, Articulating, and Communicating a Shared Vision of the Intended Change
Function II: Planning and Providing Resources
Function III: Investing in Professional Learning
Function IV: Checking on Progress
Function V: Providing Continuous Assistance
Function VI: Creating a Context Supportive of Change

Jaffe and Scott (1999) point to a series of traits that leaders display as a means of gaining support and facilitating the change process in any organization. In their work *Getting Your Organization to Change*, they provide a sample survey to assist organizations that are trying to identify their leadership's potential in moving them through a successful change. The categories that Jaffe and Scott use to predict the climate for change are **Leadership Engagement**, including *change orientation*, *credibility*, *strategic focus*, *communication*, *involvement*, *enabling action*, and *initiative and risk taking*; **Learning and Innovation**, which includes *willingness to change*, *open to learning*, and *people development*; **Teamwork**, including *team relationships* and *working across boundaries*; **Value People**, including *support and respect* and *work spirit*; and **Aligned Policies and Work Processes**, including *work processes* and *performance management and rewards*. The research to develop this survey came from a culmination of a dozen years of implementing large-scale changes including large and small corporations and public organizations. The publication is intended as a practical guide for leaders that have intent on orchestrating a change in their organization.

Richard Elmore (2003) sees the role of the leader as the key to managing change successfully. In a report commissioned by the National Governor's Association (NGA), Elmore concludes that the leader creating the proper context for change to thrive is paramount to improving the school and increasing student achievement. The report, *Knowing the Right Things to Do: School Improvement and Performance-Based Accountability*, recognizes the following related to reform:

> Knowing the right thing to do is the central problem of school improvement. Holding schools accountable for their performance depends on having people in schools with the knowledge, skill, and judgment to make the improvements that will increase student performance (Elmore, 2003, p. 9).

McRel's *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement* solidifies this philosophy with an evidence-based study on

moving an organization forward. The "working paper"(Marzano et.al, 2003, p. 2) on balanced leadership identifies the importance of their chosen leadership framework in the following statements:

Effective leaders understand how to balance pushing for change while at the same time, protecting aspects of culture, values, and norms worth preserving. They know which policies, practices, resources, and incentives to align and how to align them with organizational priorities. They know how to gauge the magnitude of change they are calling for and how to tailor their leadership strategies accordingly. Finally, they understand and value the people in the organization. They know when, how, and why to create learning environments that support people, connect them with one another, and provide the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to succeed.

Baker, Curtis and Benenson (1991) caution leaders of change to understand the perspective of the teachers during a change process. Historically, educational decisions arise one after another without follow-through. Baker et al. (1991, p.13) describe this phenomenon as follows:

> Planned change for these teachers is not the cumulative development of a comprehensive strategy. Rather, it is 'one damned thing after another'. Planned change becomes the preoccupation of an administrator who is trying to fix the system. For teachers, change becomes a matter of coping with management's penchant for educational fads.

The effective leader understands both "the order of change they are leading and how to select and skillfully use appropriate leadership practices" (Marzano, et. al., 2003, p. 8). The "order of change" (discussed further in the section *Types of Change*) often dictates which style of leadership is to be used during times of change.

Recognizing which changes are first and second order for which individuals and stakeholder groups helps leaders to select leadership practices and strategies appropriate for their initiatives. Doing so enhances the likelihood of sustainable initiatives and a positive impact on student achievement. Failing to do so will just as likely result in the negative impact on achievement (Marzano, et.al, 2003, p. 8).

Collins (2001) identifies five different levels of effective leadership in his book *Good to Great*. The most distinguished, a level-five leader, possesses similar qualities to those that are expected of a leader that is going to implement a change in his or her organization. The following illustration displays each level of leadership as defined by Collins (2001, p. 20):

LEVEL 5 **LEVEL 5 — EXECUTIVE**—Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will.

LEVEL 4 **LEVEL 4 — EFFECTIVE LEADER**—Catalyzes commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards.

LEVEL 3 **LEVEL 3 — COMPETENT MANAGER**—Organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives.

LEVEL 2 **LEVEL 2 — CONTRIBUTING TEAM MEMBER**—Contributes individual capabilities to the achievement of group objectives and works effectively with others in a group setting.

LEVEL 1 **LEVEL 1 — HIGHLY CAPABLE INDIVIDUAL**—Makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills, and good work habits.

Most Level 5 leaders are "self-effacing, quiet, reserved, and even shy – a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will…more like Lincoln and Socrates than Patton or Caesar (Collins, 2001, pp. 12-13). As is evidenced by the hierarchy of leadership, change can be initiated by more than the Level 5 leader. It becomes obvious, however, when analyzing closely, that the Level 5 leader has the capacity to initiate change that endures. As previously mentioned, several changes are interrupted as a leader "cashes in" on their opportunity that a successful change may bring. Many sponsors of change realize promotion or individual gain based on their participation in a change effort. The Level 5 leaders, however, place personal gain aside and strive for organizational greatness. Collins (2001, p. 21) describes the Level 5 leader as such:

Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious – but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves.

Level 5 leaders embody the characteristics of all four other levels of the pyramid. Simply put, they are "modest and willful, humble and fearless." (Collins, 2001, p. 22) Change in any organization is a challenging process, even with a Level 5 leader in charge. The most difficult change could possibly be in the culture. It takes the vision and determination of the leadership as well as the ability to stay the course. A change in culture is not only difficult, but a timely proposition taking several years to accomplish.

The underlying concepts in the studies on leadership point to understanding your organization and its needs, knowing how and when to intervene and providing the appropriate resources and assistance to help the employees flourish. When members of an organization are accustomed to a context supportive of change and are dedicated to the collective vision, the leader has helped create a climate conducive to improved achievement. To move an organization forward, a leader assumes the role of a contributing team member with the abilities to intervene and provide direction when and where necessary. Successful leaders embody energy, enthusiasm and hope as they balance their individual goals with an intense drive to achieve organizational goals.

"What people pressuring for management to 'drive' cultural change don't understand is: A value is only a value when it is voluntarily chosen".

O'Brien

2.1.7. Defining Culture

"Teaching…is a cultural activity. It is more like participating in family dinners than like learning to use the computer" (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 86). Stigler and Hiebert maintain that cultural activities are behaviors learned through informal participation over long periods of time. Bolman and Deal (2003, p.268) refer to culture as "the way things are done around here". The

"way things are done around here" attitude can have either a positive or negative affect on production in a building. Gemberling, Smith, and Villani (2004, p. 39) provide the following statements relating to culture:

> If, for example, the school district has a track record of success, it is likely to have a very strong culture, reinforced by substantial achievements. In this instance, the culture may blind those in the system to better ways of meeting the present challenges. It does not have to be that way, but it frequently is. Conversely, school systems that do not have a track record of sustained success are likely to have a negative culture characterized by defeatism and defensiveness. Usually the blame for failure is attributed to others. It may be the students (if only the community sent us better material to work with!), the parents, the facilities, lack of leadership, and so forth. Such a culture is negative and strong at the same time.

Geoff Scott (1999, p. 88) refers to culture as "the accepted ways of doing things in the workplace". He continues to add that "…culture penetrates all operating components of an educational workplace – its structure, system of rewards, planning processes, communication systems, staffing practices, and so on" (Scott, 1999, p. 89). Morgan (1986, p. 121) defines organizations as "mini societies that have their own distinctive patterns of culture and subculture". Reicken and Court (1993, p. 62) conceptualize culture as "that which individuals in society (organizations) hold in common that gives meaning to their (working) lives: shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, and so on." They continue to describe culture as "how we see things and how we act towards them" (Reicken & Court, 1993, p. 62). Dalin and Rolff contend that all organizations are different.

> What we experience as 'the way things are' in one organization, the written and unwritten rules that regulate behavior, the stories and the myths of what an organization has achieved, the standards and values set for its members – these and many other aspects of organizations differ (Dalin & Rolf, 1993, p. 98).

Thomas J. Sergiovanni in his 1996 work *Leadership for the Schoolhouse: How is it different? Why is it important?* refers to a theory of acceptability in explaining the term culture:

The heart and soul of school culture is what people believe, the assumptions they make about how schools work, and what they consider to be true and real. These factors in turn provide a 'theory of acceptability' that lets people know how they should behave. Underneath every school culture is a theory, and every school culture is driven by its theory. Efforts to change school culture inevitably involve changing theories of schooling and school life itself (Sergiovanni, 1996, p. 3).

Deal and Peterson make the connection between culture and productivity within a school organization. Their belief is that a strong positive culture is crucial and it impacts human beings at all levels.

From what faculty talk about in the lunch room, to the type of instruction that is valued, to the way professional development is viewed, to the importance of learning for all students – strong positive cultures have powerful effects on many features of the schools (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 7).

Productivity in the workplace has strong ties to the creation of a collaborative atmosphere and employee input. Dixon (2000, pp. 5-6) believes that the creation of such a collaborative culture is based on the exchange of knowledge within the organization. His comments on the creation of this environment are as follows:

The exchange of knowledge happens only in organizations that have a noncompetitive or a collaborative culture. It follows that the first thing you have to do is fix the culture and then get people to share. But I have found that it's the other way around. If people begin sharing ideas about issues they see as really important, the sharing itself creates a learning culture. I have, of course, inserted an important caveat in that sentence: 'about issues they see as really important' (Dixon, 2000, pp. 5 -6).

Dalin and Hans (1993, pp. 98-99) acknowledge changes in society that have had major implications for school culture:

The Nature of the Learning Task – Group work and group development are seen as important as individual achievements. Many schools are still organized as bureaucracies, characterized by departmentalization, separate subjects and departments, and teacher independence (often as a consequence of teacher isolation).

Changing Student Population – The self concept of students and their attitudes to learning and to work are changing and showing a negative trend in particular in

49

the larger cities. Increasing numbers of broken homes and a more horizontal society (with less interaction between the young and the adults).

Norms of Organizational Life – Decisions taken without involvement of key actors are increasingly questioned, hierarchical forms of leadership are challenged, and demands for more prepared and diverse students is at all time high.

Value of Group Work – Group work is becoming such an important element of everyday work and life. The value of being able to work with the production tasks (content of group tasks) and the hidden curriculum (values, norms, and processes that regulate behavior in a group) is that it helps us understand the value of working with groups to learn problem solving behaviors as well as the values and needs required in a problem solving school. Secondary schools, in particular, have some way to go before this co operative effort is an accepted part of the school culture.

Scott identifies several attributes of a culture that would move toward productivity and away from Elmore's described "default culture". These attributes are as follows (Scott, 1999, pp. 88-89):

- A focus on collaborative rather than competitive work practices and relationships.
- An explicit attempt to identify and reward successful practice and collaboration.
- A willingness to take sensible risks and express dissent. This requires norms of trust, mutuality, and reciprocity.
- Leaders who actively model ethical and open ways of behaving.
- Identification and discouragement of backbiting, blame, rumor, and micropolitics.
- Clear communication.
- Widespread acceptance of intended organizational direction.
- Staff and learners playing an active role.

Scott realizes the most challenging aspect of improving a culture is getting these attributes in place. He next addresses his "necessary steps" to achieving a collegial culture (1999, p. 90):

- Identify the main blocks to collaboration and deal with them (i.e. 'groupthink', 'balkanisation', 'micropolitics, 'contrived geneality', and rewards for individual, not group achievements.
- Knowledge of who controls decisions about learning programs.
- Consistent review of workplace operation to reinforce collegiality.
- Staff selection and promotion criteria should reflect goals of collegiality in the workplace.

Fullan (2001, p. 44) simplifies culture almost exactly the way that Bolman and Deal (2003) do when he states culture is "the way we do things around here". The transformation of a culture, he argues, should be the main discussion. He refers to this transformation as "re-culturing".

> The effective re-culturing process every organization strives for activates and deepens moral purpose through collaborative work cultures that respect differences and constantly build and test knowledge against measurable results – a culture within which one realizes that sometimes being off balance is a learning moment…Re-culturing is a contact sport that involves hard, labor-intensive work. It takes time and indeed never ends…it includes the practices of developing relationships, building knowledge, and striving for coherence in a nonlinear world. (Fullan, 2001, p. 44).

2.1.8.   Cultural Change

"People who try to change organizations often run up against attitudes that seem unchangeable." (Senge, 1999, p. 334) We have already determined that "change is a process, not an event." That holds true for any change that is being implemented. Changing a culture is a process that can take several years. As Senge (1999, pp. 334-335) puts it:

> You cannot create a new culture. You can immerse yourself in studying a culture (your own, or someone else's) until you understand it. Then you can propose new values, introduce new ways of doing things, and articulate new governing ideas. Over time, these actions will set the stage for new behavior. If people who adopt that new behavior feel that it helps them do better, they may try it again, and after many trials, taking as long as five or 10 years, the organizational culture may embody a different set of assumptions, and a different way of looking at things, than it did before. Even then, you haven't changed the culture; you've se the stage for the culture to evolve.

It is not as simple as instituting a few minor changes or creating a new set of rules. Some instances, for example, will not create a new culture but simply destroy the old one. To further explore Senge's cultural change, he identifies a series of steps that help to create what he refers to as a "cultural evolution". The steps (along with a brief explanation of each) are as follows:

1. **Clarify Your Purpose**—(Why does it need to change? Is something in the existing culture preventing progress? Do the shared assumptions of the organization no longer fit reality?) (p. 335-336).

2. **<u>Assemble a Group of Cultural "Students"</u>**—(Cultures are held by groups, not by individuals. Avoid bias by keeping inquiry focused on artifacts, values, and assumptions that make up the culture) (pp. 336-337).

3. **<u>Artifacts: List The Visible</u>**—(All artifacts should be observable signs of the organization's way of life) (p. 337).

4. **<u>Espoused Values: The Organization's Rationale</u>**—(As a group, try to establish the reasoning which underlie the artifacts. What has led the people of this organization to do things this way?) (p. 338).

5. **<u>Cultural Assumptions: Sources of Meaning and Contradiction</u>**—Point out the inconsistencies and contradictions evident in the organization. The challenge at this stage is to bring to the surface the hidden attitudes that trigger the "you can't be serious" reflexes) (pp.338-339).

6. **<u>Narrow the Cultural Diagnosis</u>**—(Attempt to get as clear a collective understanding as is possible. What would you tell someone new to the organization that "this is what you have to learn to get along"?) (pp. 339-340).

7. **<u>Formal Intervention: Initiating Cultural Change</u>**—(Begin to wrestle with the bottom line issues – What is it we want to create? What characteristics of our culture most hinder the change? Which are most likely to help? What attitudes would have to shift?) (pp. 341-342).

Senge's description of changing a culture and its inherent difficulty become evident when analyzing his steps of a "cultural evolution". "The culture of an enterprise plays the dominant role in exemplary performance (Deal and Peterson, 1999, p. 1)." The emphasis on accountability and student achievement has never presented a more pressing time to identify the pitfalls of an existing culture and collectively look for a more productive one.

A school's culture can basically be described as their own "unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that seem to permeate everything". (Deal and Peterson, 1999, p. 2) Although there is no one distinct definition that clearly describes the meaning of culture, there is no mistaking that it is what drives performance or any organization. "In the business world, culture stands out as a strong predictor of financial results" (Deal and Peterson, 1999, p.5). Sarason (1999), Senge (1999) and Fullan (1998) are among the authors that link a culture that

supports and encourages reform to successful teaching and learning. The implementation of the content area coaches for literacy in the study is an attempt to help foster a more collegial and collaborative climate necessary for an exchange of ideas and the betterment of professional production. The opportunity to exchange ideas in an environment of trust and where the input is valued amplifies the energy and motivation for improved practice. The recognition that the school is not performing at peak levels is evident in its standardized scores. "Top businesses have developed a shared culture…The same must be true of our nation's schools" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 11).

It is vital to refer to Chapter I of this paper and reflect on one of the external factors leading to the value of this study. The merger between the two schools to create the middle school is one of the major factors at the heart of the study. These two distinct cultures are combining into one that does not yet have an identity. Senge (1999, p. 42) likens the merging of two organizations to "mating two elephants and hoping to produce a gazelle". In an organization that inherently has difficulty in adjusting its culture, merging two distinct cultures brings about an identify crisis. The preparations for the merger allowed time to get an understanding of the commonalities and differences among the staff members and formulate a vision of an emerging culture of improved performance. Senge (1999, pp. 403-404) asks some questions to consider when the merging of two parties occurs:

- How will each subgroup's culture influence the new entity?
- What values will the new entity respect?
- What values are worthy of respect in each of the existing partners?
- Which subgroup's culture will dominate?
- Who will determine the decisions to be made?
- Will one culture automatically take precedence, or will we forge a new one?
- What is the destiny of the new organization?
- Who participates in that vision?
- How will we get there?

Many of these questions became part of the preliminary discussions during the school year prior to the transition. The foundation for the potential changes was built. It became the charge of the administrative team to create the capacity in the building for developing a culture conducive to teacher excellence and improved student achievement. This merger process can be viewed as one of the major factors responsible for the positive transformation of the building's culture.

Joyce (1990, p. xv) maintains that "the future culture of the school will be fashioned largely by how staff development systems evolve…whether better-designed curriculums will be implemented, the promise of new technologies realized, or visions of genuine teaching profession take form, all depend to a large extent on the strength of the growing staff development programs, and especially whether they become true human resource development systems." One of the major obstacles to overcoming a "default" culture inan individual school is the embedded culture that permeates the educational system throughout the United States. Stigler and Hiebert (1999, p. 86) liken the art of teaching to the "family dinner":

> Everyone comes to the table and begins eating at about the same time. Menus are not distributed. Instead, the food is brought to the table in serving dishes and everyone eats the same things. The food is then parceled out by passing the serving dishes around the table, with everyone dishing up his or her own portion. Adults often help children   with this task. Conversation usually is open, with no set agendas. Comments from everyone are welcome, with children and adults participating as conversational partners. Family dinner is a cultural activity.

Teaching is considered by Stigler and Hiebert to be neither an innate skill nor something that you learn by enrolling in teacher-training programs. Teaching, they believe, is learned through "informal participation over long periods of time. It is something one learns to do more by growing up in a culture than by studying it formally." (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 86) The implications of teaching as a cultural activity point to the difficulty in the implementation of

change. Stigler & Hiebert (1999, p. 87) provide a poignant description of the challenges facing

American schools:

> Cultural activities, such as teaching, are not invented full-blown but rather evolve
> over long periods of time in ways that are consistent with the stable web of beliefs
> and assumptions that are part of the culture. The scripts for teaching in each
> country appear to rest on a relatively small and tacit set of core beliefs about the
> nature of the subject, about how students learn, and about the role that a teacher
> should play in the classroom. These beliefs, often implicit, serve to maintain the
> stability of cultural systems over time. Just as we have pointed out that features
> of teaching need to be understood in terms of the underlying systems in which
> they are embedded, so, too, these systems of teaching, because they are cultural,
> must be understood in relation to the cultural beliefs and assumptions that
> surround them.

Most changes to the educational system have simply been modifications that fit into the

current system but do not change the system itself. The only way that a real change can be

affected is by changing what Stigler and Hiebert refer to as the "cultural scripts". It takes a staff

to recognize what the "common scripts have been, seeing that other scripts are possible, and

noticing things about our own scripts that we had never seen before." (Stigler and Hiebert, 1999,

p. 101)

> Improving the cultural scripts for teaching is a dramatically different approach
> from improving the skills of individual teachers, but it is the approach called for if
> teaching is a cultural activity. (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 101)

One of the most powerful ways to help to change a cultural script is to embark on a staff

development model that includes everyone in the organization. The notion of staff development

affecting school culture hits at the very core of the educational programs being implemented in

the school being studied. The programs are teacher-centered and are designed to create a

collegial atmosphere and collective sharing of the instructional program. This staff of the

building has "confronted the brutal facts" (Collins, 2001) and has begun to mold an atmosphere

conducive to professional growth and improved student achievement and away from its "default culture".

> "Too often teachers do what they did today because that is what they did yesterday or because that is what they think others expect them to do."
>
> - Barth

2.1.9.   Staff Development and its Role in Changing Culture

Barth (1990) acknowledges staff development as one of the most essential ways of improving a school or changing a school's culture. He identifies three groups of teachers that a change agent can expect to encounter during a process:

1.   Teachers who are unable and unwilling to critically examine their teaching practice and unable to have other adults – teachers, principals, parents – examine what and how they are teaching.

2.   Teachers who are quite able and willing to continually scrutinize and reflect on what they do and make use of their insights to effect periodic change.

3.   Teachers who are able and willing to critically scrutinize their practice and who are quite able and willing, even desirous, of making their practice accessible to other adults. (Barth, 1990, pp. 53-54)

Barth's training model for principals is a concept used by the content area coaches in their collegial practice at Founders' Hall. The discussions by the coaches are driven by what is currently happening in classrooms around the schools and what needs to be happening. Research-based ideas are presented by the coaches and their collaborative discussions act as a true "study group", looking continuously for ways to improve instructional practices at the school. Barth's (1990, p. 85) training model reflects the attempted professional development model in place at Founders' Hall:

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Engage in Practice          │
│                                     │
│                ↓                    │
│         Reflect on Practice         │
│                                     │
│                ↓                    │
│         Articulate Practice         │
│                                     │
│                ↓                    │
│      Better Understand Practice     │
│                                     │
│                ↓                    │
│         Improve Practice            │
│                                     │
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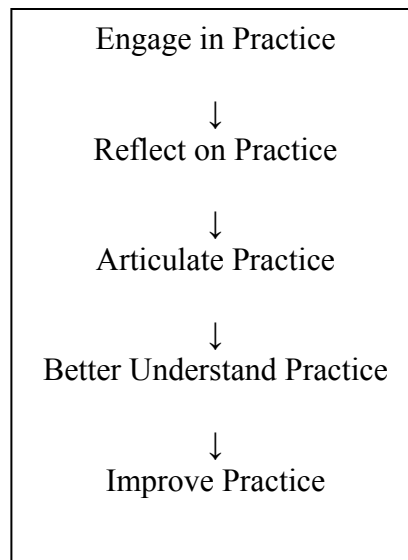
Sarason (1971) initially describes the importance of behavioral and "programmatic regularities" when defining a school's culture and related them to understanding an organization of a school and the attachments that the people have to their ways of working. When introducing change into a school setting, he contends that two assumptions are generally made: the change is desirable according to some set of values, and the intended outcomes are clear (Sarason, 1971, p. 62). Sarason (1996) returns to his work 25 years later in *Revisiting the Culture of the School and the Problem of Change*. Here he further explains the concept of changing the regularities in the school's culture. He maintains that the intended outcome is "rarely stated clearly, and if it is stated clearly, by the end of the change process it has managed to get lost" (Sarason, 1996, p.4). To avoid such an unclear vision, and even worse, the disintegration of the intended outcome, Sarason points to the collective efforts of both the principals and the teachers. "The evidence is clear that although it is true that the principal is the gatekeeper in regard to the change effort, the ultimate outcome depends on when and how teachers become part of the decision to initiate change." (Sarason, 1996, p. 5) Complimentary research including McRel (2003), Fullan (1991), Collins (2001) and a multitude of others agree with Sarason (1996) and identify teacher

participation in the entire process as paramount to move from a culture of isolation to one of collaboration.

