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Positioning For Elementary School Success: Charting The Journey Of Adopting And Leading School Reform

Nancy Jo Burke

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POSITIONING FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SUCCESS:
CHARTING THE JOURNEY OF ADOPTING AND LEADING SCHOOL REFORM

by

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Bachelor of Science, University of North Dakota, 1989
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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

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December
2012

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This dissertation, submitted by Nancy Jo Burke, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Title	Positioning for Elementary School Success: Charting the Journey of Adopting and Leading School Reform
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Nancy Jo Burke
November 16, 2012

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the importance of teaching children as much as they could (can) learn, and she also taught me how important it is to help teachers to understand children.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this longitudinal case study was to develop a process and structure for adopting and leading critical school reform initiatives within a rural North Dakota pre-kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school. Elementary principals can use this process and structure to benefit staff, and ultimately, to improve student academic achievement. This longitudinal case study identified factors that facilitated or hindered a rural practicing elementary principal, staff, and school while implementing federal, state, and local school reform initiatives beginning in the 2005-2006 school year.

This longitudinal case study utilized a qualitative, grounded theory and case study approach to identify: (a) What factors facilitated or hindered the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading critical school reform initiatives, (b) What role key stakeholders played in the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading critical school reform initiatives, and (c) What effects the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading critical school reform initiatives had on student achievement.

For the purpose of this longitudinal case study, key stakeholders included: a school district superintendent, elementary principal, elementary classroom teachers and staff, school specialists, and members of school district committees. School district data included: public documents, committee meeting and survey results,

observations, field notes, along with information obtained from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction's website relating to Century Elementary School for school years ranging from 2005 through 2011.

Results from this longitudinal case study explain implementation of school reform is complicated because many uncontrollable variables infiltrate the daily work of school leaders. The complication of school reform detracts their attention from the work that is important. The study results reflected seven school years of events summarized for the purpose of explaining school reform implementation over time for continuous improvement and development which took place in increments and stages.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

America is in the midst of a long educational reform (Fielding, Kerr, & Rosier, 2007). Fielding et al. emphasized the aim of school reform is to assure the top sixty percent of students continue to make annual growth while the remaining forty percent of students, who have not achieved minimum state standards, make annual growth in addition to necessary catch-up growth. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 is landmark education reform designed to improve student achievement. NCLB was intended to initiate better accountability for desired results in student achievement and was designed around “four common-sense pillars: accountability for results, an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research, expanded parental options, and expanded local control and flexibility” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 1).

The Kennewick Model: Targeted Accelerated Academic Growth

The Kennewick Model: Targeted Accelerated Growth (Fielding et al., 2007) is the story of an aggressive school district that adopted a goal in 1995 that in three years 90% of third graders would read at or above grade level by the end of third grade. Forty-eight percent (48%) of students attending Kennewick elementary schools were at or under poverty level. Fielding et al. stated, “Creating annual growth for more students usually means better execution in the traditional areas of excellent leadership,

excellent initial instruction, and excellent data systems” (p. 20). The Kennewick Model is an example of a robust school improvement undertaking. The authors identified themes for improving education: (a) fitting together district level pieces supporting high achievement at the building level, (b) leadership, (c) instruction, (d) diagnostic assessment practice, and (e) data systems.

The Kennewick model appeared to be directly related to the case study in this research because the principal at Century Elementary took aggressive action to change education practice at the building level based on themes for improving education similar to the Kennewick model. While the Kennewick model addressed excellent leadership, excellent initial instruction, and excellent data systems as themes for improving education, Century addressed similar nonetheless different areas. One goal at Century was that all students at Century Elementary reach bench mark scores in reading at the end of second grade. The elementary principal worked directly with district level leadership addressing needed improvements at the building level and aligning those building level improvements with district level objectives. Century chose to make improvements in the following areas: leadership, instruction, technology, assessment, and data systems.

Price (2008) provided an explanation for understanding the challenges of improving education. He pointed out how unsynchronized federal, state, and local initiatives focus on a litany of school reforms and listed a minimum of eleven initiatives being promoted at the time. The eleven initiatives included: tougher high school graduation standards, establishing high-stakes tests as prerequisites for advancing from grade to grade, ending social promotion, revising state school aide

formulas, downsizing schools and reducing class sizes, creating career academies and other schools-within-schools, reforming curricula, expanding preschool programs, launching charter schools and other variations, upgrading the caliber of teachers, and asserting mayoral control over school systems. Then Price (2008) asked the question, “What have these attempts at reform wrought to school effectiveness and student achievement?” (p. 13). He answered the question and predicted school reform measures (at the time of Price’s report) would continue only with modest annual improvements. He believed educators could not (cannot) succeed on their own. Acceleration would be needed to increase focus on accountability and reform initiatives centered on school systems and schools with initiatives directed at a desire for higher student achievement.

Elmore (2002) described the challenge and collective urgency of adopting initiatives aimed at school reform:

The schools that I have observed usually share a strong motivation to learn new teaching practices and a sense of urgency about improving learning for students and teachers. What they lack is a sense of individual and collective agency, or control, over the organizational conditions that affect the learning of students and adults in their schools. (para. 21)

The Center for Mental Health in Schools (2011) noted, “The critical need is for integrating all the resources, people, and programs focused on enabling learning into a unified system to more effectively address barriers and re-engage students to enable school learning” (p. 8). This report asserted that activities related to addressing teaching and learning methods are often dispersed in counterproductive ways, over several divisions or departments within a school. And, school districts are often

organized ineffectively for moving toward a comprehensive system of learning supports.

Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) stated, “Schools require more than changing curriculum and instruction because schools have problems that require systematic exploration” (p. 115). Root cause analysis is needed to understand organizational problems. Michael Fullan (as cited in Schmoker, 1999) put it in plain words, “There is profound confusion about the meaning of education reform and improvement” (p. vii). School administration and teachers do not always have input into the decisions made for them relating to school improvement or school reform.

“School boards make decisions; state and federal legislators make laws, school personnel do the adapting” (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011, p. 14). There are constant changes in the environment in which schools operate. Schools must ensure meaningful learning experiences addressing the needs of diverse students while maintaining compliance with various policies, regulations, and legislation (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011). Inattentive leadership, while trying to integrate school reform initiatives into an amalgamated system, which is the primary role of an elementary principal, can lead to malfunction. Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) stated, “Schools with poor processes for assessing problems often will fail to solve them” (p. 17). An elementary principal’s role in public school reform is to have in place processes and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives into a school building. In the absence of a process and structure for adopting and leading reform initiatives, elementary principals will be in need of a plan or model to channel their efforts.

Statement of the Problem

While lawmakers, field practitioners, scholars, and researchers have demonstrated and identified theoretical perspectives and essential elements needed to create successful schools, elementary school principals, experienced and knowledgeable, are the ones who intrinsically and cohesively lead, implement, and manage the complexity of school reform initiatives. The problem, inexperienced and experienced school administrators find themselves working in school buildings and districts with no implementation plan (process) in place for solving problems or adopting school reform initiatives. No systems approach has been established. Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk's (2001) research on school improvement efforts showed how administrators "relied on ad hoc committees to focus on specific initiatives or newly adopted programs" (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011, p. 27). "They devote a great deal of time and energy into multiple workshops, meetings, and conferences. . . . With time, desired improvements in student achievement gains fail to materialize and professional fatigue and frustration rise. What works in some schools and districts may not work in other schools and districts because the needs are different. Many of these improvement programs fade, or end, while new programs continue to be adopted" (Newmann et al., 2001, p. 298). Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) stated, "Team members can lose focus when confronted with too many competing initiatives or expectations" (p. 66). A school's focus should be narrow, remain on student academic achievement, and be directly related to the school or district.

According to Gallagher (2011), Standards and Achievement Director at the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI), the number of North Dakota

elementary schools failing to meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) has continued to increase. The NDDPI determines school and district AYP each school year based on student assessment scores on the North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA).

Achievement goals for students have been slowly rising over the years since the No Child Left Behind Act became effective. The NDSA achievement goals in the areas of math and reading for Grades 4, 8, and 11 were raised in the following school years: 2001-2002, 2004-2005, 2007-2008, and 2010-2011. For the 2011-2012 school year, the most recent school year at the time of this report, achievement goals for reading were: Grade 4, 91.3% students reading at a Grade 4 level; Grade 8, 90.4% students reading at a Grade 8 level; Grade 11, 85.7% students reading at a Grade 11 level. The 2011-2012 achievement goals for math were: Grade 4, 86.4% students proficient; Grade 8, 83.3% students proficient at an eighth grade level; and Grade 11, 81.0% students proficient. NCLB has mandated that by the 2013-2014 school year, the NDSA achievement goal be increased to 100%; all students will be expected to achieve a proficient or advanced standing score on their NDSA at that time and into future school years. The Department of Public Instruction applies a set of rules to compare student performance rates (assessment scores) against the state's achievement goals; hence, statistical reliability (Gallagher, 2012). The achievement goals between schools and districts is calculated and statistically reliable.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this longitudinal case study was to develop a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives within a rural elementary school. School administrators are tasked with implementing school reform initiatives.

Inexperienced and experienced school administrators find themselves working in school buildings and districts with no implementation plan (process) in place for adopting school reform initiatives. No systems approach has been established. Yet, administrators are expected to adopt, implement, and manage school reform initiatives. After reviewing this report, elementary principals may be able to replicate the school reform initiatives identified in this study to benefit other elementary schools, ultimately improving student academic achievement in their schools. This six-year longitudinal case study identified factors, which facilitated or hindered developing a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives, beginning with the 2005-2006 school year. At that time, when the elementary principal was hired, there was not a process or structure in place for adopting and leading school reform initiatives at the school participating in this study.

The longitudinal study utilized existing public school district data from the Grafton Public School District during 2005-2011. The principal of the elementary school participating in this case study is the researcher of this study. She collected and analyzed:

- compiled results of building level and school district surveys,
- compiled results of building level and school district committee meetings,
- observations,
- field notes, and

- information obtained from North Dakota Department of Public Instruction's website relating to Century Elementary School for the school years ranging from 2005 through 2011.

For the purpose of this longitudinal case study, key stakeholders involved in the school participating in the study included: the school district superintendent, elementary principal, elementary classroom teachers and staff, school specialists, and members of school district committees.

In 2005-2006, the district in this study did not have identified reform initiatives in place for the elementary principal, teacher leaders, teachers, curriculum and instruction, assessment practice, resources and support, technology, communication, related programs, or partner programs. K-12 educational programs were in existence; although these programs operated "in silos" (isolated from one another). Programs operating in silos included: classroom instruction and strategies, school counseling, library, English as a Second Language (ELL), Extended School Year (ESP), Title I, Special Education, Summer Migrant school, and assessment practice.

Educational programs and student services were not developed, aligned, nor communicated with teachers, students, parents, community, or other partner programs within the district. In the 2005-2006 school year, during public meetings, the superintendent reviewed the North Dakota state-mandated information, consisting only of assessment scores for Grades 4, 8, and 12 along with the state's adequate yearly progress (AYP) reports at the elementary, middle school, and high school levels. At the same meetings, the superintendent also reviewed student demographic information: number of students enrolled, number of students by race, students on 504

plans and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and the percentages of students qualifying to receive free or reduced school lunches. No “next steps” were initiated or outlined.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided this study include:

1. What factors facilitated or hindered the development of processes and structures leading school reform initiatives?
2. What role(s) did key stakeholders play in the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives?
3. What effects did the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives have on student achievement?

Importance of the Study

Price (2008) acknowledged a campaign to improve public education in the United States continued when it might easily have petered out. He explained:

That persistence is a testament both to the resolve of successive waves of dedicated educators and determined reformers and to the collective realization among policy makers and employers that the stakes for our society and economy are too high to retreat short of significant progress. No Child Left Behind has provoked closer media scrutiny of school performance and has heightened parental awareness of how their children are fairing. (p. 13)

The objective of this longitudinal case study was to develop a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives in elementary schools because principals are assigned the task of leading, integrating, managing, and assimilating all resources, people, and programs into an amalgamated system for school reform. Identifying factors which facilitated or hindered development of a

process and structure for implementing school reform, recognizing the role(s) key stakeholders who participated in the process played, and discovering what effects the developments of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives have on student achievement and the school environment is important for several reasons.