Sarason (1996) reports on an unpublished paper written by Wesley, Hampel, and Clark (1995) that carried out an in-depth evaluation of five schools involved in the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), all of which where committed to school change. The following are five of the findings reported that Sarason (1996, pp. 350-351) pointed to that help underscore the difficulty of cultural change:

> **Finding #1**: All five of the schools encountered difficulty making the school wide changes that many believed would be helpful, because they did not have a shared common image of a different, more rigorous kind of schooling on which to base their actions.
>
> **Finding #2**: The five schools were either stopped or made progress based on their ability to grapple with highly charged, values laden, controversial issues both as a whole school group and as smaller units like teams or departments within the school. Those faculties that had the ability to air controversy collaboratively were able to make changes that endured over time…the other were not.
>
> **Finding #3**: Building and maintaining processes for obtaining and acting on good critical feedback from external sources contributed to being able to move forward, and separated them from those who could not.
>
> **Finding #4**: Gaining feedback from others provides staff with an important analytical tool, but is not enough by itself. Equally important to the ability to engage in touch, direct self-analysis.
>
> **Finding #5**: The presence of a coherent sense of the interconnectedness of all efforts underway in one building was a rare but enabling factor in the school's ability to influence student experience. Some schools enacted several changes but did not have a consistent view of how they fit together, preventing them from pulling disparate ends together.

Fullan (1990, p. 6) refers to a study by Stallings in 1989 that exemplifies the attempt being made with the school wide professional development models being employed at Founders' Hall.

The study was based on the question "what would the effect be on secondary students' reading scores…

1. If only reading teachers were trained and their students tested?

2. If all language arts teachers and reading teachers in a school were trained – hence reaching all students – and all students were tested?

3. If all teachers in a district were trained…over a three-year period, what would be the effect on the school district's level of reading at the end of the ninth grade?

The results of the study showed that in the first design, teachers changed their behavior in the classroom and their students gained six months in reading scores. The second design saw gains in reading scores over eight months. The third design showed all students in that grade level steadily improving their reading levels over a three year period (Fullan, 1990, p. 6).

2.1.10. Summary

Change within an organization is challenging. The research points out several manners in which to facilitate its success, but there are no guarantees. Each and every organization is unique and they all work within different contexts. Some stakeholders are excited and supportive of change while others are resistant throughout the whole process. It becomes clear when reviewing the many thoughts on organizational change that having the appropriate leader is paramount in a successful effort. Whether the change is in a corporate or educational context, several things must be considered by the change agent–understanding the people in the organization, communicating the vision to them, keeping them involved in the process and providing the resources and follow through to sustain a successful change. Is it the change agent that is most responsible for making a cultural change? The research clearly says so. The findings of this study will either validate or challenge the literature in the selected school.

The types of changes outlined by Marzano et. al. (2003) and Sarason (1996) reflect personal difficulty based on individual perspective and become increasingly more difficult when referring to changing a culture. The change is not simply choosing a new textbook that someone has to adjust to or even given a new classroom that one does not want; a cultural change is a completely different way of "doing things" in an organization. For most people, a cultural change would be considered a Second Order or Type A change. For those resistant to any form of change, cultural change would be considered the most difficult to digest.

"There is no final end point to change" states Fullan in his 1993 work *Change Forces*. The work is not done following a successful implementation. If a change is going to have a lasting impact on an organization, sustaining the change is imperative. A change in culture has been in progress during the past five years at Founders' Hall. Six change indicators have been identified that direct the inquiry of the study and probe into the depth of what has actually been the roots of the cultural transformation. The cultural change is evident and has increased the collegiality and professionalism among the teaching staff. The following study will identify how this change has occurred, how it has moved the teaching staff from "isolation to collaboration" and, in turn, how it began the evolution of a more interactive and productive culture in the school.

3. CHAPTER

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1. Introduction

A considerable amount of educational research points to the willingness and ability to change as a measure of improving student achievement. A positive climate and caring culture within a building is recognized as one of the most fundamental attributes to achieving such improvement. A multitude of factors face each and every district as well as school. How they address these factors and move forward together determines the future well-being of the organization. No Child Left Behind has introduced a quantitative measure of school effectiveness that identifies whether a particular school is "successful" or not. If any organization truly strives to achieve such "success", there are many prerequisites to achieving that end. One of them is the heart and soul of education – a culture representative of the relentless pursuit of student excellence.

3.1.2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the transformation of a culture from what was considered a "default culture" to one of collaboration and academic achievement. The study identifies the emergence of a productive culture through a variety of perspectives. Teachers, building administration and central office personnel are all represented as they help uncover the

transition of a middle school building from 1999 – 2005. The intent of this particular study is to uncover the core beliefs of those staff involved throughout the duration of this cultural evolution.

This is done through the analysis of six identified "change indicators" that have been evident in the landscape of the selected middle school.

3.1.3. Statement of the Problem

What change indicators are identified as the most prominent in the transition made from a "default culture" to one that works collaboratively toward student achievement?

3.1.4. Research Questions

1. How have the changes in staff played a role in the cultural change in the school?

2. How have the accountability measures now facing schools played a role in changing the culture?

3. What role did the renovation process play in moving the building forward culturally?

4.   What role did the middle school merger play in the cultural transition?

5. How has the leadership (both formal and informal) played a role in changing the dynamics of the school's culture?

6. What role have the changes in the educational program played in the transition?

7. What other factors were instrumental in improving the culture?

3.1.5. Design of the Study

The qualitative method of naturalistic inquiry allows the researcher to collect data directly from the source. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, pp. 29-32) identify five features of qualitative research that point to the effective nature of inquiry-based research:

- Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
- Qualitative research is descriptive.

- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply outcomes or products.
- Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively
- "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

This study analyzes the reflections of professionals that have witnessed the school's emerging culture over the past five years. The interviewees for this study have been carefully selected to represent a multitude of perspectives relating to the cultural change over the past five years. The five teachers interviewed have been with the building since at least 1999 and remain a part of the current staff. The dean of students that is interviewed has held his position over the five year period and remains in his same role at the current time. The principal of the middle school has been in place during the entire time frame and remains there currently in the same capacity. The assistant superintendent of schools has seen the process move over the time frame, formerly serving in the role of director of curriculum.

> The data for qualitative analysis typically comes from fieldwork. During fieldwork, the researcher spends time in the setting under study – a program, an organization, a community, or whereas situation of importance to study can be observed, people interviewed, and documents analyzed. The researcher makes firsthand observations of activities and interactions, sometimes engaging personally in those activities as a *participant observer*. For example, an evaluator might participate in all or part of the program under study, participating as a regular program member, client, or student (Patton, 2001, p. 4).

The design of this qualitative study is action research intended to uncover the essence of the cultural transformation in the middle school through they eyes of a variety of personnel within the organization. Patton (2001, p. 213) points to five purposes for conducting qualitative research along a continuum from theory to action:

1. *Basic research*: To contribute to fundamental knowledge and theory
2. *Applied research*: To illuminate a societal concern
3. *Summative evaluation*: To determine program effectiveness
4. *Formative evaluation*: To improve a program
5. *Action research*: To solve a specific problem

Many schools and organizations face a cultural problem and view that as a major stumbling block to moving forward. Findings from this particular study may prove helpful for other organizations facing a "culture in crisis" or a "default culture".

3.1.6.   Interview Process

> The fact is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone's else's mind, to gather their stories (Patton, 2001, p. 341).

The interviews are based on Rubin and Rubin's (2005, p. 36) Responsive Interviewing Model (R.I.M).   The model allows for the basic research question to be addressed with a flexible questioning design to fit each individual interview. The five characteristics of the R.I.M are:

1.   Interviewing is about obtaining interviewees' interpretations of their experience and their understanding of the world in which they live and work.

2.   The personality, style, and beliefs of the interviewer matter. Interviewing is an exchange, not a one-way street; the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is meaningful, even if temporary. Because the interviewer contributes actively to the conversation, he or she must be aware of his or her own opinions, experiences, cultural differences, and even prejudices.

3.   Because responsive interviews depend on a personal relationship between an interviewer and an interviewee and because that relationship may result in the exchange of private information or information dangerous to the interviewee, the interviewer incurs serious ethical obligations to protect the interviewee.

4.   Interviewers should not impose their views on interviewees. They should ask broad enough questions to avoid limiting what interviewees can answer, listen to what interviewees tell them, and modify their questions to explore what they are hearing, not what they thought before they began the interview.

5.   Responsive interviewing design is flexible and adaptive. Because the interviewer must listen intently and follow up insights and new points during the interview, the interviewer must be able to change course based on what he or she hears.

The interviews conducted in the study were sensitive to gathering credible results that would be useable by others in a similar situation. Rubin and Rubin (2005, pp. 64-68) contend that gathering credible results is based on three important premises – interviewing people that are experienced, knowledgeable, and come from a variety of perspectives. The human subjects chosen for this study fit the description of what Rubin and Rubin (2005) outlined. Six teachers that have worked in the middle school throughout the time frame outlined in the study serve the important role of identifying the critical factors from the staff perspective relating to the cultural change. Two administrators (the building principal and a dean of students) that have held their positions throughout the time frame of the study will allow a building level response to the change in culture. The assistant superintendent, who previously served as the director of curriculum, provides a central office perspective on the building's evolution into a more productive and academic centered culture.   These varied perspectives (classroom teachers, building administration, and central office), along with their accompanying experience and knowledge of the transformation years, solidify the credibility of the findings in the study.

Due to the researcher being in a supervisory role for the teacher participant, an unbiased interviewer was carefully selected. The Co-Directors of the Western Pennsylvania Principal's Academy along with the members of the dissertation committee confirmed Dr. Sari McNamara as an appropriate choice. Dr. McNamara is a principal in the Fox Chapel Area School District located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and was granted her doctoral degree in 2004 with her work *A Caring School Culture in a Standards Based Era.* Her expertise in school culture combined with several common elements in the research with this study made her a unanimously accepted

choice of the committee. Several correspondences were exchanged along with a personal

meeting to prepare for the interviews.

The first teacher interview was followed by a brief discussion between the researcher and the

interviewer and appropriate adjustments were made to accommodate the subsequent interviews.

Each interview was then followed by a brief discussion to help maintain the quality of the

questioning and the probing as well as to review the interviewers notes. The six teacher

interviews were conducted by Dr. McNamara while the administrative interviews were

conducted by the researcher. The data collected from the naturalistic inquiry helped to form the

clarifying questions used in the survey that was completed by each interviewee. The survey

contained 23 questions representing each of the six change indicators in the study. The survey

data was then used in conjunction with the qualitative data to begin forming more solid

conclusions about the influence of the indicators. The final piece to the data triangulation was

the rank order data completed by each interviewee at the conclusion of the interview. Each

respondent was asked to order the change indicators from most influential (1) to least influential

(6). All three forms of data were then merged to identify those indicators that had the most

impact on the cultural transition.

3.1.7. Data Collection

> The R.I.M. relies heavily on the interpretive constructionist philosophy, mixed
> with a bit of critical theory and then shaped by the practical needs of doing
> interviews. The model emphasizes that the interviewer and interviewee are both
> human beings, not recording machines, and that they form a relationship during
> the interview that generates ethical obligations for the interviewer. In the
> responsive interviewing model the goal of the research is to generate depth of
> understanding, rather than breadth. (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 30)

The R.I.M. is a semi-structured interview that will elicit responses from interviewees on the

same major topics. Each interview, however, will vary depending on the probes and follow-up

questions that are presented during each encounter. The use of the R.I.M. allows the interviewer to move toward an internal perspective and probe deeply into the interviewee's perspective on what they actually view as the major factors in the school's cultural change. The goal of the interviews is to help gain a solid, deep understanding of each individual's personal view on the change. "Depth is achieved by going after context; dealing with the complexity of multiple, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting themes; and paying attention to the specifics of meanings, situations, and history". (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.35) To achieve this depth, careful attention has to be paid by the researcher to follow up, probe, and ask more questions than have originally been created. This flexibility in questioning will get to the heart of the matter and reveal a defining point or process that they feel led to the positive changes in the building's culture.

Although the Responsive Model of interviewing elicits variety in the depth of questioning, it still relies on a semi-structured format to ensure that all participants have addressed the same topics throughout the inquiry. An interview guide accompanied the research questions and provided a "framework within which the interviewer would develop questions, and make decisions about which information to pursue in greater depth". (Patton, 2001, p.344) All probes were carefully chosen depending on the direction of the interview, but remained within the context of the originally proposed research questions and interview guide.

3.1.8.   Interview Guide

> The guide helps make interviewing a number of people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored…it keeps the interactions focused while allowing individual perspectives and experiences to emerge. (Patton, 2001, pp. 344-345) The "critical incidents" outlined in the research questions remain the same, however, the depth of inquiry within each vary according to the response of each participant. The guide serves as a 'checklist' to ensure that each topic seen as a factor in the cultural transition

process elicits the same opportunities and follow-up questions for each participant.

3.1.9.   Background Questions

1.   What position(s) have you held in the district for the past five years?

2.   How could you best describe the school's culture during its first year with the 7th and 8th grade students (1999-2000)?

3.   How would you describe the school's culture during the most recent school year (2004-2005)?

4.   What do you think the connection is between a school's culture and student achievement?

3.1.10.   Research Questions/Discussion Topics

1.   How have the changes in staff played a role in the cultural change in the school?

___ Proficiency in delivering quality education
___ Adaptability to challenging student body
___ Willingness to change
___ Collaboration vs. isolation
___ Dedication to student achievement

2.   How have the accountability measures now facing schools played a role in changing the culture to its more productive stage?

___ National accountability (No Child Left Behind)
___ District accountability/student achievement
___ Building accountability / student achievement
___ Community pressures

3.   What role did the renovation play in moving the building forward culturally?

___ Improved physical plant (classrooms, library, cafeteria, gymnasium…)
___ Updated environment (lighting, cleanliness, functionality, computer access…)
___ Community perception

4.   What role did the middle school merger play in moving the building forward culturally?

___ Change in philosophy
___ Change in expectations
___ A new beginning

5. How has the leadership (both formal and informal) played a role in changing the dynamics of the school's culture?

   ___ Implementation of programming
   ___ Availability of resources
   ___ Professional development opportunities
   ___ Focus on student achievement
   ___ Productive relationship with staff
   __ Expectations / support / leadership opportunities

6. What role have the changes in the educational program played in the transition?
   ___ Building wide literacy initiatives
   ___ Compass Learning

   ___ Curriculum changes
   ___ After-school opportunities
   ___ Tutoring

7. What other factors are identified as factors for the improved culture?
   ___ External factors
   ___ Internal factors

3.1.11. Recording the Data

To permit the interviewer to be more attentive during the interview and to maximize the accuracy of the exchange, a tape recorder and stenographer was used throughout each interview. Notes were taken throughout each interview to help formulate new questions, maintain the intended direction and pace of the interview, and to record non-verbal behaviors that may have helped in the analysis of each conversation. Merriam (1988, pp. 71-72) points out that "An interview is a conversation with a purpose". Along with the note taking, a series of key words were taken into each interview to help facilitate the conversation and interject probing and follow up questioning. "The period after an interview or observation is critical to the rigor and validity of qualitative inquiry. This is a time for guaranteeing the quality of the data." (Patton, 2001, p.283) These "post-interview reviews" were done in a timely fashion to help establish the proper context for interpreting and making sense of the interview during analysis.

3.1.12. Analysis of the Data

> The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed (Patton, 2001, p. 432).

The interview data was analyzed around the six change indicators relating to the cultural change in the middle school (*Staffing, Accountability, Renovation, Middle School Merger, Leadership, Educational Programming*). The identification by the interviewees and their depth of discussion on each topic helps indicate the manner in which the culture was positively affected by each. The purpose of the study was to identify and describe the various perspectives leading to the positive cultural changes and depict any patterns and common answers, thus pinpointing the role of each factor in assisting the school's transformation.

Each research question is reported in a matrix that identifies the relevance and strength of the relevance for each critical indicator discussed. This data is supported by the qualitative answers given along with a 1-5 ranking of the indicators in importance to each interviewee (1 being the most important and 5 being the least important) filled out immediately following the interview. The matrix will help organize the data of each interviewee and identify what they consider to have been the major factors in the cultural transformation process. These matrices are seen throughout chapter four relative to each interviewee's responses.

Each interview was analyzed beginning with the depth of answer given based on the initial questioning. Each respondent will be given the opportunity to fully answer the question and encouraged to support their answer with examples. Their answer was studied along with other respondents to identify similarities that emerge prior to addressing the remainder of the checklist via probing questions. The method of organizing the similarities is based on a thematic design

used in a doctoral dissertation by Robert Del Greco in 2000: *unanimous themes* – mentioned by all interviewees; *supported themes* – mentioned by two or more interviewees; and *individual themes* – mentioned by only one interviewee but in line with the concepts outlined on the checklist. Those concepts on the checklist not originally identified by each interviewee will be addressed via probing questions and will be analyzed for either having a **strong influence,** a **moderate influence**, or **no influence** on the cultural transformation. This form of *methodological triangulation* allows for a thorough analysis of the data presented and helps to provide strength and validity.

> The logic of triangulation is based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed. This is termed triangulation. I now offer as a final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in every investigation. (Patton, 2000, p. 247)

The ranking of the critical indicators along with the two forms of categorizing the concepts is a mixed form of inquiry and analysis that help to ensure the results of the study are dependable.

3.1.13. Summary

In this chapter, the purpose of the study, the statement of the problem and the research questions outline the focus and direction of the study. The interview process, the method of collecting the data, the process for recording the data, and the analysis of the data are provided. The intent of this research is to share findings that may be helpful to other organizations. Having observed the transformation of the culture firsthand and generated personal thought on the key factors, a closer analysis from a variety of perspectives seemed quite intriguing. Collins (2001, p. 14) maintains that "good-to-great transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky

break, no miracle moment. Rather, the process resembled relentlessly pushing a giant heavy flywheel in one direction, turn upon turn, building momentum until a point of breakthrough, and beyond." The five critical indicators in the study most likely share in the cultural transformation in Founders' Hall. The interview process will identify, however, those indicators considered most responsible by the people that have been there throughout the change. The findings of this study into a may help another organization facing a "culture in crisis" some hope and direction for emerging more positive and productive organization.

4. CHAPTER

4.1 Interview Data And Analysis

4.1.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the primary influences responsible for the cultural change in the selected school. There were six change indicators identified that have all been in place and have had a positive impact on the building's culture. These six change indicators included: *Staff Changes, Accountability Measures, Renovations, Middle School Merger, Leadership,* and *Educational Programming* are analyzed to determine which one has been the driving force behind the building's move away from what Elmore (2005) describes as the "default culture". The primary method of research was personal interviews of the school personnel that have been in the building over the five year period of the study (1999 – 2005), the two building administrators that have been a part of the building during the time period and one central office representative that has been in those positions during the same time frame. Two supplemental forms of data were collected to achieve a *methodological triangulation* (Patton, 2000, p. 247) of the data and help pinpoint the most influential change indicators. The results of the collected data are measured in accordance with the research and serve as a valuable resource for others interested in improving a culture by identifying those change factors that had the most influence or impact.

4.1.2.   Methodology and Data Collection Processes

The qualitative method of naturalistic inquiry guided the primary research in this study as it allows the collection of data directly from the source. This study analyzes the reflections of professionals that have witnessed the school's emerging culture over the past five years. The semi-structured interview process known as the Responsive Interviewing Model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 36) was used as the foundation for this study and allows for basic research questions to be addressed with a flexible questioning design to fit each individual interview.

Due to the researcher being in a supervisory role for the teachers being interviewed, an unbiased interviewer was carefully selected. The Co-Directors of the Western Pennsylvania Principal's Academy along with the members of the dissertation committee confirmed Dr. Sari McNamara as an appropriate choice. Dr. McNamara is a principal in the Fox Chapel Area School District located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and was granted her doctoral degree in 2004 with her work *A Caring School Culture in a Standards Based Era*. Her expertise in school culture combined with several common elements in the research with this study made her a unanimously accepted choice of the committee. Several correspondences were exchanged along with a personal meeting to prepare for the interviews.

The first teacher interview was followed by a brief discussion between the researcher and the interviewer and appropriate adjustments were made to accommodate the subsequent interviews. Each subsequent interview was then followed by a brief discussion to help maintain the quality of the questioning and the probing as well as to review the interviewers notes. The six teacher interviews were conducted by Dr. McNamara. The administrative interviews were conducted by the researcher. The data collected from the naturalistic inquiry helped to form the clarifying questions used in the survey that was completed by each interviewee. The survey contained 23

questions representing each of the six change indicators in the study. The survey data was then used in conjunction with the qualitative data to begin forming more solid conclusions about the influence of the indicators. The final piece to the data triangulation was the rank order data completed by each interviewee at the conclusion of the interview. Each respondent was asked to order the change indicators from most influential (1) to least influential (6). All three forms of data were then merged to identify those indicators that had the most impact on the cultural transition.

4.1.3. Demographic Data of the Teachers

The six teachers interviewed in this study were chosen based on their employment in the school throughout the length of the study (1999 – 2005). The consistent turnover in the staff limited the choices to these six participants. The administrators interviewed in the study fit similar criteria – the building administrators worked in their capacity throughout the length of the study while the central office representative maintained upper administrative positions during that same time.

The teachers in the study had a cumulative total of ninety four years of experience in education with seventy of those years in the school of the study (Founders' Hall). Five of the teachers were female while one was male. There is a collective total of 94 years of experience between the teachers interviewed. The administrators interviewed in the study have a collective one hundred years experience in education with ninety of those years spent in the McKeesport Area School District. One of the building administrators was male while the other building administrator and the central office representative was female.

4.1.4.   Meet the Interviewees

The following section describes each interviewed teacher and administrator to provide the reader with a sense of familiarity while maintaining the participants' anonymity and confidentiality.

Teacher #1 – Teacher #1 has teaching experience at both the elementary and middle school levels. The earlier years were spent teaching elementary level students with the bulk of the years have been spent teaching reading to seventh grade students. Teacher #1 holds a Masters degree as a reading specialist and has completed additional credits toward a doctoral degree. This teacher served as a content area coach during the 2004-2005 school year. Teacher #1 referred to the first year in the study in the building as "hell…it was horrid…a horrid, horrid time" and refers to the building culture now as "a school as opposed to the yard for the penitentiary."

Teacher #2 – Teacher #2 has spent all of the time teaching math at the middle school level. The student population in the study is the group of students that Teacher #2 has been around during her entire career as a professional educator. Teacher #2 holds a Bachelor's degree plus the additional 24 required credits. The description of "it was rough…it was very rough" referring to the first year of the study became "much better…I think it's going real well…I don't really notice any problem" when referring to the most recent year of the study.

Teacher #3 – Teacher #3 has spent all of the years teaching science to middle level students. This teacher holds a bachelor's degree with the additional 24 required credits. Teacher #3 also serves as the coordinator of an after-school program that provides supplemental services to over one hundred of the school's students. This teacher described the 1999-2000 school year as "…chaotic…the students attitude was poor and the overall attitude of the teachers was declining". Teacher #3's description of the most recent year in the study (2004-2005) was "…completely 180 degrees different…an overall better feeling."

Teacher #4 – Teacher #4 has spent time in two districts over her educational career. The time in Founders' Hall has been spent teaching language arts to middle school age students. Teacher #4 holds a bachelor's degree plus the required additional 24 credits. This teacher tutors high school students after the regular school day and volunteers time tutoring at a local home for troubled youth. Teacher #4 describes the first year of the study as "stressful…really hard to define…stressful" and now describes it as "…an extended family".

Teacher #5 – Teacher #5 has spent all permanent teaching time as a math teacher at the middle school level. This teacher holds a Masters degree in mathematics and currently serves in the district as a content area coach in that field. Teacher #5 described the first year of the study as "…a disaster…absolute disaster…a battle everyday" and refers to the culture now as "fantastic…the complete opposite…just a whole different feeling."

Teacher #6 – Teacher #6 has held a variety of positions all in the same district. The earlier years were spent as an elementary teacher in five different buildings with the bulk of the teaching career spent as a special education teacher in two different buildings. Teacher #6 holds a bachelor's degree plus 30 credits and currently serves as a content area coach for the special education department. The description of the 1999-2000 school year by Teacher #6 is "…a lot of confusion…it wasn't pleasant…we had concerns about security issues" and now describes the same building by stating "I have died and gone to heaven."

Building Administrator #1 – Building Administrator #1 has spent over one third of the educational career as an administrator. This administrator served as a principal of two buildings as well as an assistant superintendent. Teaching experience for building administrator #1 includes social studies positions at both the middle and high school levels. Building Administrator #1 holds a Masters degree in administration and describes the first year of the study as "depressed…turmoil…let's just get the year over with" and the most recent school year as "optimistic…upbeat…all in it together attitude."

Building Administrator #2 – Building Administrator #2 has held a variety of positions held in two school districts over the span of the educational career. This administrator's career began as a physical education teacher and has included time as an assistant attendance officer, an attendance officer, an administrative assistant and as a dean of students. The time as dean of students are the years spent by Building Administrator #2 in the building being studied. Building Administrator #2 holds a bachelor's degree along with credits earned toward an administrative certification. This administrator describes the 1999-2000 school year as "…chaotic…we saw everything you can imagine" and now identifies the culture as "organized…focus is now on student achievement".

Central Office – The Central Office representative has held a multitude of teaching and administrative positions over their career. The early were spent teaching at the elementary levels and then moved to vice principal at an elementary school. The next three positions then included three more assistant principal positions in three different buildings. The Central Office representative then became a building principal before moving into central office positions. After serving for four years as the director of curriculum and instruction, the central office representative now serves as the assistant superintendent. This administrator holds a Doctoral degree in educational leadership and described the school's culture in the first year of the study by stating "…discipline

concerns…the action plan for the building could not be addressed…energies of the administrative staff were drained trying to deal with behavioral concerns." Descriptions of the current state of the building include "the focus of the staff has turned to student achievement…sharing best practice" along with evidence of "…continuous professional development" and "…behavioral concerns are declining."

4.1.5.   The Interview Process and Time Frame

The experience, collegiality and sincerity on the part of the interviewer combined to create an atmosphere conducive to the free sharing of thoughts and concerns related to the inquiry. The interviewer conducted the interviews based on Taylor and Bogdan's (1998) premise of empathizing and identifying with the people in the study in order to understand how the people see things by attempting to share the informants' symbolic world, their language and their perspective. The interviewer has familiarity with the district being studied. She was previously employed by the district for 25 years and her added educational experiences gave the interviewer a distinct advantage in understanding the symbolic world, identifying with their perspective and associating with their language and professional challenges. The researcher prescribed to the same premise when conducting the final three interviews of the administrative personnel.

The interviews of the six teachers were conducted over the period of one day in March 2005. All six of the interviews occurred within the school that was the focus of the study. Each interview was audio-taped and was transcribed by a stenographer that was present throughout the interview process. The transcribed interviews were reviewed by the interviewees for accuracy and clarification. Upon return of the data, the researcher was given permission to use the responses as data in the study. The administrative interviews were conducted on separate days convenient to each participant during the months of March and April 2005.

4.1.6.   Addressing the Background and Research Questions

The following section displays the data into three categories – interview data, survey data and rank order data. The three categories combine to achieve a *methodological triangulation* of all data collected. Patton (2000, p. 247) validates this form of analysis as he states

> The logic of triangulation is based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors. Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed.

The background questions are important as they validate the initial premise of the researcher that there has clearly been a move away from Elmore's (2004) definition of a "default culture". The format of analysis for the background questions differs slightly from that of the research questions. The background questions are analyzed by the identification of emergent themes described in the next paragraph. The research questions follow that same format along with two other forms of data analysis to further explore the intended outcomes.

Each individual participant was interviewed and the research question data was analyzed to determine key concepts. These key concepts were organized into themes that emerged. The themes were categorized into three areas: *unanimous themes* – mentioned by all interviewees; *supported themes* – mentioned by two or more interviewees; and *individual themes* – mentioned by only one interviewee but considered important to the research topic (adapted from Del Greco, 2000). From data collected during the interview process via the probing questions, a survey was created to further explore and validate the answers given.

The survey ensured that each person was addressing similar concepts and gave credence to their importance or dismissed them as pertinent to the cultural transformation. The interview allowed for open discussion and in-depth conversation relating to the major topics while the survey focused in on particular areas within each topic. The surveys allow the participant to

choose between the following answers in relation each question's role in changing the culture – *strong influence*, *moderate influence*, or *no influence* at all.

The final piece of the triangulation puzzle is the rank order data. Each interviewee is asked to rank order each of the six change indicators from 1 – 6 (1 being the most influential and 6 the least influential). This form of data asks each participant to identify what the most important change indicator was over the past five years in moving away from the "default culture". This rank order data in combination with the other two data collection tools helps to validate and pinpoint each participant's choice of change indicator.

The participants were divided into two distinct groups – teachers and administrators. There were six teachers that were present in the building over the past five years as well as three administrators (two building administrators and one in central office). Each group will be analyzed individually and will then be analyzed collectively during the summary portion of this section.

4.1.7.   Teacher Responses

4.1.7.1.   Background Question #1

How would you best describe the school's culture during its first year with the 7th and 8th grade students?

An immediate unanimous theme emerged from all respondents when asked this first question. Each person described the culture during the 1999-2000 school year in negative terms to say the least. Teacher #1 quickly responded by stating "How can I put this? Hell. It was horrid…it was a horrid, horrid time." Teacher #2 seconded that notion with the comment "It was rough. It was very rough" and

It was very hectic in the building…we would just sit there at the end of the day and say, oh my gosh, and just kind of talk about what happened during the day, relive all our stress and pressures.

Teacher #3 described the school as "relatively chaotic" and the student's attitudes as "very poor" with the overall attitude of the teachers as "declining". Teacher #4 quickly responded to the question by stating "It was stressful. It was really hard to define. It was stressful." Teacher #5 gave a very descriptive view that most educators could relate to when she said

It was a disaster - absolute disaster. I mean, it was a battle every day. Usually eight, 10 weeks into the school year, you hit your stride. That never happened that year. It never happened. It was a battle the whole time.

Teacher #6 continued with the same theme of disenchantment with the overall atmosphere and inherent culture by stating "There was a lot of confusion…it wasn't pleasant."

Along with the overwhelming unanimous theme of disenchantment arose some individual themes as well. Teacher #1 referred to the culture as "close to anarchy" while Teacher #2 pointed out that the "class sizes were like huge". Teacher #6 pointed out that there was a concern about security issues within the building.

Table 4.1:   Background Question #1

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Negativity	Stressful	Close to "anarchy"
Disenchantment	Disastrous	Very large class sizes
		Battle the entire year
		Security concerns

4.1.7.2.   Background Question #2

How would you best describe the culture during the current school year, the 2004-2005 school year?

The responses to the question relating to the current school year (2004-2005) highlight the sentiments that led the researcher to use this building in a cultural evolution study. A unanimous theme arose around a complete turnaround from the initial year of the study (1999-2000) to the current year. Teacher #1 maintains the following viewpoint:

> It's a school as opposed to the yard for the penitentiary. We are now teaching. I teach every day. Not that I didn't before and not that anybody else didn't. We spent more time on discipline…we have a focus and a goal.

Teacher #3 is equally as adamant about the complete change when it is stated "I would say it is completely 180 degrees different than it was…you know, it's just an overall better feeling." Teacher #5 refers to it as "Fantastic…the complete opposite. I hit my stride by day two. It's just a whole different feeling." Teacher #6 also thinks very highly of the school as it currently runs as it is mentioned "I have died and gone to heaven. A new room. The staff is young and enthusiastic. It's just a real pleasant environment." Teacher #2 sighs and says "…much better…actually, I think it's going real well compared to that first year. I don't really notice any problems." Teacher #4 explains that "I would like to say a family; however, I can't because it's too large. So, maybe we could call it an extended family, maybe.   All respondents clearly see a tremendous positive difference from the 1999-2000 school year to the current 2004-2005 school year.

A supported theme is apparent through the references made by Teachers #3 and #4 to an overall "better feeling" and just a "whole different feeling". Several individual themes emerge from the analysis such as "we are now teaching" (Teacher #1) and "don't really notice any

problems" (Teacher #2), and the notion of calling the building an "extended family" (Teacher #4). Teacher # 6 provides two individual themes through the discussion of the staff (young and enthusiastic) and the environment (pleasant).

Table 4.2: Background Question #2

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Complete turnaround	Overall better feeling	We are now teaching
		Don't really notice any problems
		Extended family
		Young and enthusiastic staff
		We have a focus and a goal
		Pleasant environment

4.1.7.3.   Background Question # 3

What do you think the connection is between the school's culture and student achievement?

All respondents identified that there is a correlation between culture and student achievement. As teacher #5 put it "It's a positive correlation. If it's a positive correlation, their achievement will increase. If it's a negative culture, it will decrease." Every other participant recognized the importance of a positive culture as well. Teacher #2 maintains

> I think there is a very strong connection…they need to feel comfortable. If the culture in the building is set around the learning activities and centered on education…I think the students will do better.

Teacher #3 uses the same connection and likens it to the attitudes and how they are linked to student performance.

> I think there is a big connection to it. I think that if the faculty and staff have a positive attitude…the students will also have a positive attitude…The more the students are involved, the better they are going to perform.

Teacher #4 refers to how effective a school and student achievement can be if the school was "caring". "I think it's a very strong connection, because I think the more loving and the more

caring a school can be, I think you get more success from the children." Teacher #1 looks at the

overall environment that is now in existence at the school and how it affects the learning.

> I think because we are better equipped now, not just because the building is nice
> and clean and beautiful, I think we are at a better stage. So, we add to that
> achievement. They (students) are in the classrooms. They are learning. They are
> actually participating and doing everything they are supposed to do.

Teacher #6 views the connection between culture and achievement by looking at the

standardized testing results.

> I think it's very important and I think this is very positive for the students. I've
> not seen any standardized testing scores…I'm hoping that they are going to be
> very positive this year because the students are more positive.

The unanimous theme that emerges through the answers is a positive correlation between a

productive culture and student achievement. One supported theme that is apparent is that the

connection is *very strong*. Both teachers #2 and #3 refer to this connection. Teacher #3 and

Teacher #6 refer to the staff having a positive attitude and how it will in turn give the students a

positive attitude and increase performance. Several individual themes emerge from analyzing

the discussions. Teacher #4 identifies the positive windfall from having a "loving and caring

school". Teacher #3 mentions the "more students are involved, the better they will perform".

Teacher #2 identifies the student's "need to feel comfortable" as helping in performance.

Table 4.3: Background Question #3

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Positive correlation	**VERY STRONG CONNECTION**	Loving and caring school promotes success in students
	Positive attitude in staff gets positive attitude in students	More students are involved, the better they will perform
		More comfortable students are, the better they will perform

The following sections reflect the inquiry data from the interviews relating to each individual research question along with the two forms of supplemental data – the survey questions and the rank order data. The survey questions are identified along with their accompanying response data. The numerical values are used to show a relationship between the indicators and to help identify which ones were shown to have the most influence according to the respondents. To help categorize the strength of the individual averages as well as the section averages, the following conversion can be useful:

1.50 – 2.00 Low Influence
2.01 – 2.25 Low – Moderate Influence
2.26 – 2.50 Moderate Influence
2.51 – 2.75 Moderate – Strong Influence
2.76 – 3.00 Strong Influence

4.1.8. Teacher Responses

4.1.8.1. Staff Changes

Question #1 – How has the quality of the instruction of the newly hired staff impacted the school's culture?

Question #2 – How has the newly hired staff's ability to relate to and adapt to the challenging student body within the school affected the school's culture?

Question #3 – How has the newly hired staff's attitude toward change affected the school's culture?

Question #4 – How has the newly hired staff's willingness to collaborate and share with other staff had an impact on the building culture over the past five years?

Question #5 – How has the newly hired staff's enthusiasm combined with new ideas helped to move the building's culture forward?

Table 4.4: Teacher Response Results (Questions re. to Staff Changes)

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	2	2	2	3	2	2	13	2.17	2.13
2	1	2	2	2	2	3	12	2.00	2.13
3	2	2	2	2	2	2	13	2.17	2.13
4	1	2	2	2	3	3	13	2.17	2.13
5	1	2	2	3	2	3	13	2.17	2.13

4.1.8.2.   Accountability Measures

Question #1   –   What influence has the national accountability system (NCLB) had on the building culture?

Question #2   –   What influence has the state's accountability system (PSSA) had on the building culture?

Question #3   –   How has the district's implementation of any accountability measures Impacted the school's culture?

Question #4   –   How has the building's implementation of any accountability measures impacted the school's culture?

Table 4.5: Teacher Response Results (Questions re. Accountability Measures)

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	1	2	3	1	2	3	12	2.00	2.25
2	2	3	3	2	2	3	15	2.50	2.25
3	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	2.00	2.25
4	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	2.50	2.25

4.1.8.3.   Renovations

Question #1   –   What influences has the improved physical plant (i.e. classrooms, library, cafeteria, gymnasium…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #2   –   How has the updated environment (i.e. lighting, cleanliness, functionality, computer access…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #3 – How important was the renovation process from the standpoint that the staff and students were brought closer together in rebuilding the culture?

Question #4 – Has the new structure and its positive appearance to the community had any influence on the culture of the building?

Table 4.6: Teacher Response Results (Questions relating to Renovations)

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	1	1	3	3	3	3	14	2.33	2.42
2	1	2	3	3	3	3	14	2.50	2.42
3	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	2.50	2.42
4	2	2	2	3	3	2	14	2.33	2.42

4.1.8.4. Middle School Merger

Question #1 – What influence did the concept of a new philosophy relating to the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #2 – What influence did the new expectations surrounding the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #3 – What influence did the idea of a new beginning relating to the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Table 4.7: Teacher Response Results (Questions re. Middle School Merger)

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	1	2	2	3	2	2	12	2.00	1.89
2	1	1	2	3	2	3	12	2.00	1.89
3	1	1	3	2	1	2	10	1.67	1.89

4.1.8.5. Leadership

Question #1   –   What influence has the *quantity* of leadership played in improving the school's culture?

Question #2   –   What influence has the *quality* of leadership played in improving the school's culture?

Question #3   –   How has the relationship between staff and administration played a role in the improved culture?

Question #4   –   What impact has the focus on student achievement played in improving the school's culture?

Table 4.8: Teacher Response Results (Questions relating to Leadership)

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	1	3	3	3	3	3	16	2.67	2.71
2	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	3.00	2.71
3	2	3	3	3	3	3	17	2.83	2.71
4	1	2	3	3	2	3	14	2.33	2.71

4.1.8.6. Educational Programming

Question #1   –   How much influence on the school's culture has the implementation of school-wide initiatives played?

Question #2   –   How have the curriculum changed impacted the school culture?

Question #3   –   How important has the implementation of technology resources been in the improved culture?

Table 4.9: Teacher Response Results (Questions re. to Educational Programming)

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	2	2	3	1	2	1	11	1,83	2.17
2	1	2	3	2	3	2	13	2.17	.2.17
3	1	3	3	3	3	2	15	2.50	2.17

4.1.9. Teacher Responses

4.1.9.1. Research Question #1

How have the changes in staff played a role in the cultural change in the school?

A variety of responses were elicited from the question on staff changes relating to the cultural change apparent over the past five years. Although most thought that the influx of new teachers was a positive addition and had an impact on moving away from the "default culture" apparent at the school, not all thought that way. Teacher #1 quickly stated that

> I don't think that it ever does…We always had the highest number of people (staff turnover)…The culture has never---I don't think that has anything to do with it, to be very honest.

Teacher #4 identifies the fact that there is a learning curve that is shared between both the staff and students with the constant hiring of new staff.

> We have new teachers coming into our building all the time, which means that the teachers aren't seasoned. And I think what happens is as they are learning, the students are also learning. So, they are learning basically together."

Teacher #5 emphatically believes that the changes in the staff have had a positive affect on the cultural evolution.

> New teachers definitely do (play a role in the cultural change). Just by bringing fresh blood, fresh ideas - positive or negative. It doesn't give the rest of us a chance to get stale…You know, look at the new teachers and they have great ideas and you think, well, I can incorporate that into my class.

Teacher #6 sees a similar role played by the new staff members in the building –

> I think the changes in staff have been very positive…I think the new staff brings enthusiasm and a new way of looking at things…They are wanting to make it work.

Teacher #2 sees the positive side of the staff turnover as well by maintaining

> They always seem more willing to come in and try new things and make changes and go with the flow…I think the younger ones are more willing to collaborate…they have all seemed very receptive to being willing to work together.

Teacher #3 agrees with the sentiments of Teachers #2, #5, and #6 by stating

> I would say, for the most part, they have been very positive changes…one of the nice things is our staff is relatively young and they adjust rather quickly, at least the newer ones.

There were no apparent unanimous themes that emerged from review of the discussions. Some of the supported themes were that the changes in staff were relatively positive changes; the new staff generally shows a willingness to go with the flow and adjust rather quickly; and the fresh ideas and a new way of looking at things were all mentioned by at least two of the interviewees. Among the individual themes that emerged were the willingness of the staff to collaborate, the fact that they want to make it work and the affect of keeping the rest of the staff from getting "stale". Also among the individual themes that emerged was the fact that the teachers aren't seasoned and are basically learning together along with the students.

Table 4.10: Research Question #1

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	Willingness to go with the flow	More willing to collaborate
	Very positive changes	Keeps existing staff from getting "stale"
	Adjust rather quickly	Wanting to make it work
	New way of looking at things / fresh ideas	Teachers aren't seasoned and learn along with students

4.1.9.2.　Survey Results – Staff Changes

Question #1　–　How has the quality of the instruction that the newly hired staff impacted the school's culture?

Question #2　–　How has the newly hired staff's ability to relate to and adapt to the challenging student body within the school affected the school's culture?

Question #3　–　How has the newly hired staff's attitude toward change affected the culture of the building?

Question #4　–　How has the newly hired staff's willingness to collaborate and share with other staff had an impact on the building culture over the past five years?

Question #5　–　How has the newly hired staff's enthusiasm combined with new ideas helped to move the building's culture forward?

*The term newly hired staff is referring to any teacher that has been new to the building within the past five years (1999 – 2004).

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a ***strong influence, moderate influence,*** or ***no influence*** on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of <u>3</u>, moderate influence was given a value of <u>2</u>, and no influence was given a value of <u>1</u>. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence.

Table 4.11: Survey Results (Staff Changes)

Teacher #	1	2	3	4	5	6	Totals	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	2	2	2	3	2	2	13	2.17
Question #2 (Results)	1	2	2	2	2	3	12	2.00
Question #3 (Results)	2	3	2	2	2	2	13	2.17
Question #4 (Results)	1	2	2	2	3	3	13	2.17
Question #5 (Results)	1	2	2	3	2	3	13	2.17
Total Section							Average	2.13

The staff changes within the school over the past five years are clearly seen as a moderate influence by the six teachers in the survey. Teacher #1's results (1.4) match the qualitative discussion of "I don't think that it ever does". Each of the remaining respondents have at least a 2.0 result for their relation to staff changes and its affect in influencing the culture. This correlation validates the qualitative discussion that was favorable, yet not considered by any of the respondents to be the most important in regards to the impact of staff changes. The section average of 2.13 ranks fifth out of the six categories scored for influence in changing the culture. For complete survey results, refer to Table # 4.44 (p. 141).

4.1.9.3.   Ranking the Change Indicators

Following the interviews, each participant was asked to rank order the change indicators from 1-6 (1 being the most influential and 6 being the least influential) as they related to their role in moving away from the "default culture". Even with the positive comments and the moderate categorization of influence on the culture, the rank order put the staff changes in fifth (rank order of 4.3) out of six possible indicators. The highest rank that staff changes received by any of the participants was third by Teachers #1 and 6. The remainder of the participants placed staff changes in either fourth, fifth, and sixth position. For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.46 (pp. 144).

4.1.9.4. Research Question #2

How have the accountability measures now facing the schools played a role in changing the culture?