First, elementary principals have the responsibility of managing the complexity of school reform initiatives. A process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives may provide elementary principals with necessary guidance needed for success. Second, findings from this longitudinal case study may clarify challenges encountered by other elementary principals or school leaders assigned the task of adopting and leading school reform initiatives. The identification of distinct challenges faced by the school in this study may provide principals or school leaders in elementary schools, outside this study, with information to address similar issues in their schools. Third, defining the role(s) which key stakeholders can play in the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives may help principals recognize and support staff with professional development, training needs, and even preparation of school leaders.

Finally, identifying the effects on student achievement realized from developing a process and structure for leading reform, as reported by key stakeholders within the school in this study, may reveal potential initiatives for further improving the process and/or structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives to meet district, state, and federal mandates. These results may further encourage school

leaders to refine methods for developing a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives.

Researcher Background

At the time of this study, the researcher was the only elementary school principal for the Grafton Public School District, Grafton, North Dakota. The researcher's twenty-two year professional career included numerous teaching and administrative experiences in several North Dakota school districts. The researcher had various task force, committee, and working group experience at the local, state, and national levels. She was the North Dakota Local Education Agency representative to the National Forum on Education Statistics (also known as the Forum, sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics – NCES), a member of the National Education Statistics Agenda Committee (NESAC), a former member of the NCES Longitudinal Data Systems (LDS) Task Force as well as a working group representative to the NCES Common Education Data Standards (CEDS). The researcher has been a member of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Data Advisory Committee, and at the time of this report, was the chair of the Discipline Data Committee.

During this study, the researcher was a member of the North Dakota Implementation and Scaling Up Evidence-Based Practices State Transformation Team. She also conducted Response to Intervention – Behavior trainings for the Special Education Unit for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. She has earned the state “Golden Apple” award from the North Dakota Elementary Principal's Association, nominated by peers. At the local level, the researcher has

been a member of the Red River Valley Education Cooperative (RRVEC) professional development committee. Within the school district and the elementary school building where she has been employed as principal, she has been responsible for professional development, goal setting, and school improvement along with elementary principal duties.

The researcher has working knowledge and experience in Grafton Public School District policies and procedures as well as knowledge in North Dakota state education policies, procedures, and North Dakota laws relating to public education as recorded in the North Dakota Century Code. The researcher has a strong bias in support of developing a structure and procedure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives. The researcher also has a strong bias in regard to the benefits of developing a structure and procedure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives. The researcher has a direct relationship with selected key stakeholders (teachers and school administrators) because this is a site-specific study. Other key stakeholders (school board and community members) have no direct relationship with the researcher. To minimize the effect of researcher bias, multiple sources of data were analyzed, and the case study was peer reviewed by the district's superintendent, the high school principal, the elementary instructional coach, and an elementary classroom teacher.

Description of the Rural School District

The elementary school studied was in a rural school district with 875 enrolled students in kindergarten through 12th grade. At the conclusion of this study, the elementary school had 313 students, pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. At the

beginning of the study, the elementary school had 410 students, kindergarten through fifth grade. The elementary school was re-configured following the 2005-2006 school year to grades kindergarten through fourth grade. The school was re-configured again 2011-2012 to pre-kindergarten through fourth grade. At the time of this report, the most recent data available indicated 63% of elementary students were Caucasian, 33% were Hispanic, 14% had individualized education plans (IEPs), 16% were identified as having migrant status, 23% qualified for the English as a Second Language (ELL) program, and 1% had a 504 written accommodation plan for the student's disability. Fifty-eight percent of elementary students received free or reduced lunches, indicating a high poverty level in the district. When the study began during the 2005-2006 school year, ten teachers had less than ten years experience, five teachers had more than ten years experience, and eight teachers were at or near retirement age.

In 2005, the district began the North Dakota State School Improvement Process (SIP), conducted district goal setting meetings, and held long-range district planning meetings. These meetings were a part of a school's internal process to conduct a needs assessment based on the school district needs per state-mandated requirements according to North Dakota Century Code. State-mandated long range planning meetings were held in conjunction with a fall school board meeting (annual event). Only the superintendent presented data to the public. Building principals and a curriculum coordinator attended the meetings. Following the SIP meetings and the goal setting meeting, no next steps action was taken, meaning nothing was done about implementing reform initiatives outlined in NCLB. Building principals did not meet with the superintendent to discuss school improvement or goal setting initiatives.

There was no system for collecting data, analyzing data and/or communicating results, or utilizing the data to improve educational practice. Building principals were not involved in any type of next step planning for school improvement. Consequently, no change to educational programs or student services related to leadership, curriculum and instruction, resources and support, assessment practice, technology, communication, related programs, or partner programs took place. There was no unified systematic approach to identify or solve problems. District leadership was inattentive to reform initiatives.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding of qualitative and case study research and grounded theory methods, strategic planning, along with change models provided the researcher strategies to apply when developing the framework for this project. A site-specific rural North Dakota elementary school was selected for a longitudinal case study because: (a) of local, state, and federal mandates demanding reforms; and (b) no process and structure for adopting and leading reform initiatives existing at the elementary school level.

Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) provided the researcher with systems thinking as a strategy to problem solve and find solutions. At Century, staff and administration worked together rather than being isolated and working alone. Ultimately, staff and administration at the building level worked together, and administration at the building level worked with administration at the district level, so everybody was working together to problem solve rather than elementary staff working isolated and alone at the building level. Additionally, working together meant administrative leaders

(building and district level) worked as a team and also with stakeholders. Systems thinking strategies allowed schools to reorganize existing practice into an organizational practice with structural change. Coordinating systems thinking strategies into daily practice at school benefited administration, teachers, students, parents, and community members. Strategic planning, a strategy used to develop an organizational plan (systems thinking), was utilized for purposeful change.

Purposeful change required knowledge of change strategies. Kurt Lewin's (1947) three-stage model, Michael Fullan's (2010) Motion Leadership, Kotter's (1996) eight steps to change, Bolman and Deal (2003) four-frame model, and Wheatly's (1999) fluid, boundary-less, and seamless organization, were applied throughout the years in the study and explained in the study.

Definitions and Acronyms

The following acronyms and terms are defined for the convenience of the reader.

AIMSweb. "AIMSweb is a benchmark and progress monitoring system based on direct, frequent and continuous student assessment. The results are reported to students, parents, teachers and administrators via a web-based data management and reporting system to determine response to intervention" ("What is AIMSweb," 2010, para. 1).

AYP. AYP is an acronym and stands for adequate yearly progress. AYP "sets the minimum level of proficiency that states, school districts, and schools must attain each year." (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, n.d.a, para. 1)

CEDS. The Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) project is a national collaborative effort to develop voluntary, common data standards for a key set of education data elements to streamline the exchange and comparison of data across institutions and sectors.

CCSSO. CCSSO stands for Council of Chief State School Officers. On the CCSSO website, a section titled *Who We Are*, described the CCSSO as follows:

The Council of Chief State School Officers is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public. (“Who We Are,” 2012, para. 1)

CSSO. CSSO is an acronym that stands for Chief State School Officer. The CSSO for North Dakota is known as North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction.

DIBELS. DIBELS is an acronym that stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills.

The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills. (“Dibels Data System,” 2008, para. 1)

ED. ED stands for the Education Department (or the United States Department of Education). It is also sometimes called DoED. (“United States Department of Education,” 2012).

ELL. ELL is an acronym that stands for English Language Learner. ELLs or English Language Learners are students who have difficulty speaking, reading, or writing English (“English Language Learners,” n.d.).

ESEA. This acronym stands for the Elementary and Secondary Education (ESEA) Act. The law “was passed in 1965 as a part of the ‘War on Poverty.’ . . . The law authorizes federally funded education programs that are administered by the states” (“Elementary and Secondary Education Act,” n.d., para. 1). The law places emphasis on equal access to education and establishes high standards and accountability. Congress amended ESEA in 2002, reauthorizing it as the No Child Left Behind Act.

ESP. Extended school day program is an educational program offered to all students which takes place before school and after school hours during the regular school year as well as six weeks in the summer. The program focuses on enhancing the school day through activity based learning.

ESY. Extended school year is an educational program offered to students on Individual Education Plans (IEP) for the purpose of supporting continuing education so no regression takes place over the summer months when students are not in school.

Goal Setting/Long-Term Planning. Goal setting has been defined as, “Establishing short- or long-term objectives, usually corporate deadlines and quantifiable measures” (“Goal Setting,” 2012, sub-heading 1). Long range planning is simply the process of developing steps to reach long term objectives – objectives to be reached over several years – based on predictions about the future (“Long-Range Planning Business Definition,” 2012, para. 1).

For North Dakota, responsibilities of school districts in long-term planning are described in the North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) under Title 15.1, *Elementary and Secondary Education*, Chapter 15.1-07, *School Districts*, Section 15.1-07-26, *School district demographics – Long-term planning process* (2011). Section 15.1-07-26 of the NDCC is retyped below:

1. Between January first and June thirtieth of every even-numbered year, the board of each school district shall invite the public to participate in a planning process addressing the effects that demographics might have on the district in the ensuing three-year and five-year periods, and specifically addressing potential effects on:
 - a. Academic and extracurricular programs;
 - b. Instructional and administrative staffing;
 - c. Facility needs and utilization; and
 - d. District tax levies.
2. At the conclusion of the planning process, the board shall prepare a report, publish a notice in the official newspaper of the district indicating that the report is available, and make the report available upon request. (“School District Demographics,” 2011, p. 5)

IEP. IEP stands for Individualized Education Program. An IEP is an essential document for children with disabilities as well as for those who are involved in educating them. The IEP is designed to outline and describe the educational program needed to meet a disabled child’s unique needs by improving teaching, learning, and results (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2000).

IRB. “An **institutional review board (IRB)**, also known as an **independent ethics committee (IEC)** or **ethical review board (ERB)**, is a committee that has been formally designated to approve, monitor, and review biomedical and behavioral research involving humans” (“Institutional Review Board,” 2012, para. 1).

LDS. This acronym stands for longitudinal data system. According to Wikipedia, a . . . :

Longitudinal data system is a data system capable of tracking student information over multiple years in multiple schools. The term appears in Federal law to describe such a system. Federal funding is provided to aid the design and implementation of such systems. (“Longitudinal Data System,” 2010, para. 1)

MAP. This acronym refers to Measures of Academic Progress. A MAP is a computerized adaptive test developed by the NWEA (Northwest Evaluation Association). The NWEA is defined later in this section.

NAEP. NAEP stands for National Assessment of Educational Progress. The NAEP consists of a series of uniform tests regularly administered across the states in various subjects: reading, math, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history. The tests are maintained consistently year to year so progress of U.S. students may be accurately monitored over time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a).

NCES. Another acronym, NCES stands for National Center for Education Statistics.

The **National Center for Education Statistics** (NCES) is the part of the United States Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES) that collects, analyzes, and publishes statistics on education and public school district finance information in the United States. It also conducts international comparisons of education statistics and provides leadership in developing and promoting the use of standardized terminology and definitions for the collection of those statistics. (“National Center for Education Statistics,” 2012b, para. 1)

NCLB. This acronym stands for No Child Left Behind.

The **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)** is a United States Act of Congress that came about as wide public concern about the state of education.

First proposed by the administration of George W. Bush immediately after he took office, the bill passed in the U.S. Congress with bipartisan support.