Each of the teacher interviewees recognized that the accountability measures put on educators have had an influence on what is happening within the school. Some appear to look at the changes as necessary and positive while others see it as adding more stress, however, making positive changes in the educational program. Teacher #1 emphasizes improvement of awareness by stating

> We are more aware of what we are doing because of it. No Child Left Behind, there are certain things that we have to do. With PSSA, there are certain things that we address. We don't teach the test. We address the test.

Teacher #5 views the idea of teaching the test a bit differently –

> I mean, we have to basically teach the test now. So, unless whatever you are doing has a direct tie to the PSSA's and what they say the kids have to know, we don't do it.

Teacher #5 does point out that the culture has changed due to the accountability with an initial answer to the question "Tremendously". Teacher #6 states

> I think that it has (changed the culture) to a certain extent. I think people are worried, do we work toward educating students or meeting standards? Do we teach children and develop a love of learning in them, or do we teach children so that they meet and pass standard so that everything is wonderful in our school district and we are not placed on warning lists? And how do we merge those two thoughts together to make it work for children?

> Teacher #4 adds

> We have all of the teachers really trying to work together as a team to increase PSSA scores…and it's to the point now where like every teacher is trying to do the same thing.

Teacher #3 sees positive changes apparent with the accountability measures but would like to see more of the emphasis and responsibility placed on the individual student and the home.

I think there is way too much accountability put on the teacher and not on the student. However, because there are accountability measures now being enforced, we have had to change how we do things to make sure we meet these accountability levels. And I think all those changes have been positive ones. One of the reasons we rewrote our curriculum was because of the standards. We may not have done that had we not met. So, I think we are much better off with what we are doing than we ever have been in the past. And so, I guess the short story is that the accountability measures put upon us have only led to positive influences.

Teacher #2 realizes that changes in instructional delivery have occurred due to the emphasis put on by accountability.

More stress…It just seems like everything is geared for that instead of teaching, which can be good and bad. There have been some good things that have come out of that, different techniques that we have used, different styles of teaching we have been using. So, that I think is good. I would not have done that on my own.

One unanimous theme that emerged was that each teacher was able to see some positive influences on the educational program and instruction due to the accountability measures. Some supported themes that emerged were the fact that the school is basically teaching to the test now and that the collaboration has increased as the staff works together as a team to increase PSSA scores. Several individual themes emerged throughout the interviews that offer support for cultural change but also put some added concerns on participants. Among the individual themes were the facts that we are more aware of what we are doing, different techniques are now being used and the rewriting of the curriculum was directly related to the accountability and current standards. Some of the individual themes that point to added concerns of the interviewees are the added stress levels, the fact that too much accountability is put on the teacher and not on the student and that schools now focus solely on not being put on warning lists.

Table 4.12: Research Question #2

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	INDIVIDUAL THEMES
Positive changes in educational program	Working together as a staff to increase PSSA scores	MORE AWARE OF WHAT WE ARE DOING
	Basically teach the test now	More stress
		Different teaching techniques now used
		Rewrote curriculum to match standards
		Too much accountability on teachers, not enough on students
		People are worried
		Focus on avoiding placement on warning lists

4.1.9.5. Survey Results – Accountability Measures

Question #1 – What influence has the national accountability system (NCLB) had on the building culture?

Question #2 – What influence has the state's accountability system (PSSA) had on the building culture?

Question #3 – How has the district's implementation of any accountability measures impacted the school's culture?

Question #4 – How has the building's implementation of any accountability measures impacted the school's culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a *strong influence, moderate influence,* or *no influence* on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little

to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6
and higher are considered to be a strong influence.

Table 4.13: Survey Results (Accountability Measures)

Teacher #	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	1	2	3	1	2	3	12	2.00
Question #2 (Results)	2	3	3	2	2	3	15	2.50
Question #3 (Results)	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	2.00
Question #4 (Results)	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	2.50
Total Section								Average 2.25

The accountability measures are shown to have a moderate to strong influence over the move

away from the "default culture" that was apparent in the building five years ago. The only

question not generating a single "3" was in relation to the district and its implementation of

accountability measures. Each other question – the national level, the state level and the building

level accountability received a minimum of two "3" answers from the six participants. Teacher

#1's response that "we are more aware because of it…No Child Left Behind, there are certain

things we have to do" as well as Teacher #2's response "There have been some good things that

have come out of that, different techniques that we have used, different styles of teaching we

have been using" point to its importance and its impact. The interview data depicted

accountability as being one of the positive contributors to the cultural transformation and the

survey data solidifies those claims. The section average of 2.25 ranks third out of the six critical

indicators scored for influence on changing the culture. For complete survey results, refer to

Table # 4.44 (p. 141).

4.1.9.6.   Ranking the Change Indicators

The participants ranked accountability measures from as high as #3 to as low as #6. Teachers #2 and 4 had accountability measures third out of the six critical indicators while Teachers #5 and 6 had it ranked last out of the six. Despite all of the demands placed around accountability through every level of education, the teacher participants in this particular study collectively ranked it last out of the possible six change indicators. The qualitative interviewing shows a positive correlation for the accountability measures on the cultural transition in the school and is recognized highly in the survey; however, when being asked to rank the indicators based on their importance in the change, it appears at the bottom (rank average of 4.7).   For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.46 (pp. 144).

4.1.9.7.   Research Question #3

What role did the renovation play in helping transform the school's culture?

The renovation project was seen by Teachers #3 and Teacher #5 as a major factor in the cultural evolution. The fact that it was in the planning and then under construction fed into the reality that something great in regards to the facility was underway. "That was probably the key in transforming the culture" explains Teacher #5.

> When we got here five years ago, this building was a disaster…It's a different feel…there are more eyes…the cameras are wonderful…they are a lot more respectful of things. They (students) went from what they thought was the worst at Cornell to the absolute worst, which was here.

 "It did a lot for the staff" maintains Teacher #3.

> You know, if you walk into a rundown building, then it's kind of hard to care if you leave garbage on the floor. Do you know what I mean? Because it just gives you that what's the difference attitude. But now, with everything being new and everything being nicer, and they also know there are consequences for things, I

see their overall behavior is a little bit better and they are a little more appreciative overall than they were before…it's inherently sneaking into them where it's respect the place and keep it as nice as you can. Especially when you think our student body has a lot of them come from not the best situation at home.

All other interviewees see a positive correlation to the renovations as well. Teacher #1 mentions that "just the simple fact that the water fountains were no longer being held up by milk crates. It made you feel good about coming into a place. It's clean." Teacher #2 adds

Obviously it helped greatly because it's beautiful…The kids from Cornell (elementary school that feeds the 7th &8th grade building) always felt that they had the crummy buildings and they always got the hand-me-downs…now they have a nice building.

Teacher #4 sees it as having a positive affect on the culture – "…the classrooms are conducive for learning and I think it does a lot for the students' self esteem." Teacher #6 concurs with the others in relating the renovations to a more positive culture by stating

…a finished building where it's quiet and the students take pride and they like being here…they like to keep it clean. They like to have it nice. They enjoy being in a nice environment.

The unanimous theme that emerged was that the renovations created a nice environment that is conducive for learning. The building prior to renovations was built for technical education and lacked quite a few of the amenities that would help create a positive learning environment for students. Several supported themes became evident through the content analysis including feeling good about coming into a place, the students became more respectful of things, the students now take pride in their new surroundings and evidence that the students like to keep it clean has become apparent. Also included in the supported themes was the notion that the kids from Cornell always got the hand-me-downs and were put in the worst buildings. Among the individual themes that emerged were the overall behavior being a little bit better, the students more appreciative of their surroundings and the addition of the cameras are wonderful. As

previously mentioned, it is important to point out that Teacher #5 mentioned that the renovation project was probably the "key in transforming the culture."

Table 4.14:   Research Question #3

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Nice environment conducive for learning	It makes you feel good about coming into a place	Helped eliminate the 'what's the difference attitude'
	Kids from Cornell always got the hand-me-downs	Overall behavior is a little bit better
	Students are more respectful of things	Students are more appreciative overall
	Students take pride and like to keep it clean	The renovations were probably the key in transforming the culture
		Five years ago the building was a disaster
		The cameras are wonderful

4.1.9.8.   Survey Results – Renovations

Question #1   –   What influences has the improved physical plant (i.e. classrooms, library, cafeteria, gymnasium…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #2   –   How has the updated environment (i.e. lighting, cleanliness, functionality, computer access…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #3   –   How important was the renovation process from the standpoint that the staff and students were brought closer together in rebuilding the culture?

Question #4   –   Has the new structure and its positive appearance to the community had any influence on the culture of the building?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a *strong influence, moderate influence,* or *no influence* on the improved culture over the past five years.

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Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence.

Table 4.15: Survey Results (Renovations)

Teacher #	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	1	1	3	3	3	3	14	2.33
Question #2 (Results)	1	3	3	3	3	3	15	2.50
Question #3 (Results)	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	2.50
Question #4 (Results)	2	2	2	3	3	2	14	2.33
Total Section							Average 2.42	

Teachers #3, 4, 5, and 6 show a very strong correlation between the renovations and their impact on the building culture. Teachers #1 and 2, on the other hand, see the process and the result as having a very low to moderate influence on the cultural change. Teachers #1 and 2 identify during their interview process that the renovations have been tremendous and will further assist in moving the culture forward, however, they have just recently been finished and the cultural improvements began before that time. Teacher #5 identified during the interview that this was "probably the key in transforming the culture…when we got here five years ago, this building was a disaster". Even though the renovations were a process, there was the feeling that "it's finally happening" and even the minor improvements along the way gave hope. The end was down the road, but it was in sight. The various perspectives from which the participants were viewing the renovations helped create a diverse appreciation for its influence on the culture. The section average of 2.42 ranked second out of the six critical indicators scored for influence on the cultural transformation. For complete survey results, refer to Table # 4.44 (p. 141).

4.1.9.9.   Ranking the Change Indicators

The rank order for the renovations and their influence on the move away from the "default culture" was second (rank average of 3.0) out of the six possible change indicators. Renovations were rated as high as #1 by Teacher #3 and as low as #6 by teacher #2. The variety of responses validates the fact that the renovation process was viewed from different perspectives by the teacher participants as pointed out in the survey data review. Although Teacher #2 ranks renovations last out of the six indicators, there is quite a bit of positive support for its impact through the interview comments. When being forced to choose among the six, however, renovations seemed the least influential to teacher #2. For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.46 (pp. 144).

4.1.9.10.   Research Question #4

What role did the middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

The change indicator of the middle school merger, more so than another indicator, appears to have had very little impact on the cultural transformation according to the qualitative inquiry. Teacher #1 reports that "I don't know that it improved it at all…I don't see that as being the part that brought the improvement along." Teacher #2 speaks to the role of the merger in similar fashion by stating "I don't see that it did…I don't think it made it worse, either." Teacher #4 follows suit with the comment

> I'm not really sure (if it played a role)…there is nothing negative about it…but I
> don't know if it was, you know---I don't know if it was one of the reasons.

Teachers #3, #5, and #6 saw some positive come out of the merger. Teacher #3 sees the merger as a wonderful new beginning. "I think it gave everybody a chance to start over…I think

the merger has actually made a positive influence on the overall culture." Teacher #5 struggled with the school's identity over the past five years as a building that housed half of the district's 7[th]and8[th] grade students. This participant saw the merger as a positive by stating "It improved it by finally giving us an identity…it gave us an identity so we had a sense of self, a sense of being after that." Teacher #6 makes reference to the students from both sides of the district having the opportunity to get together and realize the similarities among them and become one cohesive unit.

> You know, their feelings get hurt no matter if you are a kid from the Cornell side of the tracks (or the Francis McClure side). So, I think it helped because it's helped these kids to realize that there are no real differences…Actually, we are almost like a Phoenix…and it just seems like most of the bad things have gone away and there is nothing but good coming out of everything.

There were no unanimous themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data. Half of the responses were in support of the merger as a positive influence in the overall culture, whereas the other half felt that it had no affect at all. Two supported themes that emerged paint a picture of indifference to the merger – Three teachers stated that it did not play a role in improving the culture and two of those same teachers also mentioned that it didn't make it worse either. It simply did not appear that it had an affect either way. Four individual themes emerged from that included giving everybody a "chance to start over", "giving the building a sense of identity", creating a "sense of being" and allowing the students to realize there is "no real difference from students from the other side of the district".

Table 4.16:   Research Question #4

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	Not sure if it played a role at all	Gave everybody a chance to start over
	Did not make things worse either	Finally gave the building an identity
		Gave people a sense of self, a sense of being
		Students now realize there is no real difference from kids from other side of district

4.1.9.11. Survey Results – Middle School Merger

Question #1   –   What influence did the concept of a new philosophy relating to the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #2   –   What influence did the new expectations surrounding the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #3   –   What influence did the idea of a new beginning relating to the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a ***strong influence, moderate influence,*** or ***no influence*** on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence.

Table 4.17: Survey Results (Middle School Merger)

Teacher #	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	1	2	2	3	2	2	12	2.00
Question #2 (Results)	1	1	2	3	2	3	12	2.00
Question #3 (Results)	1	1	3	2	1	2	10	1.67
Total Section								Average 1.89

Based on the survey results, the middle school merger clearly ranks last out of the six indicators with a total section average of 1.89 out of a possible 3.00. Teacher #1 scored all three of the questions as having no influence on the culture while Teacher #2 scored questions two and three as having no influence on the culture. This corresponds with Teacher #1's response to the question of the merger by stating "I don't know that it improved it at all" and Teacher #2's response that "I don't see that it did…I don't think it made it worse, either". Teacher's #3, 4 and 6, however score the three questions at least a possible 7 out of 9 points and validate the merger as having some positive impact. For complete survey results, refer to Table # 4.44 (p. 141).

4.1.9.12.   Ranking Change Indicators

The preparations for the middle school merger and the actual merger that took place during the 2004-2005 school year ranked fourth (rank average of 3.7) out of the six critical indicators when participants were "forced" to rank them according to influence. A theme began to emerge when reviewing the rank order data. The variety of responses can be attributed to people's perception and perspective on each indicator. Middle school merger was ranked as high as number one (Teacher #4) and as low as number 6 (Teacher #1). Teacher #3, who ranked it number 2 overall, stated "I think it gave everybody a change to start over…". For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.46 (pp. 144).

4.1.9.13. Research Question #5

How has the leadership played a role in changing the dynamics of the school's culture?

Each interviewee seemed eager to talk about the building leadership and had some positive responses relating to the cultural evolution. Teacher #5 emphatically responded that

> The leadership we have in this building is pound for pound the best you are ever going to find. It gives you the support you need to be as creative as you can be, to take risk, because you know when you go to the administration or they come to you with an idea; it's going to be a two-way street. They are not dictators, they don't micromanage. They find people's strengths and let them go with it.

Teacher #6 points to the "enthusiasm" and "willingness to try new things" as some positive attributes of the building leadership.

> Their willingness to fight for things…they are willing to help us work through (our ideas) and help us come up with ideas to make things work. A lot of brainstorming takes place here.

Teacher #2 quickly replies

> Big difference…our administration is very good, very much supportive of the staff and tolerant of very little. There are consequences (for the students) and they stick to those consequences. The main focus of the administration is to improve student achievement.

Teacher #3 addresses the question of leadership in improving the culture by responding "It was an important role. The staff feels like, you mean, if they are willing to work that hard, then why aren't the rest of us?" Teacher #3 later adds

> …now I think we have more specific focuses, let's say, or things to focus on. So, it's not a secret to us. This is what we need you to know how to do. So, we are all in it together. You know, that's how I always imagined a school to be and didn't always have one to work in that way.

Teacher #4 feels that the "administration has been on target".

> It (focus on student achievement) has changed the dynamics. My understanding was that we were one of the schools that were like on the list, quote, unquote. And because of that, I think we started doing some things new and some things

different. We also have additional administrators. We have more administrators than we ever had in the past, and I think that's good.

Teacher #1 identifies the administration as "just as human as we are" in describing the relationships and leadership tact in the building.

The unanimous themes that emerged from the teacher interviewees were that the administration was both supportive and had a focus on student achievement. Both of these aspects were described by many of the teachers as having a major impact on the direction of the building and its culture. Several supported themes and individual themes arose throughout the discussions on leadership. Supported themes included the positive nature of having additional administrators, the idea that the staff feels that we (staff and administration) are all in it together and the building leaders find people's strengths and let them go with it. Also included in the supported themes is the enthusiasm of the leaders and their willingness to try new things. Individual themes included the fact that the administrators are just as human as we (teaching staff) are, willing to promote creativity and risk taking and leading brainstorming activities throughout the year. Also among the individual themes are that the administration tolerates very little, tries to provide whatever is needed in classrooms and has the staff wondering if they are willing to work so hard, then why aren't we?

Table 4.18: Research Question #5)

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Supportive of staff	All in it together attitude	Administrators are just as human as we are
Focus on student achievement	Additional administrators	Tolerate very little inappropriate behavior
	Find people's strengths and let them go with it	Provide whatever needed in the classrooms
	Enthusiastic	If they are willing to work so hard, why aren't we?
	Willing to try new things	Promote creativity and risk-taking
		Initiators of brainstorming activities
		The way I always imagined school to be

4.1.9.14. Survey Results – Leadership

Question #1 – What influence has the *quantity* of leadership played in improving the school's culture?

Question #2 – What influence has the *quality* of leadership played in improving the school's culture?

Question #3 – How have the relationships between the staff and administration played a role in the improved culture?

Question #4 – What impact has the focus on student achievement played in improving the school culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a ***strong influence, moderate influence,*** or ***no influence*** on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little

to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6

and higher are considered to be a strong influence.

Table 4.19: Survey Results (Leadership)

Teacher #	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	1	3	3	3	3	3	16	2.67
Question #2 (Results)	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	3.00
Question #3 (Results)	2	3	3	3	3	3	17	2.83
Question #4 (Results)	1	2	3	3	2	3	14	2.33
Total Section								Average 2.71

The survey data on Leadership sets it apart from any other change indicator on the list. The

overall section average of 2.71 is nearly .3 higher than the second largest influence based on the

survey questions. Question #2 generated the only "perfect" score of any of the 23 questions for

any of the topics throughout the entire survey. The quantitative results from the survey validate

several of the comments generated from the qualitative interviewing. From teacher #3's

comments on the willingness of the administration to work so hard resulting in a hard working

staff to the comments from Teacher #5 relating to finding people's strengths and allowing them

to go with and supporting the creativity of the staff, the correlation of administration to the

cultural transformation is very strong. The score of "3" for Teacher #1 is the only strong

influence score to show up anywhere on that participant's 23 survey answers. For complete

survey results, refer to Table # 4.44 (p. 141).

4.1.9.15. Ranking the Change Indicators

The rank average of 2.0 is the highest (top choice) of all of the critical indicators identified. It

is the number one choice of Teacher's #1, 2, and 6. The lowest that it is ranked is by Teacher #4,

which places it fourth out of the possible six when "forced" to choose. This is the only critical

indicator that shows such as distinct pattern for placement on the scale of importance in moving the culture forward. The qualitative interview data, the survey data and the rank order data all point to leadership as the number one reason for the improvements in the building culture. For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.46 (pp. 144).

4.1.9.16. Research Question #6

What role have the changes in the educational program played in the cultural transition?

The references to educational programming and its influence on the cultural change ranged from information about standards to the improvement of the curriculum to either being on board or being "overstepped by those that are." Although there were no unanimous themes that emerged from the teacher interview data, there were some interesting statements and insights to the improvement of the educational program. When asked if it has had an impact on the culture, Teacher #2 plainly states "I think it has…obviously we are pushing the reading and writing more so at this point than we ever have." Teacher #3 looks at the benefit to the students by replying

> I think that (school-wide initiatives) play a positive role, because you don't have isolated pockets of students that are just being told to do this because that's what they are doing in their class, everybody…so I think that's definitely been something that's been a positive influence there.

Teacher #4 agrees and says

> I think that they (program changes) play a positive role, because there are things that we are doing now that we weren't doing in the past…The fact that everyone is following the same curriculum…we finally have that.

Also commenting on the curriculum changes was Teacher #5. "It (curriculum changes) has actually been a benefit. Because for so long, we were always on different pages…after umpteen years, we are finally getting standardization." Teacher #1 looks at the overall involvement of the staff to meet the goals set forth by the educational program now in place.

This year, with everything that's been happening, the fact that ideas are being taken from everybody and looked at and put into practice, just the total involvement or the ability to be involved, there are more people doing things…There are people going out to conferences and out to meetings that would never have done that before…In relation to the educational programs, those people who don't want to be on board are being overstepped by those people that are.

Teacher #6 puts a refreshing perspective on the school's activities by stating "You know, we are meeting standards, but we are also meeting student interests, where, gee, this is cool."

As previously mentioned, there were no unanimous themes that emerged from the analysis of the interview data. There was evidence of both supported and individual themes, however. Included in the supported themes was the idea that the school-wide initiatives have helped get everyone on the same page, the fact that there is excitement around doing things now that we weren't doing in the past and the positive notion that everyone is following the same teacher created, standardized curriculum. Individual themes of note are the idea of total involvement or the ability to be involved, the reference to many more people taking advantage of professional development opportunities to enhance the educational program and the snowball affect of getting "on board or being overstepped" by those that are. Also emerging as individual themes are the push for the reading and writing program and the fact that we are not only meeting standards, but also meeting student interests.

Table 4. 20: Research Question #6

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	School-wide initiatives promote team approach	Ability to be involved is readily available
	Excitement about doing things we did not do in the past	People taking advantage of professional development opportunities more
	Standardization of the curriculum	People getting on board or being 'overstepped'
		Evidence of multiple reading and writing initiatives
		Not only meeting standards, but meeting interests

4.1.9.17. Survey Results – Educational Programming

Question #1   –   How much influence on the school's culture has the implementation of school-wide initiatives played?

Question #2   –   How have the curriculum changes impacted the school culture?

Question #3   –   How important has the implementation of technology resources been in he improved culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a ***strong influence, moderate influence,*** or ***no influence*** on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence.

Table 4.21: Survey Results (Educational Programming)

Teacher #	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	2	2	3	1	2	1	11	1.83
Question #2 (Results)	1	2	3	2	3	2	13	2.17
Question #3 (Results)	1	3	3	3	3	2	15	2.50
Total Section								Average 2.17

The survey results for the changes made to the educational program and their influence on improving the building culture score a rank average of 2.17 out of a possible 3.00. This score ranks its influence as fourth out of a possible six change indicators scored. Teacher #3 identifies all three questions on educational programming to have had a strong influence on improving the culture while Teacher #5 identifies two out of three as having a strong influence with one having a moderate influence. As previously mentioned, the theme of differing perspectives emerges and Teacher #1 identifies two out of three questions as having no influence and one having only moderate influence. Three teachers out the six identify at least one question of the three as having no influence on the move away from the "default culture" that once existed. The idea of standardization and commonality emerge in the qualitative discussions as important and meaningful; however, do not necessarily have much impact on the cultural improvements. For complete survey results, refer to Table # 4.44 (p. 141).

4.1.9.18. Ranking the Change Indicators

The improvements made to the educational program have made an impact on the teaching staff as its rank average of 3.3 is behind only leadership and renovations. It is not placed first by anyone, but neither is it ranked last by anyone. The teachers rank it as high as number two and as low as number five. It's consistency helps identify it as a solid contributor to the cultural movement. The fact that there are "things that we are doing now that we weren't doing in the

past" (Teacher #4) and that we are "meeting standards, but we are also meeting student interest" (Teacher #6) are positive supports for its cultural contribution. For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.46 (pp. 144).

4.1.9.19. Research Question #7

What other factors were instrumental in improving the culture over the past five years?

Research question #7 provided an opportunity for all participants to add any additional information that they felt was crucial to the school's ability to move away from the "default culture" that existed for years. In every teacher's conclusion, there was a reference, very strong at times, to the ability of some of the core members of the staff to stick together, adapt to everything and maintain a determination for improvement. Teacher #5 quickly responded to the question by stating

> I think the strength of the staff, especially those of us who stayed behind. We came in at such a bad situation that first year and the dead wood fell away. It either left the district or went to another building. And the rest of us just stepped up to the challenge.

Teacher #1 maintained that the core staff is "kind of like cockroaches…we adapt to everything…I think this staff is the best staff in the district because we are imaginative." Teacher #6 simply puts it "We have the staff of course…we have the children excited to be here." Teacher #4 points to the efforts to continue getting the staff familiar with each other and bring cohesiveness to the group in the comments

> We did some things with the staff so we could get to know one another…we had a few socials so we could meet and know one another before we all basically had to work together…we came together as a group.

Teacher #2 identifies the importance of instilling the right attitude from the outset and keeping it positive at all times.

I feel that if the teachers in the building get along and work together, the culture within your building is much better because I think the students can sense that…the attitudes of your teachers and your administrators, if it's a positive one, I think it's very beneficial to the kids. If I come in negative every day, so are my kids going to be negative.

Teacher #3 referred once again to the administrative role in assisting the culture along by saying

The way the staff works with us…just having the administrative support that we do has made a difference…and that trickles down to the students. You know, middle school is middle school. You are going to have your problems…but the togetherness of the staff helps accomplish its goals.

As mentioned at the outset of this section, the unanimous theme that emerged from the conversations was the togetherness and overall strength of the staff. The two supported theme that resonated through two teacher's descriptions were the fact that the attitudes of the teachers and administrators sets the tone for the building and that tone has been set much better than in previous years and the ability to adapt to constant challenges. Among the individual themes that emerged were that the staff are "kind of like cockroaches…we adapt to everything", the ability of the core teachers that remained to step up to the inherent challenges of middle school and the individual building, the strength of the administrative support and the ability the staff has in getting the children excited to be in school.

Table 4. 22: Research Question #7

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Togetherness and overall strength of the staff	Attitudes of teachers and administrators setting tone for students	Staff is kind of like cockroaches…able to adapt to everything
	Ability of staff to adapt to constant challenges	Administrative support trickles down to students
		Core staff continues to step up to the challenge
		The staff has the children excited to be here

4.1.10. Building Administrator and Central Office Responses

4.1.10.1. Staff Changes

Question #1 – How has the quality of the instruction of the newly hired staff impacted the school's culture?

Question #2 – How has the newly hired staff's ability to relate to and adapt to the challenging student body within the school affected the school's culture?

Question #3 – How has the newly hired staff's attitude toward change affected the school's culture?

Question #4 – How has the newly hired staff's willingness to collaborate and share with other staff had an impact on the building culture over the past five years?

Question #5 – How has the newly hired staff's enthusiasm combined with new ideas helped to move the building's culture forward?

Table 4.23: Administrative Responses (Questions re. Staff Changes)

Question #	Building Admin. #1	Building Admin. #2	Central Office	Total	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.57
2	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.67
3	2	2	3	7	2.33	2.67
4	3	2	3	8	2.67	2.67
5	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.67

4.1.10.2. Accountability Measures

Question #1 – What influence has the national accountability system (NCLB) had on the building culture?

Question #2 – What influence has the state's accountability system (PSSA) had on the building culture?

Question #3 – How has the district's implementation of any accountability measures impacted the school's culture?

Question #4 – How has the building's implementation of any accountability measures impacted the school's culture?

Table 4.24: Administrator Responses (Questions re. Accountability Measures)

Question #	Building Admin. #1	Building Admin. #2	Central Office	Total	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.58
2	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.58
3	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.58
4	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.58

4.1.10.3. Renovations

Question #1   –   What influences has the improved physical plant (i.e. classrooms, library, cafeteria, gymnasium…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #2   –   How has the updated environment (i.e. lighting, cleanliness, functionality, computer access…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #3   –   How important was the renovation process from the standpoint that the staff and students were brought closer together in rebuilding the culture?

Question #4   –   Has the new structure and its positive appearance to the community had any influence on the culture of the building?

Table 4.25: Administrator Results (Questions re. Renovations)

Question #	Building Admin. #1	Building Admin. #2	Central Office	Total	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.83
2	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.83
3	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.83
4	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.83

4.1.10.4. Middle School Merger

Question #1   –   What influence did the concept of a new philosophy relating to the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #2   –   What influence did the new expectations surrounding the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #3   –   What influence did the idea of a new beginning relating to the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Table 4.26: Administrator Results (Questions re. Middle School Merger)

Question #	Building Admin. #1	Building Admin. #2	Central Office	Total	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	2	2	2	6	2.00	2.44
2	2	3	3	8	2.67	2.44
3	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.44

4.1.10.5. Leadership

Question #1   –   What influence has the *quantity* of leadership played in improving the school's culture?

Question #2   –   What influence has the *quality* of leadership played in improving the school's culture?

Question #3   –   How has the relationship between staff and administration played a role in the improved culture?

Question #4   –   What impact has the focus on student achievement played in improving the school's culture?

Table 4.27: Administrator Results (Questions re. Leadership)

Question #	Building Admin. #1	Building Admin. #2	Central Office	Total	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.91
2	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.91
3	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.91
4	3	2	3	8	2.67	2.91

4.1.10.6. Educational Programming

Question #1   –   How much influence on the school's culture has the implementation of school-wide initiatives played?

Question #2   –   How have the curriculum changed impacted the school culture?

Question #3   –   How important has the implementation of technology resources been in the improved culture?

Table 4.28: Administrator Results (Questions re. Educational Programming)

Question #	Building Admin. #1	Building Admin. #2	Central Office	Total	Avg.	Section Avg.
1	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.33
2	2	2	3	7	2.33	2.33
3	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.33

4.1.11.   Building Administrator and Central Office Responses

4.1.11.1. Background Question #1

How would you best describe the school's culture during its first year with the 7th and 8th grade students?

The responses elicited by the building administrators and central office personnel to this question sound strikingly familiar in tone to the responses of the teachers. Building Administrator #1 begins by describing the culture as "Depressed…Turmoil. It was viewed by everyone as let's just get the year over with…It felt like we were on an island, forgotten about…definitely the have-nots." Building Administrator #2 quickly responds to the question by stating "Chaotic…we saw everything you can imagine – defiance, belligerence, bullying, harassment, violent behaviors…" The Central Office representative explained the concerns of the upper administration in relation to what was occurring within the building.

> All visits from the central office and University personnel were centered on the discipline concerns. The action plan for the building could not be addressed. The energies of the administrative staff were drained trying to deal with behavioral concerns combined with a professional staff that was minus leadership in programs, staff development, implementation of strategies…

Table 4.29: Background Questions #1

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Focus was on disciplinary issues and concerns		Depressed…Turmoil
		Chaotic
		Let's just get the year over with
		Action plan for building could not be addressed
		Energies of administrative staff drained on behavioral concerns

4.1.11.2. Background Question #2

How would you best describe the culture during the current school year, the 2004-2005 school year?

All three discussions about the culture of the building in the current school year were tremendously positive in nature when compared to that of five years ago.   Building Administrator #1 describes it as

> Optimistic…upbeat…there is collaboration evident along with uplifting ideas and a lack of negativity. There is more evidence of sharing and people willing to ask for help…there is the 'all in it together' attitude. The entire building has rallied together and there is an obvious focus on student achievement.

Building Administrator #2 speaks equally as upbeat in the description.

> Organized…everyone is on the same page and everybody knows where to be. The focus is now on student achievement. Teacher meetings are academic, lending no time for disgruntled teachers to get a forum in front of the remaining faculty and staff…that has been eliminated.

The Central Office representative begins with the apparent focus of the building and continues on to describe other noticeable attributes of the building five years later.

> The focus of the staff has turned to student achievement. The teachers are opening up and sharing best practice. Professional development for staff members has been increased and additional days for planning have been implemented. There is continuous professional development within the building

through the content coaching model and it has been effective. Behavioral concerns are declining. Research supports that the more students are engaged, discipline concerns decrease. The students are showing more of a sense of commitment to the educational program as it has become meaningful for the students.

Table 4.30: Background Questions #2

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
The focus is now on student achievement	Collaboration is evident	Optimistic…Upbeat
	Teacher meetings are academic in nature	All in it together attitude
	Teachers are opening up and sharing best practice	Organized
		Continuous use of professional development
		Behavioral concerns are declining

4.1.11.3. Background Question #3

What do you think the connection is between a school's culture and student achievement?

All three administrators questioned saw a strong connection between a school's culture and student achievement. Building Administrator #1 describes the connection as "The better the culture, the better the surroundings and the more important a student feels, the better they perform. When students feel comfortable about confiding in teachers about problems and the staff work closely with the students, production in the building can only go up." Building Administrator #2 agrees with the connection as well when stating

> There is a strong correlation between culture and student achievement. There is now a sense of pride within the building. Even though they (students) do not express it directly, they are showing that they want to be here…their schooling is now directly related to achievement. You used to get comments around here such as 'this place is a sewer…

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The Central Office representative made it unanimous when they explained

> There is a strong connection. If the students feel safe, the learning environment is relevant, if they are being challenged and taught on appropriate levels and they see teaches sharing and working together, they are motivated to perform better. If the teachers are excited about what they are doing, it is transferred to the students.

Table 4. 31:   Background Questions #3

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
There is a strong connection		The better the culture, the better they perform
		There is a sense of pride
		If teachers are excited, it is transferred to the students

4.1.11.4. Research Question #1

How have the changes in staff played a role in the cultural change in the school?

There were some positive aspects as well as some negative aspects identified by the administrators relating to the younger staff within the school. Building Administrator #1 offered many thoughts on the newer teachers and began by stating "The newer people are more technologically savvy. They pick up new things easier." When discussing their relationship with the students, Building Administrator #1 relayed that "The overall staff is not far removed from the students, which can be viewed as both a positive and a negative." One area of weakness observed by Building Administrator #1 was professionalism. "The professionalism needs work…their appearance and attire does not seem to be one of their top priorities." Two more areas viewed as positive in nature were "The younger staff is more social with each other, thus making them more comfortable with each other and more willing to collaborate and share" and "The newer staff members are more willing to change because they do not yet have a set

pedagogy and are not yet comfortable challenging the flow." Building Administrator #2 views

the changes in staff quite differently.

> We have always been a transient staff…anybody with seniority seemed to bid out.
> You never knew (with the new hires) who the weak spots were going to be…the
> changes in staff are basically a mute point…some come in good while others are
> bad…the same holds true with those who have sought retirement.

The Central Office perspective offers a refreshing and positive outlook on the new hires in the

building.

> People have been hired that were prepared well and had a sense of what they are
> doing…The newly hired staff are more in-tuned to being willing to collaborate,
> use best-practice and engage students. More teachers as I walk through the
> building are now involving students and not simply lecturing.

It is also mentioned by the Central Office personnel that "The seasoned staff can be seen

taking advantage of the energy, enthusiasm, and skills of the younger staff." It is also thought

that the culture of the newer generation of educators in itself makes a tremendous difference –

"The overall culture of the newer teaches seems more of willing to take the lead as opposed to

wanting to be told what to do.

Table 4.32: Research Question #1

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	More willing to change	More technologically savvy
	More willing to collaborate and share	Professionalism needs work…appearance and attire not a priority
		We have always been a transient staff
		Staff changes are a mute point
		Seasoned staff is taking advantage of energy, enthusiasm, and skills
		Newer teachers show willingness to take the lead

4.1.11.5. Survey Results – Staff Changes

Question #1 –   How has the quality of the instruction that the newly hired staff* impacted the school's culture?

Question #2 –   How has the newly hired staff's ability to relate to and adapt to the challenging student body within the school affected the school's culture?

Question #3 –   How has the newly hired staff's attitude toward change affected the culture of the building?

Question #4 –   How has the newly hired staff's willingness to collaborate and share with other staff had an impact on the building culture over the past five years?

Question #5 –   How has the newly hired staff's enthusiasm combined with new ideas helped to move the building's culture forward?

*The term newly hired staff is referring to any teacher that has been new to the building within the past five years (1999-2004).

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a *strong influence, moderate influence,* or *no influence* on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence. Administrator #3 refers to the Central Office representative.

Table 4.33: Survey Results (Staff Changes)

Administrator #	1	2	3	Totals	AVG.
Question #1 (Results)	3	3	3	9	**3.00**
Question #2 (Results)	3	2	2	7	2.33
Question #3 (Results)	2	2	3	7	2.33
Question #4 (Results)	3	2	3	8	2.67
Question #5 (Results)	3	3	3	9	3.00
Total Section					Average 2.67

The staff changes over the past five years seemed to have a moderate to strong influence on the culture according to the participating administrators. Both Building Administrator #1 and the Central Office representative (#3) scored in the strong range 4 out of the 5 questions given. Building Administrator #2, who referred to the staff changes as a "mute point", only scored 2 out of 5 in the strong range, while the three other were scored as a moderate influence. These numbers correlate with each person's qualitative descriptions relating to staff changes and their influence. The section average of 2.67ranks third out of the six change indicators scored for influence in changing the culture. For complete survey results, refer to Table #4. 45 (p. 142).

4.1.11.6. Ranking the Change Indicators

The survey data and the ranking both rank third out of the six change indicators used in the study. The rank average of 3.3 was achieved by having one ranked second overall, one third overall, and the other fifth overall. Staff changes came behind the other change indicators of leadership and renovations. When viewing the survey data and the rank order data of the building administrators and the central office personnel, it becomes evident that staff changes were in the upper middle of the pack in relation to influence on the cultural changes within the school. For complete rank order data results, refer to Table #4.47 (p. 146).

4.1.11.7. Research Question #2

How have the accountability measures now facing the schools played a role in changing the culture?

In the qualitative descriptions of each of the administrators in the study it becomes apparent that the accountability measures had a positive impact on education overall and on changing the culture of the building. Building Administrator #1 exclaimed "Absolutely a major role…the test is it!. This is the standard by which we are judged. Many of the changes would not have occurred without the emphasis on accountability. In industry, you are expected to produce…if you do not, there are repercussions. Although I do not agree with everything relating to the accountability measures, it has had a major impact on education." Building Administrator #2 concurs with both its importance and the correlation to other industries.

> The concept is great. Making schools accountable is part of real life. The punishments, however, are ridiculous and work against low income districts like ours…it has, however, had a positive impact. There is not personal responsibility in place. If you are not doing your job, you can be held accountable.

The responses of the Central Office representative make reference to several comments brought forth by the two building administrators.

> Excellent motivators…there is now the pressure of being accountable for every student. The focus is now on teaching students rather than teaching the material. I agree with testing the kids and I now see the test scores and available data beginning to drive instructional decisions. I do, however, think there is too much pressure for individual buildings. By labeling them as not meeting AYP can undermine the motivation of a staff.

Also during the supported theme surrounding low-income students having a disadvantage in the testing process is apparent.

Table 4.34: Research Question #2

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
A major role and positive impact	If you do not produce, you are held accountable	It is the standard by which we are judged
Do not agree with everything	Accountability is a part of life	Excellent motivator
	Inequity between low and high poverty districts	Focus now on teaching students rather than material
	Personality responsibility now exists	Too much pressure for individual buildings.

4.1.11.8. Survey Results – Accountability Measures

Question #1   –   What influence has the national accountability system (NCLB) had on the building culture?

Question #2   –   What influence has the state's accountability system (PSSA) had on the building culture?

Question #3   –   How has the district's implementation of any accountability measures impacted the school's culture?

Question #4–   How has the building's implementation of any accountability measures impacted the school's culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a ***strong influence, moderate influence,*** or ***no influence*** on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence. Administrator #3 refers to the Central Office representative.

Table 4.35: Survey Results (Accountability Measures)

	1	2	3	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	3	2	2	2	2.33
Question #2 (Results)	3	3	2	2	2.67
Question #3 (Results)	3	3	2	2	2.67
Question #4 (Results)	3	3	2	2	2.67
Total Section				Average	2.58

Both building administrators score this area as a strong influence to changing the building's culture. Building Administrator #1 views the accountability measures very strongly with a "3" score for each of the questions relating to it, validating the qualitative response of "Absolutely…the test is it!". Building Administrator #2 scored 3 of the 4 questions with a "3", further validating the responses pertaining to accountability being a "part of real life" and agreeing with the notion of having "personal responsibility" in place. The Central Office representative refers to the accountability measures as having an impact, but not as being one of the top influences. The section average of 2.58 ranks accountability in fourth out of the six change indicators scored for influence on changing the culture. For complete survey results, refer to Table #4.45 (p. 142).

4.1.11.9. Ranking the Change Indicators

When being "forced" to rank the indicators in order of influence on the building's culture, the administrators in the study collectively placed it fifth out of the six change indicators. Building Administrator #1 continued to rate it very high by placing it second among the six, Building Administrator #2 ranked it fourth out of the six, while the Central Office representative placed it sixth out of the six possible change indicators. The overall score of 4.0 was fifth out of six, only

coming in ahead of the middle school merger. For complete rank order data results, refer to
Table #4.47 (p. 146).

4.1.11.10. Research Question #3

What role did the renovation play in helping transform the school's culture?

The renovation project was equally valued by the administrators in the transformation as it
was by the teachers in the study. Building Administrator #1 saw a sense of relief and satisfaction
when it was stated "Everyone in the building finally felt that they were worthy…other can now
look at us in a different light." References were made throughout the interview about an
increased "sense of pride" among students and faculty and how the improvements have made for
more productive days. Building Administrator #2 quickly responded to the query about the role
of the renovation with "Tremendous…the physical plant itself has definitely been one of the big
things…there is a big change in student attitude as well as a big change in teacher attitude." Not
only was the finished process discussed but the process of the renovations was seen as vital as
well.

> Even while the renovations were taking place, as we moved into a completed area
> during the different stages, we began to see pieces of the puzzle and it was
> uplifting…this continued even more so during each completion phase.

The Central Office representative echoes sentiments by both building administrators during
the interview.

> It (renovation process) played a significant role in motivating the staff and making
> them feel more professional. For years, the people in the building felt
> insignificant to the rest of the district. Other buildings were in better condition
> and there were morale problems because of the existing conditions.

There was also a reference made to the excitement of the staff and students as each phase of the new building was completed. "The phasing of the construction led to a build-up of excitement throughout the process."

Table 4.36: Research Question #3

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
Staff finally felt worth…made them feel more professional	Big change in student attitudes…Big change in teacher attitudes	Uplifting
	Great sense of pride	More productive days
	Phasing of construction led to build-up of excitement throughout the process	

4.1.11.11. Survey Results – Renovations

Question #1 –   What influence has the improved physical plant (i.e. classrooms, library, cafeteria, gymnasium…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #2 –   How has the updated environment (i.e. lighting, cleanliness, functionality, computer access…) played in the transformation of the school's culture?

Question #3 –   How important was the renovation process from the standpoint that the staff and students were brought closer together in rebuilding the culture?

Question #4 –   Has the new structure and its positive appearance to the community had any influence on the culture of the building?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a *strong influence, moderate influence,* or *no influence* on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of <u>3</u>, moderate influence was given a value of <u>2</u>, and no influence was given a value of <u>1</u>. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence.   Administrator #3 refers to the Central Office representative.

Table 4.37:   Survey Results (Renovations)

Administrator #	1	2	3	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	3	3	3	9	3.00
Question #2 (Results)	3	3	2	8	2.67
Question #3 (Results)	3	3	3	9	3.00
Question #4 (Results)	3	3	2	8	2.67
Total Section				Average	2.83

The renovations become stand out to each administrator in both the qualitative interviewing as well as the survey. Building Administrators #1 and #2 both score perfect "3"'s for all four questions relating to the renovations, making for a very strong case for the major influence on the building's cultural transformation. The Central Office representative scores its influence from moderate to strong by scoring two of the questions with a "3" and the two other questions with a "2". These scores validate the positive comments made throughout the interviewing portion of the study. "Finally feeling worthy" and "big change in student attitudes and big change in teacher attitudes" are powerful comments that underscore the importance of the renovations to the administrative team. The section average of 2.83 ranks second out of the six critical indicators scored for influence on the cultural transformation, just as it did for the teacher survey. For complete survey results, refer to Table #4. 45 (p. 142).

4.1.11.12. Ranking the Change Indicators

The rank order for the renovations and their influence on the move away from the "default culture" was second (rank average of 3.0) out of the six possible change indicators. Renovations were ranked as high as first by Administrator #1 and as low as fourth out of six by the Central Office Representative. Building Administrator #2 scored it second out of the six change indicators, second only to leadership. For complete rank order data results, refer to Table #4.47 (p. 146).

4.1.11.13. Research Question #4

What role did the middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

The interview discussions generated some positive feedback; however, the answers to the question about the merger did not come as quickly and emphatically as did the others. Building Administrator #1 maintained that

> The staffing was directly affected by the negative expectations that the Francis McClure staff had with coming to North Hall. Some of the weaker staff either retired or bid out. Some of them simply did not want to deal with those 'North Hall' kids or teachers and got out…new hiring's were possible.

Building Administrator #2 believed that there was an aura of excitement that surrounded the opportunity to start anew.

> The staff seemed excited about a new beginning and a new challenge…most of the people prepared for what they wanted to see out of the new building and had input to make it better.

The Central Office representative recognized this as a perfect time to look to building a more positive culture than what had existed for years.