NCLB is a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which included Title I, the government's flagship aid program for disadvantaged students. NCLB supports standards-based education reform based on the premise that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The Act requires states to develop assessments in basic skills. States must give these assessments to all students at select grade levels in order to receive federal school funding. The Act does not assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state. NCLB expanded the federal role in public education through annual testing, annual academic progress, report cards, teacher qualifications, and funding changes. (“No Child Left Behind Act,” 2012, para. 1-2)

NDDPI.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) oversees the public school system in the U.S. state of North Dakota. The DPI also oversees the North Dakota State Library, the North Dakota School for the Blind, and the North Dakota School for the Deaf. The DPI is headed by the North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction. The DPI is headquartered in Bismarck. (“North Dakota Department of Public Instruction,” 2011b, para. 1)

NDCC. The North Dakota Century Code (NDCC) is a publication containing all the current laws of North Dakota enacted since the state joined the union. The numbering system of the Century Code contains three parts. The first part is the title, the second is the chapter, and the third refers to the section. “For example, Section 54-35-01 refers to the first section in Chapter 35 of Title 54” (“2011 North Dakota Century Code,” n.d., para. 3).

NDSIP. The North Dakota School Improvement Program (NDSIP) is a “Self-Study” program. A self study program in regard to schools is described below.

[A] school’s internal process to gather data and identify student learning needs based on multiple indicators. The disaggregation of data is used to select target areas for all students K-12. Based on selected target areas, goals and interventions should be set for implementation by all staff. Assessment

documentation should be gathered throughout the five-year process to assist in determining the success of student learning. (Sanstead, n.d., p. 3)

NESAC. NESAC stands for the National Education Statistic Agenda

Committee. “NESAC is charged with supporting the development of comparable and effective national elementary and secondary education data systems” (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.a, para. 1). The NESAC is a committee within the National Forum on Education Statistics (or the Forum). The Forum was created by the NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) to assist states in producing and maintaining uniform education statistics (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.b, para. 1).

NWEA.

Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) is a not-for-profit organization committed to helping school districts throughout the nation improve learning for all students. NWEA partners with more than 2,200 school districts representing more than three million students. As a result of NWEA tests, educators can make informed decisions to promote your child’s academic growth. (Northwest Evaluation Association, 2006, para. 1)

Poverty Level.

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in public schools, nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. It provides nutritionally-balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day. The program was established under the National School Lunch Act, signed by President Harry Truman in 1946. (“National School Lunch Program,” 2012, para. 1)

RRVEC. The Red River Valley Education Cooperative (RRVEC) is one of eight regional education associations (REAs) in North Dakota. Regional education associations consist of groups of school districts who agree to pool their resources and

work together to improve educational programs and services (“About the RRVEC,” 2010; Erhardt, 2011).

Think Tank. According to the American Heritage Dictionary (2011), a think tank is: “A group or institution organized for intensive research and solving of problems, especially in the areas of technology, social or political strategy, or armament” (para. 1).

504 Plan. A 504 Plan is a written document describing accommodations, or services a school must make to accommodate an individual student with disabilities so they can “perform at the same level as their peers” (Mauro, 2012, para. 1). Schools must accommodate all students as outlined in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (Mauro, 2012).

Delimitations

This longitudinal case study investigated in-house factors that facilitated or hindered the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives in a rural site-specific North Dakota school district that did not have a structure or process for adopting and leading school reform initiatives in place. The study was completed by the elementary principal, the researcher. This study examined how stakeholders affected the process, either facilitating or hindering the process. This study did not investigate the middle school or the high school within the district. The findings from this longitudinal case study may or may not transfer to other rural elementary schools where conditions differ.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, a synopsis of issues around school reform initiatives across America was presented; as well as the background and importance of the problem, along with the purpose of this longitudinal case study. This chapter has included terms related to school reform. It has set forth delimitations, researcher bias, and the organization of the study.

Chapter II contains a literature review from a variety of sources: documents derived from experts in the field, research studies addressing critical areas of school reform, the U.S. Department of Education, and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

Chapter III includes a discussion for the qualitative study and grounded theory design of this longitudinal case study. In this chapter, the elementary principal presents more detailed exploration of this site-specific case study, and data collection. The analysis of the data, codes, categories, and themes is presented which was extracted from the qualitative data gathered during the study. A model is proposed for the structure of activities involved in implementing reform initiatives.

Chapter IV outlines the results in tables, constructed chronologically, indicating the developing process for implementing reform initiatives; and the ensuing change in practice of applying methods for implementing reform initiatives. Kurt Lewin's (1947) three-stage model for change; Michael Fullan's (2010) *Motion Leadership* change savvy theory and process, Kotter's (1996) eight steps to change, Wheatley's (1999) organizational change, and Van Clay and Soldwedel's (2009) application of systems thinking were applied.

Chapter V provided the summary, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations of the site-specific longitudinal case study for developing a process and structure leading school reform initiatives within the realm of a public elementary school in rural North Dakota.

CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This chapter contains a review of the literature derived from: experts in the field, research studies, the U.S. Department of Education, and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, for the purpose of understanding the importance of implementing school reform initiatives. School reform is an important aspect of the work school leaders conduct within schools. Investigating, studying, and understanding school reform initiatives are valuable skills leaders need to remain attentive to improving education.

Quality Schools

Quality public schools can be defined by common characteristics. Quality schools have vision and mission statements directly related to preparing all students to succeed. The following characteristics taken from the givekidsgoodschools.org website (“What Makes a Quality Public School,” n.d.) describe quality schools as having: high expectations for all students, parent and community support, highly qualified teachers in all classrooms and professional development to strengthen teaching and learning, rigorous curriculum and fair assessments to monitor student achievement, sufficient resources to help all students achieve, schools and classrooms equipped for teaching and learning including up-to-date textbooks and current

technology, and principals empowered to lead and make informed decisions that promote learning.

Schools in North Dakota are not recognized by the state as being quality schools unless a person at the school or district level initiates a process to recognize a given school through some type of award. A building principal or superintendent must complete the necessary paper work and apply for one of several recognition programs to be acknowledged as a quality school.

North Dakota's Department of Public Instruction sponsors several statewide recognition programs for all North Dakota schools. One such program under Title I law is known as a Title I Academic Achievement Award. This Academic Achievement Award program is part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements signed into law January, 2002. To be eligible for this award, North Dakota schools must use data from the North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA). Qualified schools must be North Dakota "Title I schools that have been successful in removing themselves from program improvement status and continue to meet adequate yearly progress for two subsequent school years" ("North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Criteria," n.d., para. 5).

Table 1 shows the number of schools awarded Title I Academic Achievement Awards from the 2005-2006 school year to the 2010-2011 school year, taken from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) website under Title I Programs ("Title I Academic Achievement Award Recipients," n.d.).

Table 1. Number of Schools Awarded North Dakota State Title I Academic Achievement Awards, 2005-2006 to 2010-2011.

Year	Number of North Dakota Schools
2005-2006	Eight (8) elementary schools out of 247*
2006-2007	No eligible schools out of 242*
2007-2008	One (1) elementary school out of 237*
2008-2009	No eligible schools out of 241*
2009-2010	No eligible schools out of 241*
2010-2011	No eligible schools out of 241*

* Public elementary schools accredited in high school local education agencies (LEAs; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2011b)

A second program recognizing quality schools supported by the National Association of State Title I Directors (NASTID) and available through the NDDPI is the National Title I Distinguished Schools Recognition Program. North Dakota's Title I office reported the purpose of the Distinguished Schools Recognition Award Program has been to honor "Title I schools that have, through innovative approaches as identified by each state, improved student achievement" (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, n.d.b, para. 2).

According to North Dakota's Title I program office (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, n.d.b), schools receiving Title I funding are eligible and can operate a targeted assistance Title I program or a school wide Title I program; either category will qualify a school for recognition in one of the following categories: (a) a "school that has exceeded its AYP for two or more years," (para. 3) or (b) a "school that has significantly closed the achievement gap between student groups" (para. 3).

Schools that apply for this recognition receive ratings as exemplary, high evidence, moderate evidence, or no evidence in six categories. According to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (n.d.b), the six categories are:

- Teaching and learning based on state standards
- Use of research-based instructional strategies
- Providing opportunities for all children to achieve
- Coordination with other programs
- Professional development
- Partnerships with parents, families, and communities (para. 5)

Table 2 shows the number of schools awarded Title I Distinguished School Awards from the school years 2005-2006 to 2011-2012.

Table 2. Number of Elementary Schools Awarded Title I Distinguished School Awards, 2005-2006 to 2011-2012.

Year	North Dakota School Configuration High School / Middle School / Elementary
2005-2006	One (1) elementary school out of 247*
2006-2007	One (1) elementary school out of 242*
2007-2008	One (1) elementary school out of 237*
2008-2009	One (1) elementary school out of 241*
2009-2010	One (1) elementary school out of 241*
2010-2011	One (1) elementary school out of 241*
2011-2012	One (1) elementary school**

* Public elementary schools accredited in high school LEAs (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010a, 2011b)

** Information on elementary schools accredited in high school LEAs not available for 2011-2012.

The United States Department of Education (ED or DoED) supports identification of quality schools through guidance of Chief State School Officers (CSSOs) and the Blue Ribbon Schools Program. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program, which began in 1982, is a national program for recognizing quality American schools. The program recognizes schools whose students achieve at identifiable high achievement levels or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Schools are eligible if they meet one of two criteria:

- *Exemplary High Performing Schools*: Schools that are ranked among the state's highest performing schools as measured by state assessments in both reading (English language arts) and mathematics or that score at the highest performance level on tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested.
- *Exemplary Improving Schools*: Schools with at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds that have reduced the achievement gap by improving student performance to high levels in reading (English language arts) and mathematics on state assessments or tests referenced by national norms in at least the most recent year tested. (Department of Education: United States of America, 2012, p. 2)

Applying standards of a quality school, as described by the North Dakota State Department of Public Instruction and the federal Department of Education, to AYP assessment score results is the foundation and basis for determining student achievement and improved student performance. AYP, then, is an indicator of a quality school. A quality school in North Dakota can be described as a school having the ability to show academic improvement on the basis of AYP scores and sustained academic improvement in schools with disadvantaged student populations.

Are student achievement scores measuring student ability and reflected in AYP reports directly related to reform initiatives? The answer is yes, according to North

Dakota guidelines for standards of a quality school. A common characteristic of a quality school is having high expectations for all students. A vision and mission statement directly related to preparing students to succeed is a characteristic of a quality school indicating the academic expectation is to achieve proficiency as measured by AYP.

Are school reform initiatives interrelated with a quality school? The answer is yes; characteristics of quality schools are related to school reform initiatives. Stephen Covey (2008) stated in his book, *The Leader in Me*, “We only get one chance to prepare our students for a future that none of us can possibly predict. What are we going to do with that one chance?” (p. xvii). This is an important question for school leaders to answer because a child’s elementary school experience is the foundation for their school years. School leaders must take action and ensure characteristics of quality schools are set into motion in schools they lead.

School Reform

How do schools prepare students for academic success measured by AYP and, at the same time, integrate quality school reform initiatives into school policy and structure? What factors affect student achievement? Marzano (2003) proposed three sets of factors that affected student achievement: school-level factors, teacher-level factors, and student-level factors. School-level factors would be those things under control of the school such as policy, administrative decisions, and school-wide initiatives. Teacher-level factors would be under control of teachers and occur mainly in classrooms. Student-level factors would be things like home environment, student’s personality, and parent support.

Marzano (2003) discussed what he referred to as five school-level factors representing “the most current thinking” associated with student achievement and school reform efforts (p. 15). In his work, Marzano (2003) explained, “the most famous list of school-level factors affecting student achievement came out of school effectiveness research from the 1970s” (p.16). Researchers such as Jaap Scheerens and Roel Bosker (1997), Pam Sammons (1999), Daniel Levine and Lawrence Lezotte (1990), and Ron Edmonds (1979) explored school reform and used slightly different terms to describe the same school-level factors that affect student outcomes. Each researcher/research team addressed setting academic goals for students.

Scheerens and Bosker (1997) as quoted in Marzano (2003) were the first to rank school-level factors, ultimately increasing the awareness of the association of school-level factors with student achievement. Scheerens and Bosker (1997) rank ordered eight school-level factors. The list, in numerical order, included:

1. Time
2. Monitoring
3. Pressure to Achieve
4. Parental Involvement
5. School Climate
6. Content Coverage
7. School Leadership
8. Cooperation (p. 17)

Marzano (2003) organized his school-level factors into five categories.