> The merger provided an uncertain atmosphere in the planning stages which was conducive to creating a new culture. High academic expectations and leadership that developed in those other buildings helped to provide a standard for leadership

and the staff in the new building. The pressures on the existing staff were great from the community based on the increased expectations.

This was discussed from a motivational point of view – "The existing staff wanted to prove they were top-notch and equal to the other staff coming into the building."

Table 4.38: Research Question #4

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	Pressures on staff due to new expectations	Staffing was directly affected – weaker staff bid out or retired
		Staff seemed excited about a new beginning
		Uncertain atmosphere conducive to creating new culture
		Existing staff wanted to prove their worth

4.1.11.14. Survey Results – Middle School Merger

Question #1   –   What influence did the concept of a new philosophy relating to the impending merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #2   –   What influence did the new expectations surrounding the impending middle school merger play in improving the school's culture?

Question #3   –   What influence did the idea of a new beginning relating to the impending merger play in improving the school's culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a *strong influence, moderate influence,* or *no influence* on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence. Administrator #3 refers to the Central Office representative.

Table 4.39: Survey Results (Middle School Merger)

Administrator #	1	2	3	Totals	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	2	2	2	6	2.00
Question #2 (Results)	2	3	3	8	2.67
Question #3 (Results)	3	3	2	8	2.67

TOTAL SECTION   **AVERAGE   2.44**

Based on the survey results, the middle school merger ranks fifth out of the possible six change indicators with a total section average of 2.44 out of a possible 3.00. Building Administrator #1 and Central Office scored two of the three questions as a moderate influence and one of the three questions as a strong influence in the cultural change. Building Administrator #2 rated two of the three questions as having a strong influence, which can be validated by the comments relating to the staff being "excited about a new beginning and a new challenge." For complete survey results, refer to Table #4. 45 (p. 142).

4.1.11.15. Ranking the Change Indicators

The preparations for the middle school merger and the actual merger that took place during the 2004-2005 school year sixth (rank average of 5.7) out of the six change indicators when participants were "forced" to rank them according to influence. The two building administrators ranked the merger in the last position (sixth out of the six) while the Central Office representative ranked it fifth out of the six. When viewed in conjunction with the survey results and the qualitative answers, it clearly becomes one of the bottom two change indicators that could have influence the building culture. For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.47 (p. 146).

4.1.11.16. Research Question #5

How has the leadership played a role in changing the dynamics of the school's culture?

As was the case with the teachers in the study, the administrators identified the leadership as the prime reason for the move away from the "default culture". The concept of maintaining a focus became a unanimous theme throughout the discussions. Building Administrator #1 believes that the "adding additional administrators and allowing everyone to focus on their strengths has allowed for the provision of a more distinct building focus". Building Administrator #2 adds that "The focus has entirely changed from discipline to student achievement and the betterment of instruction…it's all on the leadership." The Central Office representative explains "The leadership has stepped up to the plate in keeping an academic focus." Several individual themes emerged from the interviews including Building Administrator #1's discussion of the leadership and how it now involves the entire building.

"The leadership has been spread out – there are teachers serving in many roles as leaders to help move the program forward." Building Administrator #1 also spoke positively about the leadership at the district level by stating "The verbal acknowledgement and support from upper administration has had a positive influence on the productivity of the administrative team." Building Administrator #2 plainly states "The quality of the leadership has improved. The first four year, all meetings were informational and contained 'compliant' sessions. All meetings now are positive and academic oriented." The Central Office personnel maintains that

> …the strengths of the administrative team have been complimentary and have helped in moving the educational program forward…there have also been additional administrators in the building that has helped to crate a lower student-administrator ratio to help keep a strong connection with the students.

Table 4.40: Research Question #5

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
The focus has turned to student achievement	Additional administrators allow everyone to focus on strengths	Leadership has been more spread out and includes the teaching staff
	Quality of the leadership has improved	Faculty meetings are now positive and academic oriented
	Focus changed away from discipline	University coursework has motivated leadership
		Strengths of administrative team are complimentary
		Acknowledgement from upper administration for efforts

4.1.11.17. Survey Results – Leadership

Question #1 – What influence has the *quantity* of leadership played improving the school's culture?

Question #2 – What influence has the *quality* of leadership played in improving the

school's culture?

Question #3 – How have the relationships between the staff and administration played a role in the improved culture?

Question #4 – What impact has the focus on student achievement played in improving the school's culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a *strong influence, moderate influence,* or *no influence* on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence. Administrator #3 refers to the Central Office representative.

Table 4.41: Survey Results (Leadership)

Administrator #	1	2	3	Total	Avg.
Question #1 (Results	3	3	3	9	3.00
Question #2 (Results)	3	3	3	9	3.00
Question #3 (Results)	3	3	3	9	3.00
Question #4 (Results)	3	2	3	8	2.67
Total Section					Average 2.91

The survey data on Leadership sets it apart from any other change indicator as was the case with the teacher survey data. The overall section average of 2.91 ranks higher than any other section and contains three questions out of four with perfect scores. There were only seven perfect scores tabulated out of the 23 questions, three of them coming from the section on leadership. The qualitative answers, the survey results, as well as the rank order data (available

in next section) all point to the leadership as the overall main influence in the building's move

away from the "default culture". For complete survey results, refer to Table # 4.45 (p. 142).

4.1.11.18. Ranking the Change Indicators

The rank average of 2.0 is the highest (top choice) of all of the change indicators identified. It

is the number one choice of Building Administrator #2 as well as the Central Office

representative. Building Administrator #1 places it at number four out of the possible six

choices. The closest rank average to *Leadership* was *Renovations,* which came in at 2.3 and had

one first place, one second place, and one fourth place vote. The triangulation of data on the

topic of leadership points to it being the major influence in the cultural change. For complete

rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.47 (p. 146).

4.1.11.19. Research Question #6

What role have the changes in the educational program played in the cultural transition?

The references to the educational programming and its influences on cultural change ranged

from talk about the school-wide initiatives, the collective responsibility of the staff and the focus

and continued efforts on professional development. Building Administrator #1 comments on the

after-school programming and the school-wide focus on reading and writing.

> There is more talk about remediation…there are new vehicles by which to
> remediate and accelerate. The after-school program has played a powerful role –
> the program has gone from a 'latchkey' program to an academic based program
> that feeds into students interests…The focus on reading and writing in all content
> areas has helped build camaraderie and eliminate the isolation of disciplines.

As far as the school's approach to the educational programming that exists, Building

Administrator #1 states "…there is now the realization that we are collectively responsible for

student achievement." Building Administrator #2 did not make reference to any single program

and its affect but did say comment that "…the appearance of the school-wide initiatives is a change that has occurred, but the report card will be when the PSSA scores return." The Central Office representative sees the tremendous value in the concentrated efforts on professional development impacting the educational program. There is recognition for the programming; however, the concentration that the district and the school has relating to staff development has been the key.

> The continued efforts in professional development and the focus on student achievement have been the major influences on the educational program…more so than any individual program that has been implemented.

Table 4.42: Research Question #6

Unanimous Themes	Supported Themes	Individual Themes
	School-wide initiatives have helped foster a change	There is more talk about remediation
		After-school program has played a powerful role
		We are collectively responsible for student achievement
		Continued efforts in professional development
		PSSA results will serve as the report card

4.1.11.20. Survey Results – Educational Programming

Question #1 – How much influence on the school's culture has the implementation of School-wide initiatives played?

Question #2 – How have the curriculum changes impacted the school culture?

Question #3   –   How important has the implementation of technology resources been in the improved culture?

Each respondent was asked to complete a survey that contained the following instructions: Please check the most appropriate box for each of the following questions. The choices reflect your thoughts on whether it had a *strong influence, moderate influence,* or *no influence* on the improved culture over the past five years.

Strong influence was given a value of 3, moderate influence was given a value of 2, and no influence was given a value of 1. Averages ranging from 1.5 – 2.0 are considered to be of little to moderate influence, 2.1 – 2.5 are considered to be of moderate influence and averages of 2.6 and higher are considered to be a strong influence.   Administrator #3 refers to the Central Office representative.

Table 4.43:   Survey Results (Educational Programming)

Administrator #	1	2	3	Totals	Avg.
Question #1 (Results)	3	2	2	7	2.33
Question #2 (Results)	2	2	3	7	2.33
Question #3 (Results)	3	2	2	7	2.33
Total Section				Average	2.33

The survey results identify the influence of the educational programming as a moderate influence on the culture based on its 2.33 overall score. The 2.33 average is the lowest of all six change indicators in the survey. Of the 23 questions asked, only seven scored a "7" or lower in the total average with three of those coming in the category of *Educational Programming*. Each question had two administrators indicate a moderate influence while the other indicated a strong influence. The minimal discussion and depth of conversation around educational programming along with the section average from the survey lead the researcher to believe that it is not one of

the most influential pieces in the cultural transition puzzle. For complete survey results, refer to Table #4.45 (p. 142).

4.1.11.21. Ranking the Change Indicators

The rank order results for educational programming averaged a 3.7, which placed it fourth out of the six change indicators in the study. Two administrators placed it third while the other placed it fifth. The rank average placed it ahead of both *Accountability Measures* as well as the *Middle School Merger.* The triangulation of the three forms of data identify *Educational Programming* as having a moderate to strong influence, however, not among the top choices in the move away from the "default culture". For complete rank order data results, refer to Table # 4.47 (p. 146).

4.1.11.22. Research Question #7

What other factors were instrumental in improving the culture over the past five years?

Research question #7 did not receive nearly the response from the administrators as it did from the teachers in the study. Building Administrator #2 was the only one that commented on something other than the original research questions and their influence on the building culture. Building Administrator #2 ends the interview with stating "Just about everything as addressed in the prior discussions…One possible thing that stands out is that the nature of the young staff to be flexible and resilient. That along with the fact that the core group of teachers that have been here for years are willing to work with and mold the younger staff." The common thread posed in that discussion in relation to the teacher discussions was the strength and resiliency of the

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staff.   During the teacher portion of the study, that was identified as a unanimous theme and

references to staff continued to resonate throughout the supported and individual themes as well.

Table 4.44:   Survey Results (Teachers)

Point Values   <u>3</u> = Strong Influence <u>2</u> = Moderate Influence   <u>1</u> = No Influence

Change Indicator #1 – Staff Changes

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	2	2	2	3	2	2	13	2.17	2.13
2.	1	2	2	2	2	3	12	2.00	2.13
3.	2	3	2	2	2	2	13	2.17	2.13
4.	1	2	2	2	3	3	13	2.17	2.13
5.	1	2	2	3	2	3	13	2.17	2.13

Change Indicator #2 – Accountability Measures

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	1	2	3	1	2	3	12	2.00	2.25
2.	2	3	3	2	2	3	15	2.50	2.25
3.	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	2.00	2.25
4.	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	2.50	2.25

Change Indicator #3 - Renovations

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	1	1	3	3	3	3	14	2.33	2.42
2.	1	2	3	3	3	3	15	2.50	2.42
3.	2	2	3	3	2	3	15	2.50	2.42
4.	2	2	2	3	3	2	14	2.33	2.42

Change Indicator #4 – Middle School Merger

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	1	2	2	3	2	2	12	2.00	1.89
2.	1	1	2	3	2	3	12	2.00	1.89
3.	1	1	3	2	1	2	10	1.67	1.89

Change Indicator #5 – Leadership

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	1	3	3	3	3	3	16	2.67	2.71
2.	3	3	3	3	3	3	18	3.00	2.71
3.	2	3	3	3	3	3	17	2.83	2.71
4.	1	2	3	3	2	3	14	2.33	2.71

Change Indicator #6 – Educational Programming

Question #	Teacher #1	Teacher #2	Teacher #3	Teacher #4	Teacher #5	Teacher #6	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	2	2	3	1	2	1	11	1.83	2.17
2.	1	2	3	2	3	2	13	2.17	2.17
3.	1	3	3	3	3	2	15	2.50	2.17

Table 4.45: Survey Results (Administrators)

Point Values   3 = Strong Influence 2 = Moderate Influence   1 = No Influence

Change Indicator #1 – Staff Changes

Question #	Building Administrator #1	Building Administrator #2	Central Office	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.67
2.	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.67
3.	2	2	3	7	2.33	2.67
4.	3	2	3	8	2.67	2.67
5.	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.67

Change Indicator #2 – Accountability Measures

Question #	Building Administrator #1	Building Administrator #2	Central Office	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.58
2.	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.58
3.	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.58
4.	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.58

Change Indicator #3 - Renovations

Question #	Building Administrator #1	Building Administrator #2	Central Office	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.83
2.	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.83
3.	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.83
4.	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.83

Change Indicator #4 – Middle School Merger

Question #	Building Administrator #1	Building Administrator #2	Central Office	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	2	2	2	6	2.00	2.44
2.	2	3	3	8	2.67	2.44
3.	3	3	2	8	2.67	2.44

Change Indicator #5 - Leadership

Question #	Building Administrator #1	Building Administrator #2	Central Office	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.91
2.	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.91
3.	3	3	3	9	3.00	2.91
4.	3	2	3	8	2.67	2.91

Change Indicator #6 – Educational Programming

Question #	Building Administrator #1	Building Administrator #2	Central Office	Totals	Avg.	Section Avg.
1.	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.33
2.	2	2	3	7	2.33	2.33
3.	3	2	2	7	2.33	2.33

Table # 4.46: Rank Order Results (Teachers)

Rank the six change indicators from 1 – 6 (1 being most influential, 6 being least influential).

TEACHER #1

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Leadership
2	Renovations
3	Staff Changes
4	Educational Programming
5	Accountability Measures
6	Middle School Merger

TEACHER #2

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Leadership
2	Educational Programming
3	Accountability Measures
4	Staff Changes
5	Middle School Merger
6	Renovations

TEACHER #3

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Renovations
2	Middle School Merger
3	Leadership
4	Educational Programming
5	Accountability Measures
6	Staff Changes

TEACHER #4

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Middle School Merger
2	Educational Programming
3	Accountability Measures
4	Leadership
5	Staff Changes
6	Renovations

TEACHER #5

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Renovations
2	Leadership
3	Staff Changes
4	Middle School Merger
5	Educational Programming
6	Accountability Measures

TEACHER #6

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Leadership
2	Renovations
3	Educational Programming
4	Middle School Merger
5	Staff Changes
6	Accountability Measures

RANK ORDER TOTALS

Change Indicator	Rank	Rank Average
Leadership	1	2.00
Renovations	2	3.00
Educational Programming	3	3.33
Middle School Merger	4	3.67
Staff Changes	5	4.30
Accountability Measures	6	4.67

Table 4.47: Rank Order Results (Administrators)

Rank the six change indicators from 1 – 6 (1 being most influential, 6 being least influential).

BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR #1

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Renovations
2	Accountability Measures
3	Educational Programming
4	Leadership
5	Staffing Changes
6	Middle School Merger

BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR #2

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Leadership
2	Renovations
3	Staff Changes
4	Accountability Measures
5	Educational Programming
6	Middle School Merger

CENTRAL OFFICE

Rank Order	Change Indicator
1	Leadership
2	Staff Changes
3	Educational Programming
4	Renovations
5	Middle School Merger
6	Accountability Measures

RANK ORDER TOTALS

Change Indicator	Rank	Rank Average
Leadership	1	2.00
Renovations	2	2.33
Staff Changes	3	2.67
Educational Programming	4	3.67
Accountability Measures	5	4.00
Middle School Merger	6	5.67

4.1.13. Summary

This chapter outlines how the teacher and administrator interviewees in the study demonstrate their beliefs in the cultural change that has taken place in the Founders' Hall Middle School (previously known as North Hall). There is recognition by all of the interviewees that several changes have been influential in the change and that change for the better has occurred and is still occurring. Qualitative inquiry via the interviews combined with quantitative support (survey and rank order) form a triangulation of data that identifies those changes out of the six in the study that have had the most direct impact on moving the culture forward.

The responsive interview process with the flexible questioning design led tremendous discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. The data collected provided the

researcher with an undeniable validation of the school's movement away from the "default culture" that once existed. Within virtually every interview conducted was a sense that each of the six change indicators discussed had a positive impact on the culture of Founders' Hall. Based on the interview data given, a survey was created to further explore each change indicator to help truly discover those indicators that were considered most influential in the change. The interview data along with the survey data began to create a clearer picture of the staff and administration's perception of the changes in the culture. The third form of data, the ranking of the change indicators, further pinpointed the change indicators that had the most impact on moving the culture forward.

The background questions comparing the two school years (1999-2000 and 2004-2005) solicited a variety of descriptive adjectives for both years. The 1999-2000 school year, the baseline year of the study, was described as "horrid", "relatively chaotic", "very rough", "stressful", "very poor", a "disaster" and "close to anarchy". The 2004-2005 school year descriptors were completely different and included such comments as "fantastic", "180 degrees different", "overall better feeling", "much better", an "extended family" and even "I have died and gone to heaven". The premise of the study was to identify the changes that have helped to improve the culture in the building. Background Questions #'s 1 and 2 provided solid evidence that this building was in the midst of a positive change and the culture was moving into a more productive realm and away from the "default culture".

Two change indicators were identified from the triangulation of data as having the largest influence on the culture – the building Leadership and the Renovation process. Leadership was the top chosen indicator in all three analyses of the data while the Renovation process was the second choice in all three analyses of the data. The data in the study validates the overwhelming

research depicting the leadership as the most important piece of the educational (and corporate) change puzzle. The renovation process, although on the surface appearing to simply be a physical change, offered the professional staff hope that they would finally escape the stigma that went along with the building they inhabited for years. The most surprising of all of the indicators was the overall outlook on the accountability processes that have been at the forefront of education in recent years. It was theorized at the outset of the study that the pressures and implications of the accountability at the national, state and local levels would become one of the major influences opening the door for change. The participants in this study collectively have the accountability measures near the bottom of the six indicators. The inquiry data depicts its importance and influence on the change processes. The supplemental data reflects it as one of the least important indicators to the professional staff as the culture of Founders' Hall moved away from the default culture that existed for many years. This example highlights the essential need for the triangulation of the data presented in this chapter. The interview process identified all six of the change indicators as having a positive influence on the cultural transformation. The informal atmosphere created by the interviewer solicited responses that reflected strong support for the influence of all six indicators. The survey data began to create a clearer picture of the results and the rank order data finally zeroed in on the two definitive choices as the most influential – leadership and the renovation process.

5. CHAPTER

5.1   Discussion, Recommendation And Reflection

5.1.1   Overview of the Research

The evidence is clear that although it is true that the principal is the gatekeeper in regard to the change effort, the ultimate outcome depends on when and how teachers become part of the decision to initiate change (Sarason, 1996, p. 5).

Initiating change can be a daunting task for any organization. Changing a culture is among the most difficult of all changes to undertake. A cultural change in most every instance becomes either a "second order" or "Type A" change as it challenges the foundation of what has always been or what has become comfortable to members of the organization. Marzano et. al. (2003, p. 7) describe second order changes as "a break with the past", "outside of existing paradigms", "conflicting with prevailing values and norms", "emergent" and "complex". First order changes, on the other hand, are described as "an extension of the past", "within existing paradigms", "consistent with prevailing values and norms", focused" and "bounded". Sarason (1996, p. 345) categorizes these changes as Type A or Type B changes. Type A changes are the more difficult to accomplish and are defined by Sarason as systemic. Type B changes, however, are occurring all of the time. Even though they are intended to change and inspire something, they do not necessarily change the school system itself. Even the most basic definition "the way things are

done around here" (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p. 268) fits into the description Marzano and Sarason provide when referring to a systemic change such as a cultural transformation. The research on change provided a wealth of examples from both the corporate world and the educational setting. The correlation between the two in relation to change and culture is astounding. Although the terminology is different, the means of getting to the desired end as well as the end result remain similar. "In the business world, culture stands out as a strong predictor of financial results" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p.5). Sarason (1999), Senge (1999) and Fullan (1998) are among the authors that link a culture that supports and encourages reform to successful teaching and learning. "Top businesses have developed a shared culture…The same must be true of our nation's schools" (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 11).

The six change indicators that drive the study have all been identified by the participants as having some measure of importance as the middle school moves away from the "default culture". The triangulation of data, however, shows that some indicators had a much stronger influence on the cultural transition than others. The research points heavily to leadership as the most integral part of initiating and sustaining any change. This study validates those claims made by the research by being the most influential of the change indicators through analysis of the interviewing data, the survey data and also the rank order data. Collins and Porras (1996, pp. 50-54) identify the "prescriptive framework" that helps move an organization forward. The Walt Disney Corporation, The Sony Corporation, 3M and Nike all have "core values" that have been established by their leadership that have been the driving force behind their initial and continued successes. Duck (1993, p. 56) identifies the power of creating a "critical balance" and empowering the informal leadership in the organization to help move the formal leadership's vision forward. Senge (1999, p. 22) speaks of the value of the formal leadership establishing

"learning organizations" that empower all members of the organization to understand and assist in moving forward.

> The internal change, however, of changing practices, views and strategies relies heavily on the leadership's capability to engage its organization in learning and building capacity for doing things in a new way (Senge, 1999, p. 10).

Martin (1996, p. 139) recognizes the importance of the leadership to "put themselves in their employees' shoes to understand how change looks from that perspective" as they attempt to move into a new direction. Fullan (1993, pp. 21-22) outlines what he refers to as eight basic lessons of the "new paradigm of change" that are crucial to a leader contemplating the implementation of successful change. This "blueprint" recognizes the impact that a leader has on an organization, whether it is positive or negative. Fullan (2001, p. 4) further discusses change and the importance of the leadership by identifying moral purpose, understanding change, relationship building, knowledge creativity and sharing, and coherence making combined with energy, enthusiasm and hope as imperative qualities. Collins (2001, p. 20) illustrates five levels of leadership that help define the potential success of an organization. The ultimate example of leadership is labeled as a "Level 5 Executive" that, simply put, are "modest and willful, humble and fearless". Many of the leaders identified in Collins' work can promote successful change. To successfully move or begin to move the culture of an organization, however, would most likely require the consistent efforts of either a Level 4 personality (Effective Leader) or the Level 5 Executive.

5.1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the transformation of a culture from what was considered a "default culture" to one of collaboration and academic achievement. The middle school selected for the study (Founders' Hall) has been in the midst of several changes over the

five year period from 1999-2005. By analyzing the six "change indicators" of *Staff Changes,*
Accountability Measures, Renovations, Middle School Merger, Leadership and *Educational*
Programming that have directly affected the school, the question "What change indicators are
identified as the most prominent in the transition made from the 'default culture' to one that
works collaboratively toward student achievement?" can be answered.