Marzano's five school-level factors are listed below in order of their impact on student achievement:

1. Guaranteed and viable curriculum
2. Challenging goals and effective feedback
3. Parent and community involvement
4. Safe and orderly environment
5. Collegiality and professionalism (p. 15)

Marzano explained, changes in these factors are, for the most part, outcomes of formal or informal policy decisions under the authority of the school. His research considered and addressed only the school-level factors that could be addressed without drastic addition of resources (p. 15). Marzano's (2003) emphasis was on "school reform efforts that can be implemented within the general boundaries of the resources available" (p. 16) in schools.

Table 3 represents Marzano's (2003) research compared to conclusions other researchers, including Marzano, have drawn regarding school-level factors/categories that affect student achievement.

In Table 3, Marzano's school-level factors or categories from 2003 are presented in the first column and ranked in the second column according to Marzano's order of priorities (see list above) on how important a school factor is at affecting student achievement with *challenging goals and effective feedback* being most important, and so on. Table 3 provides building principals with a framework of where to initiate change in schools to improve teaching practice and student achievement.

Table 3. Marzano's Comparison of School-Level Factors Across Researchers.

Marzano's School-Level Factors	Rank*	Marzano (from earlier research)	Scheerens and Bosker	Sammons	Levine and Lezotte	Edmonds
Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum	1	Opportunity to Learn	Content Coverage	Concentration on Teaching and Learning	Focus on Central Learning Skills	Emphasis on Basic Skill Acquisition
		Time	Time			
Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback	2	Monitoring	Monitoring	High Expectations	High Expectations and Requirements	High Expectations for Student Success
		Pressure to Achieve	Pressure to Achieve	Monitoring Progress	Appropriate Monitoring	Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
Parental and Community Involvement	3	Parental Involvement	Parental Involvement	Home-School Partnership	Salient Parent Involvement	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4	School Climate	School Climate	A Learning Environment	Productive Climate and Culture	Safe and Orderly Atmosphere Conducive to Learning
				Positive Reinforcement		
				Pupil Rights and Expectations		
Collegiality and Professionalism	5	Leadership	Leadership	Professional Leadership	Strong Leadership	Strong Administrative Leadership
				Shared Vision and Goals		
		Cooperation	Cooperation	A Learning Organization	Practice-Oriented Staff Development	

* Marzano ranked these factors by order of impact on student achievement. Adapted from "What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action," by R. J. Marzano, 2003, Alexandria, Virginia, p. 19. Copyright 2003 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (Permission to use table in Appendix A).

Marzano's (2003) five school-level factors or categories (that affect student achievement) appear to align with the views of the six researchers in Table 3.

Elementary principals should understand the linear relationship school-level factors such as: a *guaranteed and viable curriculum*, *challenging goals and effective feedback*, *parent and community involvement*, and a *safe and orderly environment* have on student outcomes; however, principals must also understand the important relationship nonlinear school-level factors such as *professionalism and collegiality* have with student achievement.

Curriculum

In order to provide instruction, a teacher must know what to teach. Curriculum is the word used to describe what is taught in schools by teachers. Curriculum is confusing because it has different meanings. Wikipedia has described how a school might refer to its curriculum at the elementary level as the “entire sum of lessons and teaching . . . designed to improve national testing scores or help students learn the basics” (“Curriculum,” 2012, para. 2). We have all heard teachers refer to their particular curriculum. In this context, curriculum may refer to a teacher's syllabi or “all the subjects that will be taught during a school year” (“Curriculum,” 2012, para. 2). All students must fulfill specific requirements, or learn the material, in order to pass a certain level of education.

Grade level material is identified by content standards. Content standards are “general statements that describe what students should know and the skills they should have in a specific content area” (North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, 2003, p. vi). State education departments have identified content standards that school

districts must meet for each grade level; with selected standards in some content areas more heavily represented than others on national tests (Buffum, Mottos, & Weber, 2009). Administrators at the building level (school level) and district level must ensure, through the accreditation process in North Dakota, these content standards are taught. Standards are identified for all content curricular areas at grade level in North Dakota.

North Dakota, like other states, has mandated a State Assessment used to measure student knowledge and skills. State core content standards are assessed in North Dakota, at identified grade levels, in the areas of reading/language arts, math, and science. In North Dakota, the standard measurement for assessing student achievement is the cut score. “On virtually all tests these days, there is a score that determines whether a student passes or fails, is proficient or not or is being educated or left behind. This is the cut score” (Bracey, 2008, para. 1). Cut scores are determined at four intervals for achievement levels: novice, partially proficient, proficient, and advanced. Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is calculated and reported for individual school buildings and combined for a district level AYP report. The state assessment in North Dakota is known as the North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA) and is administered each fall to all students enrolled in public schools in Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11.

Marzano (2003) emphasized that students cannot be expected to master all the standards states have identified at grade level. Remember, Marzano identified a *guaranteed and viable curriculum* as one school-level factor affecting student achievement. What is the guaranteed and viable curriculum teachers are expected to

teach? Marzano (2003) explained a guaranteed and viable curriculum is confusing because of the different meanings of curriculum. Marzano (2003) pointed to three types of curricula. First, an “intended” curriculum must contain content standards specified by the state, district, or school at a particular grade level. Second, the “implemented” curriculum consists of content standards actually delivered by the teacher. And third, the “attained” curriculum is in actuality content standards actually learned by students.

How do teachers determine what standards students must know and be able to do at grade level? This is an important question, given the fact that quality schools are identified based on their school’s AYP assessment scores, meaning how well students score on questions selected from state content standards on the NDSA. What should teachers teach? To help answer this question, Buffum et al. (2009) discussed how teachers prioritize standards they can improve in a core program. Buffum et al. described a core program as “a school’s initial instructional practice;” in other words, “the teaching and school experiences that all kids receive every day” (Buffum et al., 2009, p. 74). Core curriculum has been defined by Buffum et al. (2009) as:

A basic course of study deemed critical and usually made mandatory for all students of a school or school system. Core curricula are often instituted by school boards, state departments of education, or other administrative agencies charged with overseeing education. Core curricula must be scientific and research-based. (p. 206).

Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) asserted, “Since the inception of standardized testing, the most important predictor of student learning was what was taught” (p. 141). Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) depicted aligning between published academic standards and state assessments as having taken out the “guess what’s important” (p.

141) to the planning of curricula. Teachers can identify what is essential to teach by checking state standards and therefore ensure students learn the high priority standards at grade level. The first question identified by DuFour et al. (2006) as driving the work of a Professional Learning Community asks: “What is it we want our students to learn?” (p. 91). This is an important question because in order to teach we must be able to answer this question. Marzano (2003) supported depth of learning, in regard to student mastery of identified curriculum standards; his suggestion was reduce number of content standards in the curriculum area students need to know and be able to do, so teachers and students could focus on or delve more deeply into the remaining standards.

Reeves (2005) provided teachers with three criteria to help them determine which standards merit the highest priority for children to master in order to attain the next level of instruction (advance to the next grade level). These three criteria addressed three aspects of learning: endurance, leverage, and necessity.

1. Does the standard address knowledge and skills that will endure throughout a student’s academic career and professional life?
(Endurance)
2. Does it [the standard] address knowledge and skills that will be of value in multiple content areas? (Leverage)
3. Does it [the standard] provide the essential knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in the next grade level? (Necessity)

If students are to become academically successful as measured by state assessments framed around core curriculum standards, then a guaranteed and viable curriculum is an important school-level factor affecting student outcomes.

Are other essential factors needed for successful student learning? Buffum et al. (2009) stated, “Quality teaching is the most significant factor in maximizing student learning” (p. 78). Buffum et al. (2009) continued to support the fact that the quality of the classroom teacher is vital, “Quality teaching makes a difference; teaching of the highest quality is focused on key content and focused on depth over breadth” (p. 79), depth meaning the student has time to understand the standards taught, rather than the teacher teaching a wide range of material the student does not need to know.

States have identified curriculum standards school districts are expected to meet at each specific grade level. Standards make up the intended curriculum for each grade. However, not all standards qualify as essential standards which children need to know and be able to do. Teacher identified essential standards drive curriculum. Students cannot be expected to learn and be proficient with all the standards states have identified at grade level. Reeves (2005) provided teachers with three criteria to determine which standards merit high priority. Buffum et al. (2009) supported the notion that the quality of the classroom teacher is vital. Research on the Kennewick model (Fielding et al., 2007) identified the highest factor correlating with different rates of growth in learning among students is the instructor. High priority curriculum standards coupled with high quality of instruction provides a structure for teachers to teach and students to engage in a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

Goals and Feedback

How do teachers know if students are learning the core instructional program, the identified grade level core curricular standards? Hamilton et al. (2009) recommended schools use student achievement data to make instructional decisions intended to raise student achievement scores. Hamilton et al. inferred the recent changes in education accountability and testing policies have provided educators with an abundance of student-level data. They believed the availability of student data has “led many to want to strengthen the role of data for guiding instruction and improving student learning” (p. 5). The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (2009) and the U.S. Department of Education (2009) echoed this message, calling upon schools to use assessment data to respond to students’ academic strengths and needs.

Buffum et al. (2009) maintained, “Summative and formative assessment data about students, including their course grades, can inform staff about the quality of the core program” (p. 77). They went on to explain, “Summative assessments evaluate student learning and are not intended to modify future instruction or diagnose student needs” (p. 77). However, teachers, school leaders, and principals analyze summative assessments for the purpose of evaluating student learning as well as instructional programs. Buffum et al. (2009) stated, “Formative assessments are diagnostic progress-monitoring tools used to adjust teaching and learning while they are still occurring” (p. 77).

According to Buffum et al. (2009) analysis of summative assessment data is important to the core instructional program. If the end-of-year assessment results indicate most students are below proficiency level, the core curriculum program must

be re-examined. The same synopsis pertains to large numbers of students receiving failing grades on assignments. Teachers must use formative assessment data to adjust instruction and curriculum, when needed. This supports the importance of teachers identifying essential curriculum standards at grade level. If students are failing, the core curriculum program is not serving the student population.

Chappuis, Commodore, and Stiggins (2010) identified seven actions to ensure student success be framed around assessment balance and quality. They recommended a local school or district conduct a self-evaluation of its current assessment system, based on how thoroughly the school or district had completed these seven actions:

1. Balance the district's assessment system to meet all key user needs.
2. Refine achievement standards to reflect clear and appropriate expectations at all levels.
3. Ensure assessment quality in all contexts to support good decision making.
4. Help learners become assessors by using assessment *for* learning strategies in the classroom.
5. Build communication systems to support and report student learning.
6. Motivate students with learning success.
7. Provide the professional development needed to ensure a foundation of assessment literacy throughout the system. (p. 5)

A balanced assessment system was explained by Chappuis et al. (2010) as the process of gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional decisions. Assessment systems should support and verify student learning as well as be designed to serve both formative and summative purposes across levels of assessment use.

Chappuis et al. identified levels of assessment use as: (a) day-to-day classroom assessment, (b) periodic interim/benchmark assessment, and (c) annual standardized testing (p. 13).

Why do schools need a good system to assess students? An assessment system provides accurate information about students who are most at risk for dropping out of school (Fielding et al., 2007). Assessment systems allow schools to have reporting platforms to compare students, classrooms, and schools (Chappuis et al., 2010). An assessment system should provide the school board, superintendent, principals, and teachers with a clear way to determine the amount of student growth that has occurred or has not occurred. Curriculum standards, quality instruction, and assessment practice which supports learning are needed interrelationships for a structure of a school. Chappuis et al. emphasized chronically low-performing schools have principals and faculty who fail to devote sufficient time and energy to curriculum alignment, instructional improvement, and assessments which support learning. Fielding et al. identified excellent leadership, excellent initial instruction, and excellent data systems as necessary elements for creating annual growth for students. Fielding et al. supported Chappuis et al.'s interpretation of assessment practice. Table 4 and Table 5 distinguish and outline a framework for structuring sound assessment practice needed in schools.