5.1.3 Overview of the Methodology and Procedures

The semi-structured interview process known as the Responsive Interviewing Model (Rubin
and Rubin, 2005, p. 36) was used as the foundation for this study as it allowed for the basic
research questions to be addressed with a flexible questioning design to fit each individual
interview. The data collected from the naturalistic inquiry helped to form the clarifying
questions used in a survey developed for completion by each interviewee. The survey contained
23 questions representing each of the six change indicators in the study. The survey data was
then used in conjunction with the qualitative data to begin the formation of more solid
conclusions about the influence of each change indicator. The final piece to the data
triangulation puzzle was the rank order data completed by each interviewee at the conclusion of
the interview. Each respondent was asked to order the change indicators from most influential
(1) to least influential (6). All three forms of data were then merged to identify those indicators
that had the most impact on the cultural transformation.

Since the researcher was a supervisor of the teachers being interviewed, an unbiased
interviewer was carefully selected. The Co-Directors of the Western Pennsylvania Principal's
Academy along with the members of the researcher's dissertation committee confirmed Dr. Sari
McNamara as an appropriate choice. Dr. McNamara is a principal in the Fox Chapel Area
School District located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and was granted her doctoral degree in 2004

with her work *A Caring School Culture in a Standards Based Era*. Her expertise in school culture combined with several common elements in the research with this study made her a unanimously accepted choice of the committee. Several correspondences were exchanged along with a personal meeting in preparation for the interviews.

The six teachers chosen for the interviews were those remaining employees in the school who have been teaching over the length of the study (1999 – 2005). The consistent turnover in staff limited the choice of teaching participants to these six. The administrators chosen for the study fit similar criteria – the building administrators worked in their capacity throughout the length of the study while the central office representative maintained upper administrative positions during that same time. The teachers in the study had a collective total of 94 years of experience in education with seventy of those in the school of the study (Founders' Hall). The administrators interviewed in the study had a collective one hundred years experience in education with ninety of those years spent in the McKeesport Area School District.

Enthusiasm for the study was apparent with the interviewees as each of them expressed curiosity with how the others felt and were anxious to see what the results of the study would show. Teacher #1 expressed excitement about the process and proclaimed "I can't wait until the project is complete so that I can read the final analysis". Building Administrator #2 has spent 27 years in the district, remains a resident and has seen the changes in the building over the past five years.

> From my perspective this building has made a complete turnaround. We saw everything you can imagine five years ago and now we are organized and focused on student achievement. I am interested in seeing how the study depicts that various perspectives and what those results will show.

The experience, collegiality and sincerity on the part of the interviewer combined to create an atmosphere conducive to the free sharing of thoughts and concerns related to the inquiry. The

interviewer conducted the interviews based on Taylor and Bogdan's (1998) premise of empathizing and identifying with the people in the study in order to understand how the people see things by attempting to share the informants' symbolic world, their language and their perspective. The familiarity with the district as a previous employee of 25-years along with the educational experiences gave the interviewer a distinct advantage in understanding the symbolic world, identifying with their perspective and associating with their language and professional challenges. The researcher subscribed to the same premise when conducting the final three interviews of the administrative personnel.

The 30 to 60 minute interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by a stenographer who was present throughout the interview process. The interviewees for accuracy and clarification reviewed the transcribed interviews. Upon return of the data, the researcher was given permission to use the responses as data in the study. Each individual informant data for each research question was studied to identify key concepts. The key concepts were organized according to themes that emerged. The themes were categorized into three areas: *unanimous themes* – mentioned by all interviewees; *supported themes* – mentioned by two or more interviewees; and *individual themes* – mentioned by only one interviewee but considered important to the research topic (adapted from Del Greco, 2000). Following the analysis of the naturalistic inquiry, the survey data and rank order data were used together to both validate and pinpoint each participants' choices for final analysis.

5.1.4 Discussion

"Autonomy is the basis of educational practice…teaching in isolation, not in conjunction with what is going on elsewhere in the building" (Elmore, 2005). This is one of typical behaviors in an organization that is mired in the "default culture". Elmore maintains that professional

practice should be based on a set of agreed upon standards and practices that work to displace the default culture in existence today. Even with overwhelming research pointing to better practice, many educators still wish to stay in their comfort zone and do what they like to do. This study recognizes a building that has broken those walls of isolation down and continues to progress toward a true model of collaboration and effective teaching practice. All six of the change indicators in the study have had an impact on moving away from the defined "default culture". Before focusing on what was considered as the most influential change indicator, the interviewee responses for each research question are addressed and connected to the literature.

5.1.1.1. Addressing the First Research Question

How have the changes in staff played a role in the cultural change in the school?

> The good to great leaders (and companies) began the transformation by first getting the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and then figured out where to drive it (Collins, 2001, p. 63).

If the correct people are not in place within an organization, it is difficult to create the "culture of discipline" necessary to move that organization forward successfully. Several means of getting the right people in the right places were apparent for Founders' Hall over the past five years. Some people who had been unresponsive to the upcoming changes either retired or bid out of the building. These processes allowed for the hiring of people that were dedicated to carrying out the vision that the school was establishing. Those remaining did so by choice and began to see their role in moving forward as paramount in the process. Teacher #5 emphatically stated that the influx of the new staff has had a positive affect on moving the building forward. "Just by bringing fresh blood, fresh ideas…it doesn't give the rest of us a chance to get stale…" Teacher #2 maintains that they always seem more willing to come in and try new things…the

younger ones are more willing to collaborate…they have all seemed very receptive to being willing to work together." The Central Office representative sees the new people on the "bus" as "well prepared and having a sense of what they are doing…the newly hired staff are more in-tune to being willing to collaborate, use best-practice and engage students. The seasoned staff can be seen taking advantage of the energy, enthusiasm and skills of the younger staff."

The positive comments during inquiry analysis depict staff changes and its importance in the process of moving away from the default culture. The survey data ranks the staff changes fifth out of a possible six in importance among teachers and third out of six among the administrative representatives. The rank order data results are similar with the teaching staff viewing it fifth out of six in importance while the administrative representatives had it third out of the six. There are many strong comments made supporting the necessity of the staff changes and their influence on the cultural transformation. The supporting data, however, have it either in the middle of the pack or toward the bottom in terms of influence in the building's move away from the embedded default culture. The inherent challenges presented by a middle school may continue to result in staff changes as the years progress. One of the most positive indicators that the building is moving forward is the 2004 district data that identified no single individual in the building putting in for a voluntary transfer. Rather than bidding out, there were several individuals that requested movement into the middle school.

5.1.1.2. Addressing the Second Research Question

How Have the Accountability Measures Now Facing the Schools Played a Role in Changing the Culture?

> The role and use of content standards, high-stakes testing and accountability, adjustments in school days, weeks, and years, non-graded classrooms, home schooling, and school vouchers are for some educators, policymakers, and

parents, first order changes; they are appropriate responses to what these individuals see as problems with the schools (Marzano et. al., 2003, p. 8).

There are other educators, policymakers, and parents, however, that view these changes as dramatic and "undesirable breaks with the past, which conflict sharply with their prevailing values and norms". (Marzano et. al., 2003, p. 8) This difference in perspectives is noticed in the answers given by the interviewees relating to the accountability measures. Teacher #2 sees changes in instructional delivery that have occurred due to the high stakes accountability, which could be considered a second order change for many. "More stress…it just seems like everything is geared for that instead of teaching, which can be good and bad. There have been some good things that have come out of that, different techniques that we have used, different styles of teaching we have been using." Teacher #6 responded with a concern "Do we teach children and develop a love of learning in them, or do we teach children so that they meet and pass standards so that everything is wonderful in our school district and we are not placed on warning lists?" The building administrators and central office representative all concur that the accountability standards are excellent motivators and now put the focus on teaching students rather than material. A consensus theme arose, however, that everyone in one form or another had concerns about everything associated with the accountability. The inequities among districts, the availability of resources, and the AYP measures are among the concerns mentioned.

Whether viewed positively or negatively, it is obvious after analyzing the data from the inquiry that the accountability measures have had an influence on the culture within the building. The other two forms of data collected, however, put accountability either toward the middle or at the end of the pack relating to its influence on the culture over the past five years. The survey data ranked it fourth out of six change indicators as far as importance among the administrative representatives and third out of the six among the teachers. The rank order data among teachers

ranked it last in influence while the administrators had it fifth out of six. The accountability measures have played a role in assisting the change from the default culture; however, when compared to the other five indicators, that role is not viewed among the most important. This comes as a bit of a surprise to the researcher. As an educational leader who is very conscientious about the successes and failures of the educational program, it was almost an assumption that everyone in the organization would see the overwhelming influence that the accountability measures have had. This highlights Marzano et. al. and Sarason's caution that every change impacts each individual within an organization in a different manner.

5.1.1.3. Addressing the Third Research Question

What Role Did the Renovation Play in Helping Transform the School's Culture?

The renovation process would be considered by both Marzano et. al. (2003) and Sarason (1996) as "first order" or "Type B" changes. The changes brought about by the renovations "make things better for people with similar interests", but do not necessarily "require individuals or groups of stakeholders to learn new approaches or conflict with prevailing values and norms". (Marzano et. al., 2003, p. 7) The teaching staff sees the final product as well as the process of the renovations as having a major impact on the cultural state of the building.

Teacher #5 explains that the renovations were probably the key in transforming the culture. "When we got here five years ago, this building was a disaster…" "It did a lot for the staff" maintains Teacher #3. Teacher #2 points out the important fact that the "…kids from Cornell (elementary school that feeds the 7th and 8th grade building) always felt that they got the hand-me-downs…now they have a nice building." The renovation process helped to lift spirits over a lengthy period of time as the phasing of the project unveiled new areas of the building over a three year period. Building Administrator #1 refers to the uplifted spirits by commenting

"Everyone in the building finally felt that they were worthy…others can now look at us in a different light." Building Administrator #2 claims that it was not only the finished product that helped, but the entire process within itself. "Even while the renovations were taking place, as we moved into a completed area during the different stages, we began to see pieces of the puzzle and it was uplifting…this continued even more so during each completion phase." The Central Office representative echoes the sentiments that were evidences by the professional staff.

> It (renovation process) played a significant role in motivating the staff and making them feel more professional. For years, the people in the building felt insignificant to the rest of the district. Other buildings were in better condition and there were morale problems because of the existing conditions.

All forms of the collected data pointed to the importance of the renovation process in moving the culture forward. The inquiry data depicted the heart felt comments about the improvements in attitude and spirit as the renovation process unfolded over the years. A consistent pattern of importance was evident throughout analysis of the survey data as well as the rank order data. The teachers as well as the administrative representatives recognized the renovation process as the second most important or influential change indicator via analysis of the survey data. The rank order data also scored second highest for both the teachers and administrative representatives. This consistency from the triangulation of data identifies the renovation process as a vital ingredient in moving the culture from its "default" status. These results might help anyone contemplating renovations and their validity in helping to energize a staff and become an important part of creating the proper context for a cultural change. It is more than just a physical change…it appears to have been an emotional uplifting for many of the participants in this study.

5.1.1.4. Addressing the Fourth Research Question

What Role Did the Middle School Merger Play in Improving the School's Culture?

Senge (1999, p. 402) likens the merging of two organizations to "mating two elephants and hoping to produce a gazelle." In an organization that inherently has difficulty in adjusting its culture, merging two distinct cultures brings about an identity crisis. Senge (1999, pp. 403-404) provides a series of questions that are among the things to be considered when considering a merger:

- How will each subgroup's culture influence the new entity?
- What values will the new entity respect?
- What values are worthy of respect in each of the existing partners?
- Which subgroup's culture will dominate?
- Who will determine the decisions to be made?
- Will one culture automatically take precedence, or will we forge a new one?
- What is the destiny of the new organization?
- Who participates in that vision?
- How will we get there?

The middle school merger was quite a concern for the community as well as the professional staffs within the two schools. The Francis McClure building had a free and reduced lunch rate of 47% compared to a 73% free and reduced rate at North Hall. Francis McClure was a suburban intermediate program while North Hall enrolled students primarily from the city of McKeesport. The residents of the Francis McClure communities were very happy with their schools and did not wish to see their children combined with those from the other communities until their high school years. The process was met with a considerable amount of resistance, however, was slated to move all of the district 7th and 8th grade students into the newly renovated building beginning with the 2004-2005 school year.

A difference of opinions was evident when this research question was posed. Teacher #1 reported that "I don't know that it improved it (culture) at all…I don't see that as being the part

that brought the improvement along." Teacher #2 states "I don't see that it did (improve the culture)…I don't think it made it worse, either." Teacher #4 responds in similar fashion to Teachers #1 and 2 by stating "I'm not really sure…there is nothing negative about it…but I don't know if it was, you know…I don't know if it was one of the reasons." Teachers #3, #5, and #6 refer to some positive actions that came from the merger. Teacher #3 sees the merger as a wonderful new beginning. "I think it gave everybody a chance to start over." Teacher #5 has struggled with the school's identity over the past five years as a building that housed half of the district's 7thand8th grade students. "It improved it (culture) by finally giving us an identity…so we had a sense of self, a sense of being after that." Teacher #6 uses a common reference to make the claim of a positive impact by stating "…we are almost like a Phoenix…and it just seems like most of the bad things have gone away and there is nothing but good coming out of everything." Building Administrator #2 believed that "…the staff seemed excited about a new beginning and a new challenge…most of the people prepared for what they wanted to see out of the new building." The Central Office representative believed that this was the perfect time to look to building a more positive culture than what had existed for years.

The inquiry data did not provide a clear cut picture as to whether the merger process had a major impact on the cultural transformation. Some comments provided insight into the positive aspects of the merger while others were indifferent to the process completely. The survey results for the teaching staff had the middle school merger rated as the lowest out of the six change indicators relating to influence on the culture while the administrative representatives rated the merger fifth out of a possible six. The rank order data for the teachers had the middle school merger ranked fourth out of a possible six change indicators while the administrative staff had it ranked in the sixth and lowest position. The combination of the inquiry data, survey data and the

rank order data provide glimpses that the merger had a potential impact on the move away from the default culture, however, not strongly considered among the top choices. The new staff along with the renovations that occurred due to the merger has provided a better climate than previously existed. The merger itself appears, however, to not have had the build-up of excitement among the staff and was not considered a major impact in the cultural transformation.

5.1.1.5.   Addressing the Fifth Research Question

How has the Leadership Played a Role in Changing the Dynamics of the School's Culture?

   "The effective leader understands both the order of change they are leading and how to select and skillfully use appropriate leadership practices" (Marzano et. al., 2003, p. 8). No matter how difficult the change may be, the leader is the driving force behind whether or not it is successful. The wrong person in the wrong position at the wrong time can thwart any kind of organizational advance. Collins (2001, p. 20) identifies five levels of leadership that are all capable of leading change. The more advanced the level, however, the better the chance that the change will be successful and endure. Those levels of leadership according to Collins are as follows:

LEVEL 5   **Executive**--Builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will

LEVEL 4   **Effective Leader**--Catalyzes commitment to and vigorous pursuit of a clear and compelling vision, stimulating higher performance standards

LEVEL 3   **Competent Manager**--Organizes people and resources toward the effective and efficient pursuit of predetermined objectives

LEVEL 2   **Contributing Team Member**-- Contributes individual capabilities to the achievement of group objectives and works effectively with others in a group setting

LEVEL 1   **Highly Capable Individual**--Makes productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills, and good work habits

A cultural change is among the most difficult changes for any organization. The likelihood of undertaking and sustaining a cultural change is minimal. Those leaders most likely to achieve such a task are Level 5 leaders because they "channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It's not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious – but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves." (Collins, 2001, p. 21)

A cultural change is likely a second order or Type A change for any organization. Second order and Type A changes can "confront group identities, change working relationships, and challenge expertise and competencies" (Marzano et. al., 2003, p. 8). Each of these conditions are complex and can become disastrous in any educational atmosphere. Times exist, however, that call for a challenge to the status quo and the leader must know when those time are and how to go about implementing the change effort. Fullan (2001, p. 11) recognizes that changing a culture is a tall task for anyone willing to take on the challenge. He offers a framework for leaders to consider if they wish to be successful in such a change effort:

> Leaders will increase their effectiveness if they continually work on these five components of leadership – if they pursue moral purpose, understand the change process, develop relationships, foster knowledge building,   and   strive   for coherence – with energy, enthusiasm, and hopefulness. If leaders do so, the rewards and benefits will be enormous. It is an exciting proposition. The culture of change beckons.

The leadership in the building has gone through significant changes over the past five years. The first year with the seventh and eighth grade students (1999 – 2000) and there was a principal and a dean of students. Later that year an additional dean of students was to added to help address the severe discipline problems that were apparent in the building. During the 2003-2004 school year an additional administrator was added, bringing the total in the building to four. During the first year of the merger (2004-2005) a fifth administrator was available every other

day to help bring familiarity to the students coming down from the other middle school. The increased number of administrators has been an obvious bonus to the building. Also available within the leadership team were a variety of skills and complementary abilities and that enabled the focus to move away from discipline to classroom instruction and student achievement.

When referencing the building leadership Teacher #5 maintains that "The leadership we have in this building is pound for pound the best you are ever going to find. It gives you the support you need to be as creative as you can be, to take risks…they are not dictators, they don't micromanage…they find people's strengths and let them go with it." Teacher #3 adds "…now I think we have more specific focuses, let's say, or things to focus on. So, it's not a secret to us. This is what we need you to know how to do. So, we are all in it together. You know, that's how I always imagined a school to be and didn't always have one to work in that way." Building Administrator #1 sees the additional administrators as a tremendous plus as it is stated "…adding additional administrators and allowing everyone to focus on their strengths has allowed for the provision of a more distinct building focus." Building Administrator #2 added that "The focus has entirely changed from discipline to student achievement and the betterment of instruction…it's all on the leadership." Building Administrator #2 later states that "The quality of the leadership has improved. The first four years, all meetings were informational and contained 'complaint sessions'. All meetings now are positive and academic oriented." The Central Office representative maintains that "…the strengths of the administrative team have been complementary and have helped in moving the educational program forward…there have also been additional administrators in the building that has helped to create a lower student-administrator ratio to help keep a strong connection with the students."

The review of the inquiry data clearly provides a wealth of positive feedback relating to the building leadership. Even more interesting are the supplemental forms of data – the survey and the rank order data. In each case Leadership is rated the top reason for the building's move away from the default culture. The survey results for both the teachers and administrators have leadership rated number one in importance or influence on moving the culture forward. The rank order data puts leadership in the top spot for both teachers and administrators as well. Just as the research overwhelmingly points to leadership as the major factor in implementing successful change and promoting a positive and productive culture, so to does this study point to leadership as the number one reason for the cultural transformation. As a practicing administrator and lifelong student of educational leadership, this study serves as a validation of the years of study and discourse pointing the importance of leadership in the improvement and success of an educational organization.

5.1.1.6. Addressing the Sixth Research Question

What Role have the Changes in the Educational Program Played in the Cultural Transition?

"Change for the sake of change" (Fullan, 1991) has become commonplace at times in history when referring to education. In the *Adoption* era of the 1960's, the more innovations that became part of the educational arena, the better. Large-scale innovations, inquiry-oriented instruction, student-centered instruction and individualized instruction all became the order of the day. The overwhelming response to adopting innovation without a vision for sustaining its success led to the *Implementation Failure* era of the 1970's. Researchers during this time period consistently wrote of the lack of successes of the changes, thus referring to it as a failure. The undertaking of a change is to effectively "replace existing structures, programs, and / or practices

with better ones" (Fullan, 1991, p.15). Change for the sake of change, as was the practice during the 1960's and into the 1970's does not help.

The "failure" of educational change is related to the fact that many reforms were never fully implemented in practice; "i.e. real change was never accomplished" (Fullan, 1991, p. 15). This is an example of what clouds the educational field with "*change survivors*". Duck (1993, p. 15) defines the *change survivors* as "cynical people who've learned to live through change programs without really changing at all. Their reaction is the opposite of commitment." Duck (1993, p. 70) further points out that "trust in a time of change is based on two things – predictability and capability".

The participants in the inquiry portion of the study speak favorably to the changes in the educational program and their role in improving the school's culture. Teacher #4 believes that the efforts in keeping everybody "on the same page" have been a tremendous improvement. "There are things we are doing now that we weren't doing in the past…The fact that everyone is following the same curriculum…we finally have that." Also commenting on the curriculum changes was Teacher #5. "It (curriculum changes) has actually been a benefit. Because for so long, we were always on different pages…after umpteen years, we are finally getting standardization."   Teacher #1 refers to the overall involvement of the staff to work collaboratively to meet the building goals has been a tremendous stride forward. "This year, with everything that's been happening, the fact that ideas are being taken from everybody and looked at and put into practice, just the total involvement or the ability to be involved, there are more people doing things…In relation to the educational programs, those people who don't want to be on board are being overstepped by those people that are." Teacher #6 plainly states "You know, we are meeting standards, but we are also meeting student interests, where, gee, this is

cool." Building Administrator #1 reflects on the fact that teachers are moving away from isolation based on the educational program being implemented. "The focus on reading and writing in all content areas has helped build camaraderie and eliminate the isolation of disciplines." The Central Office representative sees the tremendous value in the concentrated efforts on professional development impacting the educational program.

> The continued efforts in professional development and the focus on student achievement have been the major influences on the educational program…more so than any individual program that has been implemented.

Although there were several positive comments relating to the educational program mentioned throughout the inquiry, no unanimous themes were evident in either the teacher or the administrator analysis. The survey data for the teachers ranked educational programming fourth out of a possible six change indicators while the administrators ranked it sixth out of six, making it one of the least influential change indicators to both groups queried. The rank order data places educational programming at the middle of the pack for both groups – third out of six for the teachers and fourth out of six for the administrators. The triangulation of the data for educational programming maintains that it had a positive affect on the cultural movement, but was not considered among the top choices.

Changing an educational program as well as changing an organization's culture is complex. There must be a dedication to the program and a willingness to be patient and implement in increments that optimize the chances for success. There must be a leadership that is willing to afford the resources to sustain the programming. Continuous training and staff development should accompany any programming that is going to have a long-lasting affect on improving student achievement. When the school has an intense focus and programs have begun to make an impact, the more likely a culture of collaboration and student achievement can evolve.

5.1.1.7. Addressing the Seventh Research Question

What Other Factors were Instrumental in Improving the Culture Over the Past Five Years?