Table 4. Framework for a Balanced Assessment System.

Level of Assessment/ Key Issues	Formative Applications	Summative Applications
Classroom Assessment		
Key decision(s) to be informed?	What comes next in each student's learning?	What standards has each student mastered? What grade does each student receive?
Who is the decision maker?	Students and teachers	Teacher
What information do they need?	Evidence of where the student is now on learning continuum	Evidence of each student's mastery of each relevant standard
What are the essential assessment conditions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate standards in learning progressions • Accurate assessment results • Results leading to next steps • Results as descriptive feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and appropriate standards • Accurate evidence • Evidence well summarized • Grading symbols that carry clear and consistent meaning for all
Interim/Benchmark Assessment		
Key decision(s) to be informed?	Where can we improve instructional programs right away? Where are students struggling?	Did the program of instruction deliver as promised? Should we continue to use it?
Who is the decision maker?	Professional learning communities; district and building instructional leaders	Instructional leaders
What information do they need?	Standards students are struggling to master	Accurate evidence of student mastery of particular program standards
What are the essential assessment conditions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear and appropriate standards • Accurate assessment results • Results revealing how <i>each</i> student did in mastering <i>each</i> standard 	Accurate assessments focused on specific program standards aggregated over learners

Table 4. Cont.

Level of Assessment/ Key Issues	Formative Applications	Summative Applications
Annual Accountability Testing		
Key decision(s) to be informed?	Where and how can we improve instruction next year?	Are enough students meeting standards?
Who is the decision maker?	School leaders, curriculum & instructional leaders	School and community leaders
What information do they need?	Standards students are struggling to master	Percent of students meeting <i>each</i> standard
What are the essential assessment conditions?	Accurate evidence of how <i>each</i> student did in mastering <i>each</i> standard aggregated over students	Accurate evidence of how <i>each</i> student did in mastering <i>each</i> standard aggregated over students

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Table 5. Comparing Assessment *for* and *of* Learning: Overview of Key Differences.

	Assessment <i>for</i> Learning	Assessment <i>of</i> Learning
Reasons for Assessing	Promote increases in achievement to help students meet more standards; support ongoing student growth; improvement	Document individual or group achievement or mastery of standards; measure achievement status at a point in time for purposes of reporting; accountability
Audience	Students about themselves	Others about students
Focus of Assessment	Specific achievement targets selected by teachers that enable students to build toward standards	Achievement standards for which schools, teachers, and students are held accountable
Place in Time	Process during learning	Event after learning
Primary Users	Students, teachers, parents	Policy makers, program planners, supervisors, teachers, students, parents

Table 5. Cont.

	Assessment <i>for</i> Learning	Assessment <i>of</i> Learning
Typical Uses	Provide students with insight to improve achievement; help teachers diagnose and respond to student needs; help parents see progress over time; help parents support learning	Certify competence or sort students according to achievement for public relations, gatekeeper decisions, grading, graduation, or advancement
Teacher's Role	Transform standards into classroom targets; inform students of targets; build assessments; adjust instruction based on results; involve students in assessment	Administer the test carefully to ensure accuracy and comparability of results; use results to help students meet standards; interpret results for parents; teachers also build assessments for report card grading
Student's Role	Self-assess and contribute to setting goals; act on classroom assessment results to be able to do better next time	Study to meet standards; take the test; strive for the highest possible score; avoid failure
Primary Motivator	Belief that success in learning is achievable	Threat of punishment, promise of rewards
Examples	Using rubrics with students; student self-assessment; descriptive feedback to students	Achievement tests; final exams; placement tests, short-cycle assessments

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Ainsworth (2007), in accordance with Chappuis et al. (2010), stated, “Intentionally aligning in-school common formative assessments to district, end-of-course, and state assessments should not be misconstrued as teaching to the test, but regarded instead as sound and fair instructional practice” (p. 95). Ainsworth compared this thinking to how coaches use rules and strategies to practice before playing games. Coaches expect players to use the strategies they learn in practice.

Ainsworth summarized the benefits of educators using assessment practice as promoting ongoing collaboration. Grade level educators should meet regularly to discuss and share effective instructional practices which they can implement in their classroom teaching. This supports the Professional Learning Community (PLC) concept to be discussed later in this chapter. Marzano (2003) ranked monitoring to achieve as number two on the list of school-level factors that affect student achievement. Assessment practice monitors student achievement. When leaders and teachers communicate assessment data with students and with parents, a better understanding of student skills and progress can be made than if no assessment is done; there is a high level expectation for students to achieve academically.

Parent Involvement

Is there a connection between academic achievement and parent involvement?

According to the National PTA (1997):

Over thirty years of research has proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parent involvement and student success. Effectively engaging parents and families in the education of their children has the potential to be far more transformational than any other type of education reform. (p. 5)

What constitutes parent involvement? Child Trends Data Bank (2010) has defined and measured parent involvement in school “by attendance at a general meeting, a meeting with a teacher, or a school event, and by volunteering or serving on a [school] committee” (para. 5). The data bank also makes available information which reports parent involvement rose significantly between 1999 and 2007 (Child Trends Data Bank, 2010).

The goal of NCLB, signed into law January of 2002, has been to insure all children achieve academic proficiency and gain educational skills. The law has mandated parents and community members must be provided with report cards disseminating information on how schools in a student's district score on the district report card. Scoring is based on the school and district AYP report. Schools and districts must report how parents and community members can be involved in school improvement efforts. A large component of the Title I program, which is part of NCLB, mandates parent involvement.

One of the most valuable resources schools have is parental involvement. Laurie Matzke (2010), Director of Title I at the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, stated in a letter written to North Dakota Title I personnel:

Parental involvement has always been a key component in the Title I law. Title I regulations require parental involvement at every level of the program. Communication and training with parents should be an on-going, sustained process that occurs throughout the school year. (para. 1)

In a report titled, *Parental Involvement: Title I, Part A, Non-Regulatory Guidance*, the United States Department of Education (2004) reported the term "parent involvement" means:

The participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities, including ensuring –

- That parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning;
- That parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school;
- That parents are full partners in their child's education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and

- that other activities are carried out, such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA (parental involvement) [Section 9101(32), ESEA]. (p. 3)

The National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs have been developed. The standards and their quality indicators are grounded in sound philosophy, practical experience, and they are research based. The purpose of the standards is:

- To promote meaningful parent and family participation,
- To raise awareness regarding the components of effective programs,
- To provide guidelines for schools that wish to improve their programs.

(Center for Effective Parenting, 2004, p. 2)

According to Lockett (1999), the National Standards are:

- Standard 1: “**Communicating** – Communication between the home and the school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.”
- Standard 2: “**Parenting** – Parenting skills are promoted and supported.”
- Standard 3: “**Student learning** – Parents play an integral role in assisting student learning.”
- Standard 4: “**Volunteering** – Parents are welcome in the school, and their support and assistance is sought.”
- Standard 5: “**Decision Making and Advocacy** – Parents are full partners in the decisions that affect children and families.”
- Standard 6: “**Collaborating with Community** – Community resources are used to strengthen schools, family, and student learning.” (p. 2)

Environment

Learning organizations are built on the premise that learning in organizations means continuously assessing how people think, act, and interact (Senge, 1990; Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross, & Smith, 1994). Johnson (2012) stated, “Teachers make a serious mistake when they assume that student failure only occurs in the academic areas” (p. 17). Sornson (as cited in Fay, 2005) pointed out, “It only takes me a few minutes to notice which schools have a culture of respectful behavior, which supports great learning and teaching” (p. ix). Sornson (as cited in Fay, 2005) expressed, “In the great modern rush to improve schools by raising test scores we may be over-looking some basic truths. Children learn best when they feel safe, valued, and successful” (p. ix), as do teachers.

Fay (2005) affirmed, children do not respond to prescribed consequences out of fear; instead they test the rules and determine the loopholes. “Schools have fallen into the trap of believing if kids know the consequences for rules they break, they will not break the rules. If this were true, discipline would not be a problem” (Fay, 2005, p. 5). Fay continued, “Discipline plans that lock in or prescribe consequences are psychologically unsound” (p. 5).

When students fail behaviorally, effective teachers develop and implement intervention strategies “to correct the behavior just as if the student was failing academically” (Johnson, 2012, p. 17). This does not mean “doing something” to the student. Johnson (2012) discussed, “Effective discipline is influenced by the teacher, the curriculum, classroom structure, how the classroom is managed, and the student” (p. 17). An effective and proactive approach “does not allow teachers to waste time

engaging students in non-essential tasks” (Johnson, 2012, p. 19). This viewpoint parallels academic intervention views; identify and teach the essential skills to help kids become academically successful. A proactive teacher can be described as one who believes and displays an attitude in practice of continual student academic achievement. This statement suggests that learning is not just for students, but rather is a joint partnership between the teacher and the students. Johnson (2012) stated, “This practice involves a continual learning process” (p. 29).

Jenson, Reavia, & Rhode (1994) made the statement, “A major reason teachers leave teaching is because of problems they encounter with difficult students and loss of control in their classrooms” (p. 1). Should schools address behavior and academic deficiencies through instructional coaching practices?

School-based coaching can be a resource and support for schools for learning. According to Killion and Harrison (2006) an increasing number of school systems have determined the school-based instructional coach is a new professional role which helps address the deficiencies in professional development of teachers to improve teacher and student learning. PLCs are a good place for coaching of teachers and so for professional development. School-based behavior coaches address weaknesses in professional development and improve teacher understanding of student behaviors because school-based coaches can work directly with teachers one-on-one when needed. Addressing professional development weakness and improving teacher and student learning is a multi-faceted and complex role for coaches. An important function of school coaches is being a catalyst for change. Killion and Harrison (and Elmore as cited in Killion and Harrison) stated,

To make deep changes in teachers' instructional practice and content knowledge, educators need both opportunities for continuous learning focused on improving student learning and overall school success rather than individual success, grounded in the realities of practice, and located within school as close to the classroom as possible; collaboration with peers about "problem of practice" (Elmore, 2002, p. 8); regular feedback about their practice; and opportunities to examine their beliefs related to teaching and learning. (p. 8)

Killion and Harrison (2006), in their work with school-based coaches, identified Joyce and Showers (1996) as having the best-known studies supporting school-based coaching. Killion and Harrison, supporting Joyce and Showers' research, found when staff development involved presentation and demonstrations, the transfer rate from teacher to classroom implementation was low (p. 14). Beginning in 1980, Killion and Harrison consistently found teachers' implementation of new learning rose dramatically when peer-coaching sessions occurred. Elmore, Peterson, and McCarthy (1996) suggested substantive changes in instructional practice amid teachers are not easy to achieve, even when teachers are willing to apply new practice. "Most of the time, their work found teachers applying new practice inconsistently and superficially in classroom practices" (p. 14).

Killion and Harrison (2006) explained and described the role of an instructional coach as demanding, where the coach seeks to influence change for school improvement by introducing new ideas, making observations, and questioning current practice. They stated, "Coaches are leaders of learning in their schools" (p. 87). Coaches lead learning, supporting teachers to improve their classroom management and instruction by modeling attitudes and behavior needed by teachers to be successful. Killion (2002) explained when instructional coaches are catalysts for change, they have two key responsibilities. The first responsibility is to "elevate the

importance of evaluation beyond monitoring to a genuine enquiry or ‘evaluation think’” (Killion, 2002, p. 1). “Evaluation think” is “individuals and teams looking critically and analytically to discover what is working and what is not in order to redefine their work and improve results” (Killion, 2002, p. 1). An instructional coach’s second responsibility is to introduce alternatives or refinements to current practices.

How do instructional coaches help classroom teachers? Killion and Harrison (2006) provided guidance for instructional coaches to model continuous improvement daily for teachers through their own (the coach’s own) work. The authors provided many strategies for coaches to improve their own professional development.

1. make their practice public;
2. seek feedback from staff inside and outside of school;
3. examine and refine their own practice;
4. think aloud about their work;
5. learn continuously from networking with other coaches;
6. read and conduct action research;
7. use creative and critical problem solving skills;
8. engage others in dialogue;
9. make observations and state them factually;
10. see opportunities, not barriers;
11. communicate and build relationships;
12. frame the challenges to change as positive and constructive. (pp. 82-84)

Killion and Harrison (2006) identified a strategy for an instructional coach: question the status quo as one way to bring about change. They went on to explain the following important strategies. Coaches are willing to change their own practice first and lead by example. Important knowledge and skill for coaches in their role of bringing change is to know and understand how their leadership can effect change and adult development, along with engaging staff in reform initiatives. Behavior coaching

is analogous to academic coaching. Coaches do this by becoming aware of national, state, and local educational initiatives that will improve and impact education.

Another resource for helping schools improve their learning environment is a long-standing national, state, and local education initiative, after school programs. Marzano's (2003) research identified school-level factors that affect student achievement and compared school-level factors described by different researchers. One school-level factor identified was *opportunity to learn*, meaning some students need more time to learn if they are going to progress. Scheduling extended time for instruction during the school day and providing teachers with needed time to meet, plan, and discuss everyday concerns is a school day resource. Extending that scheduled time to after school hours or out-of-school hours is another important resource for teaching and learning. In their report for the Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP), Little, Wimer, and Weiss (2008) stated, "The country is now engaged in public discussions about how to best expand time and opportunities for children and youth in and out of school in order to actively and effectively support their learning and development across the day, throughout the year, and from kindergarten through high school" (p. 1).

Does student participation in After School Programs increase academic achievement? The HFRP report by Little et al. (2008) addressed a decade of research and evaluation studies confirming children and youth who participate in after school programs benefit in outcome areas such as academic, social/emotional, prevention, and health and wellness. Little et al. reported research and evaluation offer three major interrelated factors which are essential for achieving positive youth outcomes:

1. Access to and sustained participation in programs,
2. Quality programming, particularly:
 - Appropriate supervision and structure
 - Well-prepared staff
 - Intentional programming
3. Partnerships with families, other community organizations, and schools.

(p. 6)

Concentration on these three factors will likely accomplish established goals and have successful outcomes.

Access to sustained after school participation can be explained as youth participating more days per week (frequency) over a number of years (sustained). A January 2007 Brief from Chapin Hall Center for Children revealed tailoring programs to youth interests, needs, and schedules, along with providing a variety of enrichment opportunities, were found to be important factors for sustaining programs (Goerge, Cusick, Wasserman, & Gladden, 2007).

Professionalism

The factor (or category), *collegiality and professionalism* has been ranked last of Marzano's school-level factors (categories) and leadership is absent. Marzano explained how those factors may have nonlinear relationships with outcomes. Marzano provided the explanation; the factor, *collegiality and professionalism*, only positively impacts student achievement to a certain point. Marzano inferred professionalism, collegiality, and leadership have nonlinear relationships with student achievement. What is the nature of the nonlinear relationships relating

professionalism and collegiality to student outcomes? Does leadership play a critical role in school reform?

According to Marzano (2003), leadership's "proper place is as an overarching variable that impacts the effective implementation of the school-level factors, the teacher-level factors, and the student-level factors" (p. 20). Marzano (2003) asserted, "Leadership could be considered the single most important aspect of effective school reform" (p. 172). He also stated, "The strongest reason for separating leadership from the model of [school-level, teacher-level, and student-level] factors is that it influences virtually every aspect of the model" (p. 172). Marzano (2003) considered that leadership plays a critical role in school reform. Before the importance of school-level factors are explored, expanding the understanding of the nonlinear factors in school reform would be wise. Elementary principals should understand the importance of nonlinear factors, *professionalism and collegiality*, along with leadership.

If *professionalism and collegiality* is a nonlinear factor in school reform, how does this factor influence other school-level factors and student outcomes? Wikipedia has defined a professional as "a person who is paid to undertake a specialized set of tasks and to complete them for a fee" ("Professional," 2012, para. 1). Most professionals are subject to strict codes of conduct enshrining rigorous ethical and moral obligations. Collegiality, defined by Wikipedia, "is the relationship between colleagues" ("Collegiality," 2011, para. 1). A professional learning community (PLC), defined by Wikipedia, "is an extended learning opportunity to foster collaborative learning among colleagues within a particular work environment or field" ("Professional Learning Community," 2012, para. 1). One means of ensuring

collegiality and professionalism is the development of a PLC. It is often used in schools as a way to organize teachers into working groups.

Professional Learning Community (PLC) is a popular term used loosely and freely by educators today (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2006). DuFour et al. described the purpose of a PLC in education. “The very essence of a learning community is a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student” (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 3); thus, professionalism and collegiality. They acknowledge putting a PLC into practice is not easy; however, they overwhelmingly believe it is worth taking the journey. The authors elaborate about PLCs by stating, schools that take the plunge and actually begin doing PLC work to develop their teaching, their professionalism, their collegiality, and their capacity to do work and increase their effectiveness, help students improve academically. Teachers involved in PLCs “describe a heightened sense of professionalism and a resurgence of energy and enthusiasm” (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 12). DuFour et al. made it clear, just putting PLCs into practice, has been by far more effective than schools that spend years preparing and going through readings and training to implement PLCs. Some schools and districts spend time and money training with no implementation plan or follow through process.

Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) supported the development of professionalism and collegiality. In their book, they quoted one Florida teacher (they didn’t give the teacher’s name) as having said, “There is a huge difference in school culture when a staff feels that what they say actually matters” (p. xi). Capacity has been defined as “the mental or physical ability for something or to do something” (“Capacity,” 2009, para. 4). Marzano (2003) referred to *professionalism and collegiality* as a nonlinear

factor. Nonlinear relationships are described as having wide ranges of dependencies. Because *professionalism and collegiality* exhibits a wide range of dependencies, *professionalism and collegiality* is a nonlinear factor related to all other school-level factors – a *guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals and effective feedback, parent and community involvement*, and a *safe and orderly environment*. Professional learning communities are vehicles for building capacity to do work. They do this by increasing professionalism and collegiality (good will among teachers). PLCs mirror non-linear relationships between leadership and student outcomes, leadership and teachers, and *professionalism and collegiality* and student achievement. Professional learning communities give teachers an opportunity to say what actually matters and leadership an opportunity to respond.

Can schools and districts build their capacity utilizing leadership along with professionalism and collegiality, in other words using the PLC concept to help students learn? Michael Fullan (2005) explained,

Capacity building . . . is not just workshops and professional development for all. It is the daily habit of *working together*, and you can't learn this from a workshop or course. You need to learn by doing it and having mechanisms for getting better at it on purpose. (p. 69)

Fullan prescribed, take action via *learning by doing*. Just start taking action and make something happen. Taking action is a leadership responsibility.

DuFour et al. (2006) emphasized greatly that the PLC concept was not designed for teachers to study over time; the model was designed for taking essential action steps for building capacity between teachers to create and sustain PLCs.

DuFour et al. (2006) continued their support for PLCs by stating, “There is no precise

recipe for school improvement. . . . Even the most promising strategies must be customized for the specific context of each district and each school” (p. 10). They further support the PLC model by verifying one cannot read a book and find the “here’s how” to solving a problem; there are no answers to problems in books. They went on to explain, “Informing others about how something can be done does not ensure they will be persuaded to do it” (p. 11).

Leadership has the responsibility to ensure planning for action takes place. DuFour et al. (2006) made clear their intention has been to use the PLC model as a forum to engage educators in dialogue about their struggles with personnel or school problems. PLCs at the school and district level are useful because, as DuFour et al. believed, dialogue results in the deepest learning and the greatest commitment for teachers and administrators. The focus should not be on the “how” to do it, but rather on the “why” we should do it. When teachers understand the why of their actions, they become more committed. When they know their colleagues understand the same things as they do, it deepens collegiality or teacher-teacher relationships. Teachers are more relaxed and morale is higher, and this is reflected in their attitudes towards students, improving teacher-student relationships or professionalism. When teachers know administrators will listen when they speak that further contributes to a relaxed atmosphere and teacher morale (and professionalism) and ultimately, student outcomes. Thus, the importance of nonlinear factors, *professionalism and collegiality* mirrored with leadership, on student outcomes becomes apparent.

DuFour et al. (2006) stated, “The challenge facing leaders is to identify purposeful dialogue focused on actions, which will contribute to the goal of improved

learning” (p. 11). How do schools take action, putting into practice PLCs and developing a school improvement model for their school or district, which will benefit instruction, and ultimately, student academic achievement? Kotter (1996) concluded in his study:

No one individual is ever able to develop the right vision, communicate it to large numbers of people, eliminate all obstacles, generate short-term wins, lead and manage dozens of change projects and anchor new approaches deep in an organizations culture. A strong, guiding coalition is always needed – one with a high level of trust and shared objectives that appeal to both head and heart. Building such a team is always an essential part of the early stages of any effort to restructure a set of strategies. (p. 52)

Kotter’s study supported a strong leadership team, a guiding coalition team.

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), in their comprehensive study of effective school leadership, concluded: Creating a guiding coalition or leadership team is a critical first step in the complex task of leading a school. An example of a guiding coalition or leadership team would be a small working group of trusted key staff members engaging in a process of shared learning, sharing the specific purpose of building shared knowledge, and leading the school improvement process through scaffolding-shared learning. An example of scaffolding-shared learning between trusted key staff members and colleagues is sharing their experiences in various school settings such as teacher meetings or during informal conversations. A leadership team would be vital to implementation of a professional learning community model.

DuFour et al. (2006) stated, “The purpose of collaboration can only be accomplished if the professionals engaged in collaboration are focused on the right things” (p. 91). DuFour et al. identified the “right things” a staff would direct their collaborative efforts by – questions that drive the work of a PLC.

- What is it we want our students to learn?
- How will we know if each student has learned it?
- How will we respond when some students do not learn it?
- How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency? (p. 91)

The PLC model can be applied to practice by creating a district level leadership guiding PLC coalition team, a team to lead and guide schools from the district level. The PLC model applied to practice at the building level brings teacher leaders together forming a guiding PLC coalition team to guide educators at the school/building level. PLC coalition teams can also be created at the grade level and/or content area level; teacher level teams collaborate and focus on the four questions that drive their particular area of work. Creating a three leveled structure of coalition teams provides professionals the opportunity to identify, engage, and focus on school reform from three different perspectives to identify, discuss, and find solutions to bring about change.

Leadership

A final consideration in the implementation of quality reform is leadership. Marzano (2003) described leadership as a nonlinear factor, the over arching component of school reform. Linda Lambert (2003) described leadership capacity as helping us get from where we are to where we want to be. She put this in plain words: “What we learn depends on understanding the connection between participation and skillfulness” (p. vii). If Lambert described leadership as requiring capacity, how do leaders gain capacity? Is learning a factor of gaining capacity? Lambert described the

features of high leadership capacity as broad-based, skillful participation; a shared vision; established norms of inquiry and collaboration; reflective practice; and improving student achievement. Can leaders gain capacity by learning? Lambert asserted:

Learning and leading are deeply intertwined, and we need to regard each other as worthy of attention, caring, and involvement, if we are to learn together. Indeed, leadership can be understood as reciprocal, purposeful learning in a community. Reciprocity helps us build relationships of mutual regard, thereby enabling us to become co-learners. And as co-learners we are also co-teachers, engaging each other through our teaching and learning approaches. (p. 2)

Lambert also said:

As principals and teachers, we must attend not only to our students' learning but also to our own and to that of the adults around us. When we do this, we are on the road to achieving collective responsibility for the school and becoming a community of learners. (p. 2)

Collins (2001) depicted great leaders as “self-effacing individuals who displayed the fierce resolve to do whatever needed to be done to make the company great” (p. 21). Bell (2009) supported school leaders as learners. Bell stated, “Be eager to learn” (p. 95). He went on to discuss the willingness to learn not only opens you for learning, but also exposes you to opportunities for learning. How do elementary principals learn about new education initiatives, about their staff and students, as well as community values, and the parents of the students in school? Leaders learn to communicate.