A unanimous theme emerged when the seventh research question was asked of the teacher representatives in the study. The togetherness and overall strength of the staff were referred to by all six of the teachers queried. Teacher #5 quickly responded to the question by stating

> I think the strength of the staff, especially those of us who stayed behind. We came in at such a bad situation that first year and the dead wood fell away. It either left the district or went to another building. And the rest of us just stepped up to the challenge.

Teacher #6 responded "We have the staff of course…we have the children excited to be here." Teacher #1 identified the adaptability of the core staff and those that have been coming aboard through recent hires. The core staff is "kind of like cockroaches…we adapt to everything…I think this staff is the best staff in the district because we are imaginative." Teacher #2 states

> I feel that if the teachers in the building get along and work together, the culture within your building is much better because the students can sense that…the attitudes of your teachers and your administrators, if it's a positive one, I think it's very beneficial to the kids. If I come in negative every day, so are my kids going to be negative.

Teacher #3 points to the inherent difficulties with the middle school aged child and how the professional staff working as a cohesive unit is nearly a must. "You know, middle school is middle school. You are going to have your problems…but the togetherness of the staff helps accomplish its goals." Building Administrator #2 was the only one of the administrative staff that commented on the seventh research question with any substance.

> Just about everything was addressed in the prior questions and discussion…One possible thing that stands out is the nature of the young staff to be flexible and resilient. That along with the fact that the core group of teachers that have been here for years are willing to work with and mold the younger staff.

Research question number seven was added to the list to solicit any further change indicators that may have been inadvertently left out. The responses validated that the major changes underway were those that had the most influence or impact on moving the building away from the default culture had been embedded for years. The qualities of the staff as strong, together and resilient undoubtedly assist an organization looking to change, however it cannot be quantified as a change indicator within itself.

5.1.5 Conclusions and Implications

"People who try to change organizations often run up against attitudes that seem unchangeable." (Senge, 1999, p. 334) This is exactly why changing an organization's culture is a process requiring patience and persistence. Changing a culture is a process that can take several years. Senge (1999, pp. 334-335) maintains the following:

> You cannot create a new culture. You can immerse yourself in studying a culture (your own, or someone else's) until you understand it. Then you can propose new values, introduce new ways of doing things, and articulate new governing ideas. Over time, these actions will set the stage for new behavior. If people who adopt the new behavior feel that it helps them do better, they may try it again, and after many trials, taking as long as five or 10 years, the organizational culture may embody a different set of assumptions, and a different way of looking at things, than it did before. Even then, you haven't changed the culture; you've set the stage for the culture to evolve.

Senge's description of a cultural evolution fits the process that is underway at the Founders' Hall middle school. A different set of assumptions has been established and the organization is looking at things differently than it has in the past. Although the cultural transformation is not complete and has not had withstood the test of time, it has been validated as a process underway.

"Top businesses have developed a shared culture…The same must be true of our nation's schools." (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 11) The main focus in the school has turned to student

achievement and the vehicle for reaching the goals set forth has been a strong professional

development component. Joyce (1990, p. xv) maintains that

> the future culture of the school will be fashioned largely by how staff
> development systems evolve…whether better-designed curriculums will be
> implemented, the promise of new technologies realized, or visions of genuine
> teaching profession take form, all depend to a large extent on the strength of the
> growing staff development programs, and especially whether they become true
> human resource development systems.

A true staff development program challenges the traditional "cultural script" (Stigler &

Hiebert, 1999, p. 101) and builds the capacity of staff members to create a new and more

effective script. The dedication to changing the cultural script and assisting the professional staff

along a continuum of learning comes from the leadership within the organization, the change

indicator unanimously recognized by the participants in the study as the most influential.

The approach of the leadership team over the five years of the study appears to have had a

profound affect on the culture of the building. To move forward from the descriptions of the

teachers such as "chaotic", "disaster", and "horrid" required a building of trust and community

rather than the institution of strict policy or placing of blame. Major changes were necessary. It

was essential, however, to first build a foundation supportive of change. This process is

validated by the 1999 work of Palestini titled *Educational Administration – Leading with Mind*

and Heart.

> Another assumption that is generally held by administrators is that if dramatic
> changes are not made during the first year of one's tenure, the so-called
> honeymoon period, changes may never be made. Once again, I challenge this
> assumption. I believe that change is far more effective when it is made in a
> culture of trust and of participation (Palestini, 1999, p. xii).

Palestini is among many authors that subscribe to the theory that leadership is the key element

in the success of an organization. "Leadership is offered as a solution for most of the problems

of organizations everywhere. Schools will work, we are told, if principals provide strong

instructional leadership." (Palestini, 1999, p. 37)   Palestini maintains that there are seven "principles of effective leadership" that can help move an organization into a realm of productivity.   The use of Palestini's principles of effective leadership along with inquiry and relevant building data are used in the following descriptions to help identify how the building was able to undertake change from its existing "default culture".   Palestini's "principles" combined with the subsequent data can serve to assist leaders as they undertake the daunting task of transforming a culture or simply making a positive and sustainable contribution to their school or organization.

Principle #1—Must be keenly aware of the organizational structure and culture of school.

> One of the administrator's first steps in effectively leading a school toward fulfilling its potential is to 'know the territory' (Palestini, 1999, p.30).

To move away from a "default culture" it is paramount that the leadership understand what the culture is, what it has been and the best areas to intervene and move the organization forward. The years of experience in the district as well as within the school itself have given the administrative team an in-depth understanding of practically every aspect of the organization. The building principal was a teacher of 22 years in the district and an administrator for six years (five in the building). The associate principal was a teacher for seven years in the district and five years in the building. The assistant principal, who joined the administrative team during the 2003-2004 school year, was working as a teacher in the district for 26 years before taking a leadership position. The dean of students worked in the district for 15 years as an assistant attendance officer, two years as an attendance officer, five years as an administrative assistant and five years as a dean of students. The building principal, assistant principal and dean of students have held lifelong residencies in the community as well. The building leadership

understands the organizational structure from a multitude of perspectives and has been immersed in the culture of the community, district and school for a number of years. The administrative team collectively determined that changes were necessary to move out of "survival mode" and that the opportunity to do so was presenting itself. When the changes identified as the *change indicators* for the study started to become realities, the team began to game plan for moving the culture into a collaborative and student achievement oriented one. The team adhered to the philosophy that the change was not going to occur overnight.

Collins (2001, p. 186) maintains that

No matter how dramatic the end result, the good-to-great transformations never happened in one fell swoop. There was no single defining action, no grand program, no one killer innovation, no solitary lucky break, no miracle moment.

Principle #2— Must be able to engender a sense of trust in the faculty and staff

Trust is the beginning of effectiveness and forms the foundation of a principle-centered learning environment that places emphasis upon strengths and devises innovative methods to minimize weaknesses (Palestini, 1999, p. 265).

The inquiry data reflected comments that either directly identify trust or refer to it as a solid ingredient in the initial successes in the cultural transformation of the school. Teacher #5 comments

I know what goes on in other buildings in the school district, and I know what goes on in other districts. They (leadership) are not do as I say. They lead by example. They are always willing to come to you to say, hey, we have this idea, what do you think? There is a trust between staff and administration that has strengthened this building…I know I can say whatever I need to say and can disagree with them, and that doesn't change our relationship.

Teacher #4 does not directly use the word trust, but refers to the relationship between the staff and administration as a "family". "I would like to say a family…maybe we can call it an extended family". Teacher #3 offers a scenario that describes the trust and respect that has been established in the building.

Again, it goes back to that we appreciate you kind of thing, because I don't see…I don't see our administration micromanaging or thought that, well, we are the ones sitting here and you do what we say. The need us to help implement a lot of their ideas and vice versa. So, we are all in it together.

Principle #3—Need to continuously improve the school program and, therefore, must be able to be agents for change

Individuals must disengage from and dis-identify with the past, as well as view change as a way of dealing with their disenchantments with the past or the status quo (Palestini, 1999, p. 54).

The inquiry data clearly displays the satisfaction and dedication of the teaching staff to the improvement of the program. Teacher #1 mentions the leadership's willingness to include the remainder of the professional staff in the change process which has an affect on the entire building's attitude toward organizational improvement.

…with everything that's been happening, the fact that ideas are being taken from everybody and looked at and put into practice, just the total involvement or the ability to be involved, there are more people doing more things…I think there is an ownership that comes into play when you have things like that…those people who don't want to be on board are being overstepped by those who are are.

Teacher #6 refers to the improvements to the school program by stating '…we are almost like a Phoenix…it just seems like most of the bad things have gone away and there is nothing but good coming out of everything'. Teacher #6 further explains the leadership's efforts to improve the school program by adding

…our administration is at the forefront in trying to come up with new ideas, new strategies, new processes that will help the kids learn, be successful, in addition to meeting our requirements as far as with the tests.

Palestini (1999, p. 54) makes the case for transformational leadership that embodies the qualities evident in the inquiry data when he states "The leader helps subordinates recognize the need for revitalizing the organization by developing a felt need for change, overcoming resistance to change, and avoiding quick-fix solutions to problems".

Principle #4—Need to be able to adapt his or her leadership style to the situation

> Current thought is that there is no one best style. Rather, a combination of styles depending on the situation the leader finds himself or herself in has been found to be more appropriate (Palestini, 1999, p. 38).

The leadership style at the beginning of the study (1999-2000) in the building could be considered managerial. The traditional tasks of creating the schedule, managing the budget and handling the daily operations of the school were the focus. As the administrative team expanded and the demands of education changed, the role of the educational leader began to take over. The accountability standards now in place along with the other 'change indicators' provided the landscape for an adaptation for the entire leadership team. There is now an understanding that the managerial tasks will be completed, however, the goal first and foremost is the improvement of student achievement. This change in leadership was recognized by the Central Office Representative when it was stated

> The energies of the administrative staff were drained trying to deal with behavioral concerns combined with a professional staff that was minus leadership in programs, staff development, and the implementation of proven strategies…The focus of the staff has not turned to student achievement. The teachers are opening up and sharing best practice…Behavioral concerns are declining.

The merger process combined two schools that were headed in different directions. One was bogged down in discipline problems while the other one was consistently achieving at a high rate. 'The pressures on the existing staff were great from the community based on the increased expectations' proclaimed the Central Office representative. This situation called for an adaptation to the original building's educational plan. The district was wise to not only place additional administrators in the building, but to add those with qualities that would complement the other administrators. As Building Administrator #1 stated 'The culture has changed by adding additional administrators and allowing everyone to focus on their strengths.'

Principle #5—Need to be well-organized, creative and have a clearly articulated educational vision

> A transformational leader changes an organization by recognizing an opportunity and developing a vision, communicating that vision to organizational members, building trust in the vision, and achieving the vision by motivating organizational members (Palestini, 1999, p.54.)

One of the major components of the educational vision in Founders' Hall is the move away from teaching in isolation and becoming a more collaborative and sharing staff. To accomplish this feat, several goals were established including the creation of building wide foci, the restructuring of faculty meetings and the sharing and collective study of best-practice. Teacher #3 maintains that

> . . . there has always been a focus on student achievement, but "now we have more specific focuses, let's say, or things to focus on. So, it's not a secret to them or to us. This is what we need you to know how to do. An when you nail that down and everybody is working towards the same thing, I think eventually you will accomplish that.

The Central Office representative also recognizes the efforts to move to a more collaborative environment. "The focus of the staff has turned to student achievement. The teachers are opening up and sharing best practice…There is continuous professional development within the building and it has been effective." Teacher #1 identifies changes in the format of the faculty meetings and maintains that

> Our faculty meetings consist of educational opportunities. It's not we sit down and bitch and moan about everything that's going wrong. We are looking at the positive and not the negative and focusing on the positive and not the negative.

Building Administrator #3 adds to the notion of improved faculty meetings by maintaining that "All meetings now are positive and academic oriented. The focus has entirely changed from discipline to student achievement and the betterment of instruction…"

Principle #6— Must be able to communicate effectively

> Often times, the greatest perceived communications gap' is between the faculty and the administration. If an administrator is to be effective, then he or she must master the skill of effective communication (Palestini, 1999, p. 92).

The responses displayed in the inquiry data do not directly state any references to the quality of communication between the administration and staff. Many parts of the discussions, however, relate to the effective communication and how it has impacted the organization in a positive fashion. Teacher #6's description implies that the building leadership and the staff have an understanding that resonates throughout the organization to help productivity. '

> …we are all encouraged at any time to look for something, to share our ideas, to take them to any of the administrators. When we have problems or concerns with students or parents, you know, even other staff members, the administration is there for us. They are willing to help us work through it, help us come up with ideas to make things work.

Teacher #3 identifies the complementary abilities of the leadership team and how it benefits the professional staff. There are clearly defined roles by each of the administrators that helps open the doors of communication and assist the teachers as they look for answers to their questions.

> …you know who to go to with what problem, or if it's a question, things of that nature, because you know who is better at answering or who has the information…all of them are receptive to ideas. All of them are very receptive to suggestions and things of that nature…we appreciate that kind of thing.

Building Administrator #1 believes that the upbeat and collaborative atmosphere has opened up the lines of communication and willingness to share. '…there is the 'all in it together' attitude. The entire building has rallied together.'

Principle #7—Must know how to motivate his or her faculty and staff and be able to manage the conflicts that arise

> The next step in preparing oneself to be an effective administrator is to adopt an approach to motivate one's colleagues to attain the educational vision that has been jointly developed (Palestini, 1999, p. 64).

One of Palestini's previous mentioned principles was the tact of the leadership to adapt their style to fit any situation. With a core veteran staff desperate for a positive direction and a young staff eager to fit into the organization and find their roles, the motivation tactic of leading by example seemed an appropriate beginning. The contract did not allow for financial rewards, therefore intrinsic motivation and empowerment became the major methods of motivating the staff. The impact of the administrative team's work ethic is apparent in Teacher #3's description of how that mentality has trickled down. 'They (leadership) would really have to get the credit for getting us together and solving a lot of these problems and making the effort. And, you know, anyone that knows them knows they are anything but lazy. And so, that always puts a lot of positive influence on us too. You mean, if they are willing to work that hard, then why aren't the rest of us? It's easy to just kind of catch on…it filters through.' Similar to this notion is the recognition of Teacher #1 that the administration team is "just as human and feel the same frustrations" as the professional staff. Teacher #6 sees the administration's dedication to professional development and willingness to provide staff members with the opportunity to attend productive conferences as a motivating factor.

> …when you get to go to conferences, you get to talk with other people and you find that your big problem is someone else's minor inconvenience. And it makes you appreciate what you have and sometimes what you don't have so that you can wish for something. But it's nice because you get to see what's going on…they (staff members) have brought back their experiences and have helped to enthuse, or we have exchanged certain things. It's been very positive.

Each of the six change indicators that shaped the study has had a profound affect on the culture of Founders' Hall Middle School. The data, however, clearly show that the indicator with the most influence on that change was leadership as it came out on top in each of the three forms of data collection. This study supports the overwhelming amount of research that presents leadership as the element in any organization that is likely to have the most impact. Several of Palestini's themes are validated by Collins (1999, p. 42) when describing a "good-to-great" leader and the profound affect they can have on an organization:

> The good-to-great leaders understood three simple truths. First, if you begin with 'who' rather than 'what', you can more easily adapt to a changing world. If people join the bus primarily because of where it is going, what happens if you get 10 miles down the road and you need to change direction? You've got a problem. But if people are on the bus because of who else is on the bus, then it's much easier to change direction: 'Hey, I go on this bus because of who else is on it; if we need to change direction to be more successful, fine with me.' Second, if you have the right people on the bus, the problem of how to motivate and manage people largely goes away. The right people don't need to be tightly managed or fired up; they will be self-motivated by the inner drive to produce the best results and to be part of creating something great. Third, if you have the wrong people, it doesn't matter whether you discover the right direction; you *still* won't have a great company. Great vision without great people is irrelevant.

Any existing or aspiring leader that comprises Palestini's "principles of effective leadership" is well on his or her way to good results. That same leader, however, can produce great results if they were to adhere to Collins' advice and look closely at the people within the organization and make appropriate changes.

The change indicator that came out in the "runner-up" position in all three data collections was the renovation process. The simple changing of a physical structure seems highly unlikely to have such an influence on a culture. This process, however, represented something of tremendous value to the interviewees and gave hope for a building and group of people that they felt had been neglected and forgotten about for years. The building always housed the most

challenging students in the district and always seemed neglected when it came to facilities, resources and overall respect. The teachers and students "always felt they had the crummy buildings and always got the hand-me-downs" according to Teacher #2. The Central Office representative also recognized this phenomenon and added the following comments:

> It (renovations) played a significant role in motivating the staff and making them feel more professional. For years, the people in the building felt insignificant to the rest of the district. Other buildings were in better condition and there were moral problems because of the existing conditions…The phasing of the construction led to a build-up of excitement throughout the process.

The renovation process was more than a physical improvement for the staff within the building. Each phase of the renovation generated excitement and hope for a group of people that have generally had nothing positive happening within their school. Although leadership clearly rose above the other indicators in influencing the cultural change, it is imperative to point out the profound impact that the renovation process had in helping the mindset for positive change.

5.1.2.   Summary

> Changing an educational institution or system has been described as being like making a U-turn with the Queen Elizabeth II. In some cases, resistance to change is so extreme that this is an understatement (Palestini, 1999, p. 155).

The Founders' Hall Middle School (formerly known as North Hall) was mired in the status quo for a multitude of years and making such an extreme change, a cultural change, began during the 1999-2000 school year. During the next five school years, the school had several influences, some internal and others external, that helped to shape the cultural changes that would occur. The thoughtful responses by all of the participants in this study helped provide a foundation for which of those influences, called change indicators, was most responsible for the transformation of that status quo, or "default culture", to one of collaboration and student achievement. This chapter has taken the indicator that was unanimously identified as the most influential,

leadership, and compared it with Palestini's "Principles of Effective Leadership" and provided

support from the inquiry data collected as well other pertinent building data. Although creating

or changing a new culture is among the most difficult of all organizational changes, the correct

leader can achieve success.

> I believe that it is possible to create a school culture that is hospitable to human
> learning if we invite students and adults to take risks with a safety net, engage in
> novel and surprising experiences, enjoy a sense of adventure and purposefulness,
> share leadership with others, pose and solve problems for themselves, find joy and
> freedom that comes with hard work, assume responsibility not only for their own
> lives, but for the lives of others (Barth, 2001, p. 51).

It is possible and it is underway based on the data collected in the study. This study along

with the research validates one of the chosen change indicators as the most influential factor –

leadership.

5.1.3.   Recommendations for Further Research

- Conduct a similar study using the same questions that includes support personnel, parents and community leaders that were involved in the school over the time frame of the study.

- Replicate the study five years from now and compare the results to help determine if the results remain consistent or if another change indicator is identified as most influential.

- Replicate this study in a school that has seen similar cultural advances to identify the indicators that proved most influential.

- Use quantitative measures to help identify the cultural improvements in the school (ex. attendance, discipline, grades, standardized test scores).

- Initiate a study that depicts the affects of the renovation process on the staff. This study identified that the process was more than simply a physical reconstruction. Can a renovation project for some schools be the springboard to improving a culture?

- Conduct a study in Founders' Hall that is specific to the indicator of leadership to further identify the contributions the leadership has made to the cultural advancement.

- Incorporate into the study an assessment (cultural survey) of students when they enter the building in 7th grade and again when they leave the building as 8th graders and use the two- year data to complement the other data and to add a valuable perspective.

5.1.4. Reflection

The administrative courses throughout the doctoral process continued to highlight the importance the culture of a building had on its productivity and student achievement. During the coursework and into the selection of the dissertation topic, I realized that I was working in a building that was in the midst of change and one of the outcomes of those changes was the foundation of a more productive culture. As a seven-year middle school teacher and five-year administrator I became quite familiar with the way things occurred within the middle school. It became more and more apparent that quite a bit of positive energy was building in the school and the focus of the entire staff and program was moving away from its day-to-day survival mode and into a realm of collaboration and the promotion of student achievement. Witnessing this process made me realize its power and usefulness to other schools or school leaders facing a similar situation and wanting to move their culture forward.

The intended purpose of this study was to identify which of the six identified change indicators had the most influence in moving away from the "default culture". With student achievement being a more pressing issue than ever based on the ever-growing accountability in education, the proper context (culture) to advance the production within the school is essential. As I progressed throughout each stage of the study, there were many valuable lessons learned including the following:

- The process of change has produced many monumental failures along with its many successes throughout the history of education as well as in the corporate world.

- I believed that education was an entity unlike no other. What I found out is that education can be very similar to any other organization and encounters the same pitfalls as they do. The research uncovers a multitude of considerations in the corporate world that mirror the considerations for people in the educational community.

- The process of change affects people within the same organization at several different levels. What is a minor change to someone may be a major change full of challenges and difficulties for someone else.

- I found out that the most difficult of all changes is undoubtedly changing an organization's culture. It requires a tremendous amount of patience and only occurs over a lengthy period of time with persistence and buy-in from a multitude of stakeholders.

- The outcomes of the study solidify my belief that the leadership in the organization has a profound impact on the building culture and productivity.

- The passionate responses reminded me of how powerful and personal the educational experience is for teachers and administrators alike.

- It appeared that each interview and discussion was "therapeutic" for each participant. A collaborative school model opens the doors for both personal and professional growth. When reviewing the responses, I realized how important it can be to create a team approach and truly form a learning community that is full of both personal and professional support.

- Each and every question can be interpreted differently and careful consideration must be put into their creation. Likewise, each and every interview is likely to take on its own direction and encouraging people to develop their own story makes for a rich and meaningful discussion.

- It is more likely that people in leadership positions view educational accountability as having more impact on an organization than do the teaching staff. Once a culture has been changed to reflect collaboration and student achievement, the more likely the teaching staff will recognize and understand the importance of accountability in each one of their own classrooms.

- A renovation process can be much more than simply a physical change. This study opened my eyes to the emotional uplift that many staff members witnessed during the phases of the construction.

The dissertation process has had a profound affect on both my personal and professional life. The challenges and subsequent acceptance of those challenges inherent in completing the dissertation have given me a measure of confidence and serenity that will endure throughout my lifetime. The opportunity to work closely with a group of teachers and administrators that display a strong sense of ownership and dedication to their organization and the improvement of it has given me great faith in the future of education. The sharing between me and the

participants in the study as well as colleagues in the field has afforded me a unique network that provides continued discussion on school improvement and the removal of barriers to organizational success. The professional stimulation from engaging in this process gives me great confidence as I continue in my educational leadership role. It is my hope that this study becomes a great resource for someone interested in looking to change the culture of their organization and provides a working framework for further research in the area.

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