Bell (2009) used a communication model describing four levels of learning, based on work by a communication skills pioneer, Dr. Thomas Gordan.

Level 1: Unconscious Incompetence. You're unaware of what you don't know – both in terms of deficit in skill or knowledge you don't currently possess. (p. 96)

Level 2: Conscious Incompetence. You know what you don't know. Here, you recognize the deficit of what you don't know, and you're motivated to learn. (p. 96)

Level 3: Conscious Competence. You know what you know – you are aware of the skills and knowledge you have gained and are ready to accomplish something. However, demonstrating the skill or knowledge requires a great deal of awareness and focus. (pp. 96-97)

Level 4: Unconscious Competence. You don't have to think about what you know – you have had so much practice with a skill that it becomes second nature and can be performed easily (often without concentrating too deeply). You can also teach the skill to others. (p. 97)

The four levels of learning, the four styles of learning, and the relevance of learning are within the description of leadership capacity. Bell (2009) explained, “Everyone may go through the same levels of learning, but everyone has a different learning *style*” (p. 97). Researchers have identified four well-known learning styles:

1. **Visual** learners prefer seeing what they are learning.
2. **Auditory** learners prefer spoken messages, either someone else's voice or their own.
3. **Kinesthetic** learners want to sense the position and movement they are working on.
4. **Tactile** learners want to touch and “get their hands dirty.” (Bell, 2009, p. 97)

As an elementary principal and school leader, knowing your unique learning style supports your learning. As an elementary principal, it is also good to recognize the level of learning of your staff, but also their learning style. It is simultaneously important to learn the learning levels and styles of students attending elementary school.

Bell (2009) went on to point out it is important to identify, “What’s in it for me?” In doing so, he answered the question, “Why?” He explained, “You will be more engaged in the learning once you have identified the relevance of the learning” (p. 98), and Bell described five steps a person goes through during the learning process.

Step 1: Humility. Admit you don’t know all that is necessary for success. Being open to new information is the first step in learning. (p. 98)

Step 2: Intake. Allow the information others have to offer to enter into your mind. . . . It is important to create a safe learning environment, where mistakes are allowed and “re-dos” are encouraged. (p. 98)

Step 3: Clarity with repetition. Learning is a dynamic process. . . . The more you repeat and review the learning, the better you know how to do it. [Repeat what you understand and ask for confirmation.] (p. 98)

Step 4: Application. Once you know how to do something through intake and repetition, you can consciously apply what you have learned in a real situation- [putting into practice what you know]. (p. 98)

Step 5: Internalization. Internalization is where you’re not really thinking about the activity, you’re simply doing it. There are things that you have internalized, like driving a your car or riding your bike. Until you internalized the skill, you had to think about all the mechanics that now seem natural. (p. 99)

Are Bell (2009) and Lambert (2003) separately asserting it is important that a principal know his/her level of learning and learning style as well as that of the staff? The answer is yes. Leadership that understands learning, instruction, and skill level is important to help staff. Differences in levels and styles of learning among teachers are no surprise. Each individual has different skill sets. If an individual teacher is a vital component to a student’s learning outcome, then a focus on good classroom instruction is fundamental. If the vital component to a student’s learning outcome is

the individual teacher, then the vital component to an individual teacher being an effective teacher is leadership? The common goal of effective learning promotes a common vision, that of good classroom instruction. The principal, plays a supportive role within a school, and provides an environment in which teachers are willing to explore new ideas and are unafraid to take risks in leadership roles.

The role of an elementary principal, who works with staff and students every school day, also includes simultaneously experiencing and practicing learning opportunities while providing leadership and organization management skills. In other words, leadership, a principal's primary role, is everything the principal does during each school day. If so, leadership is important.

Heifetz and Linsky (2003) explained how leadership is about making the lives of people around you better, and leadership provides meaning in life. The role of a quality leader is to create the conditions that promote cooperation, creativity, quality work, and self evaluation. Once these conditions are in place, it is the responsibility of the staff to choose whether or not to integrate these concepts into their personal and professional lives.

Is leadership more than creating the condition? The National Association for Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2001), in the publication, *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do* claim.

The myriad management responsibilities a principal faces don't go away. But the framework for how schools are managed needs to change: Everything a principal does in school (whether observing instruction or ordering materials) must be focused on ensuring the learning of students and adults. (p. vi)

The NAESP also stated, “Leadership is a learning activity. By allowing ourselves to see leaders as learners, we create a new image of principal’s work, and we present the principal as a model learner” (p. 12).

Elementary principals also have the responsibility of being effective managers, as well as successful instructional leaders. They understand the need to have balance between management and leadership. NAESP (2001) defined instructional leadership, using six standards:

Standard 1: “Lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center” (p. 2).

Standard 2: “Set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults” (p. 2).

Standard 3: “Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-upon academic standards” (p. 2).

Standard 4: “Create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals” (p. 2).

Standard 5: “Use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement” (p. 2).

Standard 6: “Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success” (p. 2).

Defining and understanding the role and responsibility of an elementary principal is one aspect of the position; however, having the ability to carry out the specific tasks and actions requires a set of skills.

One important skill is to know and understand that leadership is dangerous work. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) reminded leaders the reality and “dangers of leadership take many forms” (p. 31). Heifetz and Linsky stated, “When exercising

leadership, you risk getting marginalized, diverted, attacked, or seduced” (p. 31).

Heifetz and Linsky also stated, “When people resist adaptive work, their goal is to shut down those who exercise leadership in order to preserve what they have” (p. 31).

Leaders understand that when carrying out a cause, which they believe in, it can be difficult to see patterns in the reactions of people around them. Organizations are clever. Resistance to new ideas is often subtle, what makes resistance (dangerous to a leader) effective, is that undercurrents of opposition are not usually obvious.

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explained when people are trying to exercise leadership; they can be pushed aside and taken by surprise from places and people the leader does not expect. Heifetz and Linsky used the example of betrayal. “Individuals may not even realize that they are being used to betray you” (p. 31).

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) described leadership as risky business. “However gentle your style, however careful your strategy, however sure you may be that you are on the right track” (p. 2), the work is tough and people get scars for their efforts.

When you lead people through difficult change, you challenge what people hold dear – their daily habits, tools, loyalties, and ways of thinking – with nothing more to offer perhaps than a possibility. . . . People push back when you disturb the personal and institutional equilibrium they know.” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 2).

Leaders display courage when challenged. Bell (2009) said, “Understand that courage is an action” (p. 75). Bell added, “The stronger your courage is the more willing you will be to confront or engage in the numerous challenges you face” (p. 74). In addition, Bell explained, “Courage is the quality that allows you to stand up, look your fear in the face, and continue to move toward success” (p. 74). Bell listed four areas to “stretch” your courage. Do you need to:

- speak up?
- do the right thing?
- do the unpopular thing?
- participate? (p. 74)

Bell (2009) went on to explain courage can help:

- express your ideas and thoughts
- lead your team in a different direction
- learn new skills
- share information
- be your authentic self
- make decisions with limited information

Bell suggested a role model can provide the strength to be more courageous.

Experienced administrators, those that have experienced success and failure, but continue to lead schools, and who mentor newer administrators, are an example of a role model.

Understand leadership is muddled, confusing, chaotic, frenzied, and seemingly disconnected and disorganized. Bell (2009) depicted, “To have success, (not just leaders, but everyone) you must put up with some disorder; it [success] rarely occurs in a linear path” (p. 108). He explained the world and people are too complex for success to go exactly as planned. People find other opportunities, miscommunications can cause difficulties, mistakes are made, and there are a variety of barriers to overcome. At times, even the most explicit written goals, objectives, and action plans

go by the way-side because elementary schools are dynamic environments filled with active children, teachers, parents, and the daily business of school. Do principals as school leaders confront difficulties and barriers?

School leaders are continually challenged to improve test scores, to better prepare students for workplace challenges, and to make schools more representative of state and national goals. The challenge is difficult. To achieve these goals, leaders will have to blend the characteristics of a school into a new schema that honors community traditions, yet encompasses change that will move a school forward toward targeted goals. As leaders move to make necessary changes, barriers to proposed changes surface.

Barriers to change.

Barriers to change can be viewed as standalone elements, obstacles, difficulties, or catalysts for change, or viewed as one-and-the-same. Diane Ravitch (2011), former United States Assistant Secretary of Education, an education policy analyst and currently a research professor, proselytized to educators that No Child Left Behind does not work. Did she feel barriers and difficulties are the catalyst for change? Yes.

Shirley (2009) stated, “It is becoming increasingly clear that educators’ classroom-level resistance to certain aspects of the recent reforms has reached such a critical mass that a redesign of school-improvement strategies is a matter of the utmost urgency” (p. 139). Shirley described “change” as a “battleground where individuals often stake out their turf and defend it reactively and tenaciously” (p. 152). At the time of this study, was education already in the next generation of school reform?

Education is now moving beyond NCLB. And resistance is high among some educators; however, change is imminent. We all know change is hard; therefore, there is a need to study, develop, and then implement strategies for organizational change that will tackle barriers and difficulties.

To meet challenges and become the catalyst for change, school leadership must hold a vision to identify endemic barriers to change, be visionary enough to adapt change strategies, and lead (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011). That vision should address the major needs of school, yet motivate and inspire staff to change and prepare for the future. It is essential to identify teacher leaders and to then cultivate their skill as leaders who will inspire, support, and teach colleagues.

Research has identified barriers to change and provided methods to make change happen (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011). These barriers include, but are not limited to, internal and external forces. Internal barriers include: cultural, political, and technical challenges. Some external challenges include: insufficient supports, lack of control over hiring and transferring of personnel, as well as lack of sufficient budgets. What do internal and external barriers look like in practice?

Internal barriers to reform (change).

Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) stated barriers are pre-existing aspects of a school's "culture," and they emerge as change is underway. Problems can reduce the commitment of team members. Identifying existing barriers and dealing with them as change takes place is important. Leaders in the field working with teachers identify these barriers as the "existing beliefs, norms, and routines" (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011, p. 56) shared by staff. These barriers can compromise any effort to implement

change. The most common cultural barrier is lack of trust (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011). Lack of trust can be present among any combination of people: parents and teachers, parents and administrators, teachers and administrators, teachers and other teachers, and parents and other parents, etc.

A school system is an excellent example of an interdependent organization because everything that takes place in a school day relies on something else happening or someone taking action. Efficient classrooms depend on parents getting students to school on time, alert and well fed. Teachers depend on administrators to see the right resources are available. Traditional beliefs and views that differ from new instructional strategies, combined with a lack of trust, challenge organizational change. Organizations need trusting environments. When a staff lacks trust, they will not commit to problem solving. Bryk and Schneider (2002) found trusting relationships among teachers to be the most powerful predictor of teacher innovation.

Another example of a cultural barrier is blame bonding. Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) referred to blame bonding as “those instances where teacher collegiality rests upon shared commiseration” (p. 58). Blame bonding is professional exchanges of “them versus us” and not much can be done to change status quo. Blame bonding leads to isolation and enhanced lack of trust. Recurring disagreements or historical splits are another example of cultural barriers that stop communication. Following a set of procedures is yet another example of a cultural barrier. The expression I hear often from teachers is “just tell me what you want me to do.” Kilgore and Reynolds (2011) pointed out that “meaningful improvements rarely, if ever, occur when just

following a set of procedures” (p. 61). “Political” challenges (political barriers) arise when leadership fails to anticipate cultural challenges.

“Technical” challenges (barriers to change) in schools are related to the lack of time allotted for professional development needed to support teacher expertise in new strategies or educational tools. Teachers need guidance and support from many sources: (a) in-school support – on-the-job training, mentoring, and (b) outside consultants – content specific training to understand new processes, technologies, and tools to perform day-to-day instruction activities that relate to curriculum, assessment practice, and pedagogy. School boards, administrators, and teachers need varying amounts of time and support for understanding, implementing, and practicing new strategies.

External barriers to reform (change).

Lack of control over personnel, a human resource concern, is an example of an external barrier. Principals need to be the ones able to hire the right person to fit a school’s needs because principals understand type of personnel needed to make educational improvements. Yet, in practice, principals often are only allowed to manage programs rather than provide support by selecting quality staff or providing input into a budget for resources needed to strengthen programs. Lack of control over budgets and the budgeting process is another example of an external barrier. Staff selection and having control of a budget are management skills. State and federal mandates control budgets, as does central school district offices. Governments and school district offices hold hostage budgets and budgeting processes from principals; governments and district offices are examples of external barriers to change (Kilgore

& Reynolds, 2011). In practice, building principals manage budgets given to them by central offices. It is very difficult for a principal to develop a support plan for staff and provide resources when they, in many cases, have no input into the hiring of personnel or the budgeting process (which is a manager's role). Nevertheless, principals are expected to be school leaders and manage their school.

Change strategies.

How do leaders apply change theory strategies to implement change in an organization? Many people have suggested Lewin's description of three stages of change can help. Lewin's (1947) model remains applicable today. Kurt Lewin's three stage model of change is not only relevant but important for practitioners in the field to communicate with staff (MindTools.com, 2006). Helping stakeholders understand the change process and their feelings associated with change will help those involved commit to and therefore internalize the purpose for change. When staff internalize the reasoning behind change, change becomes more acceptable and is sustainable. Communication is vital to change practice. Kurt Lewin's three stage model for change – called Unfreeze, Change, Refreeze – as cited in MindTools.com (2006), includes:

- Stage 1, Unfreeze, understanding that change is needed;
- Stage 2, Change, recognizing change is a process; and
- Stage 3, Refreeze, establishing stability once the change has taken place; and celebrating the success.

What do leaders do to move organizations forward and work through barriers to improve education? Leaders take action. Fullan (2010) suggested problems

associated with change come in all shapes and sizes, the problems all have a common theme, and they are mired in inertia. Fullan was of the opinion that good leaders sort out what is important and take action, even if they do not always get the intended result. In practice, if leaders do not get the intended results, they figure out work-arounds. Work-arounds mean doing something until the intended result takes place, or doing something different altogether.

Margaret Wheatley (1999) recommended organizations move away from narrow roles to earnest more fluid boundary-less and seamless organizations. Moving teachers away from narrow roles and communicating to staff a purposeful goal for having teacher leaders in an organization is a change strategy. Teachers are not equally skilled; they need to know where they can get help. Educational leaders help teachers by getting them out of their comfort zone to achieve results. Principals that are out-and-about in their buildings, visiting classrooms and interacting with and observing staff members, can determine the teachers who are good at selected skills because those teachers get results. Principals select teacher leaders to serve on leadership teams based on their skills, the results of situations they have dealt with, and their ability to help other teachers. Leadership teams communicating a purposeful goal to staff increase the chance change will become school culture. Communication is the vehicle for understanding an organization's culture. Leaders are the coordinators, the interpreters, the vehicles through which reasoning behind change is communicated to all involved. Leadership is the vehicle to determining sense; why there is importance in bringing change to an organization.

Bolman and Deal (2003) developed a four-frame model to address change in organizations. They defined a frame as a mental map of surroundings; “A frame is a set of ideas and assumptions you carry around in your head” (p. 12). We all carry these “mental models, maps, mind-sets, schema, and cognitive lenses” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 12), around in our heads to help us understand our environment, the culture we live in. Reframing organizations involves changing a collective frame or mind-set in an organization.

Bolman and Deal (2003) recommended leaders make sense of organizations by looking at their organizations through four different perspectives, lenses, or frames. They described these frames as the realms of: structure, human resources, symbolism, and the political frames. They advised those interested in changing an organization to utilize all frames or perspectives ensuring organizations view change through all four lenses. Bolman and Deal provided advice; change agents should not only rely on reason, but also on structure, human resources, political, and symbolic elements. Bolman and Deal (2003) stated, “The effective leader creates an ‘agenda for change’ with two major elements: a *vision* balancing the long-term interests and key parties and a *strategy for achieving the vision*” (p. 205). The agenda for change can be a sense of urgency.

Kotter (1996) and Fullan (2010) supported the idea that a sense of urgency must be created among stakeholders in an organization to create action and make change effective and permanent. Improving student achievement is a catalyst for change in schools. The change strategy then is to create a plan led by educational leaders to overcome barriers and difficulties that can interfere with change known as

the catalyst for change. Kotter's eight steps to change can be used to develop a strategic plan. His steps are:

1. establish a sense of urgency;
2. create a guiding coalition team;
3. develop a vision and strategy articulated in a simple format;
4. communicate the vision of change;
5. give the power to others to act, provide broad-based action;
6. generate short-term goals and objectives, plan for and create;
7. consolidate gains (improvements) and produce more change; and
8. embed new approaches in the culture (construct the new approach as a part of the system). (Kotter, 1996)

How do organizations get where they want to go? Fullan (2010) said leaders need to have a strong purpose with a strong message. Fullan (2010) suggested leaders decide what they are prepared to do and design a plan for teachers with input from teachers, so teachers do not feel something is done to them, but something is done with them. To overcome barriers, internal and external, leaders need to communicate "the plan" to stakeholders. Leaders communicate the clear purpose of a plan by explaining the "why" of the plan.

Strategic planning can be a navigation system for an organization to plan for purposeful change. Schools are complex environments that grow and require change (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011). They need transitioning to attain a desired goal and planning to be able to deal with barriers and overcome difficulties during transitioning phases. Planning is not perfect and no single person can plan for organizational

change. A change process should include planning for abandoning strategies that do not work. Leaders can give permission to abandon a process that is not working and then guide the abandonment process, recalculate, and set a new course. Sometimes the best laid out plans do not work.

Van Clay and Soldwedel (2009) applied systems thinking and building successful partnerships to making sense of different roles within an organization; specifically the school board, administration, and teachers to bring about organizational change. The administration serves as tacticians, having direct impact on performance, and teachers are the operationalists, exercising direct influence on students. Van Clay and Soldwedel (2009) identified the school board as serving a strategic role or providing the big-picture view. Van Clay and Soldwedel (2009) summarized the three stakeholder roles as tactical, operational, and strategic. Each stakeholder role has their view of expectation and reality, and roles are interdependent of each other.

A domino effect takes place when something happens causing something else to happen, and barriers and difficulties are positioned (Kilgore & Reynolds, 2011). People stake out their position, no matter their stakeholder role in the school organization. With leadership, the school board, administrators, and teachers can overcome barriers and difficulties to create alignment and develop a plan for what is important.

Leadership is responsible for guiding educators to gain an understanding of what change requirements are needed in a school in order for the school to become a quality school. Then, leaders channel staff development planning with staff to align

researched-based critical areas of school reform with best and next practices.

Changing teacher behavior and ultimately the culture in an organization requires skill, planning, and practice. Planning that is focused on specific goals results in change.

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explained, “Perseverance [is] required of leadership until a successful adaptation can take hold” (p. 20).

Leaders assess staff skills to be able to know and understand what teachers need. They divide the needs of staff and plan for and provide support. DuFour et al. (2006) affirmed we learn best by doing. Leadership is a learned skill, put to practice using research-based strategies, re-examined often, and continuously improved if principals are to help teachers and cultivate teacher leadership. Fullan (2010) supported learning by doing. He recommended, “To get anywhere, you have to do something” (p. 32). Fullan explained the goal of all leaders of change is to get movement in an improved direction. “The role of the leader is to enable, facilitate, and cause peers to interact in a focused manner” (Fullan, 2010, p. 36).

Skillful leaders can help staff hone their existing skill levels, while simultaneously removing internal and external barriers to change through purposeful planning with staff. When leaders guide people through difficult change, they challenge what people hold dear, their daily habits and ways of thinking (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Planning professional development provides teachers opportunities for learning new ways, changing attitudes, values, and behaviors. Teachers can thrive in a new environment. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) asserted although leadership can be a perilous undertaking, it is worth the risk because goals “extend beyond material gain or personal advancement” (p. 3).

Effective leaders make lives of people around them easier, better, and in doing so the leader's own life is enriched. Leadership well done can create purpose that affects leaders as well as staff by providing meaning to their work. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) emphasized leadership involving change would be a safe undertaking if solutions to problems were already known. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) made it clear that sustainability depends on people involved internalizing the change.

School leaders involved in school reform bring change to their staff and the school. The way that a leader approaches change and deals with barriers will affect not only the staff but also the students and ultimately have a positive effect on student achievement.

CHAPTER III

Research Methods

Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used in this study including the purpose of developing a process and structure for adopting and leading critical school reform initiatives in an elementary school. The goal has been improved academic achievement for all students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth grade enrolled at Century Elementary, Grafton, North Dakota. This qualitative research study design employs fundamental components of case study and grounded theory to address the following questions.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided this study include:

1. What factors facilitated or hindered the development of processes and structures leading school reform initiatives?
2. What role(s) did key stakeholders play in the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives?
3. What effects did the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives have on student achievement?

Ultimately, the role of a researcher is to collect data with the goal of visually presenting and conveying an analysis of the data in a model. In this study, case study

and grounded theory designs provided a foundation for the model developed (Slavin, 2007).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative researchers are concerned with an interaction in a particular setting (Slavin, 2007). Slavin explained a setting is best understood in the context of the history of institutions and communities of which the researcher is a part. Qualitative research uses a natural setting as the direct source of data (p. 122). Slavin further clarified, “When the data in which researchers are interested comes in the form of existing documents, such as official records, researchers want to know where, how, and under what circumstances the records came into being” (p. 122). Qualitative researchers believe human behavior is significantly influenced by the setting.

This research was designed to be an exploration and learning activity within an elementary school setting within a school district in an effort to benefit the school district; but ultimately, to strengthen and improve the elementary students’ academic achievement. The researcher used qualitative research methods in this study to analyze site-specific factors involved in leading school reform. Combining methods of grounded theory and case study, made a stronger research design because case study research examines a known real-life context having strategic importance to real life problems, and grounded theory allows the researcher to understand that real-life context. Grounded theory helps a researcher understand the context of a condition (such as a case study) by applying a set of steps from a corpus of data. Data may be collected from the case study and from grounded theory methods to produce interpretations or a particular outcome (Slavin, 2007). Grounded theory and case

study differ; however, they share the essential characteristics of qualitative research including: eliciting understanding and meaning from a set of phenomena with the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection, analysis, and presentation of the findings.

Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) first developed grounded theory as an approach to qualitative analysis while conducting an observational field study. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined grounded theory as a qualitative research method that used a systemized set of procedures to develop and inductively derive grounded theory about a phenomenon. The purpose for using a grounded theory approach is to develop a descriptive explanation of phenomenon which identifies major constructs or categories, then relationships. Following the identification of major constructs, categories, and relationships, a researcher then organizes the many ideas during analysis of the data to make interpretations.

Borgatti (1996) described grounded theory as concerned with understanding the world by using a set of steps. Borgatti (1996) described the phases of grounded theory by referring to theory developed inductively from a corpus of data. Grounded theory takes different cases and merges them into a whole, a single unit, in which the variables interact as a unit to produce a particular outcome. The intentional result is in aligning collected data with one data set. Thus, the importance of using grounded theory with this real-life case study is that schools are highly dynamic environments where multiple circumstances surround events, programs, and staff. “In school” things happen, just as Glasser (1998) described: sequentially, subsequently,

simultaneously, serendipitously, and as scheduled; and, grounded theory is multivariate. Then, combining grounded theory methods with case study theory makes an even stronger research design.

Case Study

A case study point of view assumes variables interact in complex ways. Yin (1984) provided a technical definition for case study. He associated case study research with an empirical enquiry which investigated a modern-day phenomenon with real-life circumstances, when boundaries between phenomenon and circumstances are not clearly evident. Case study is an intensive analysis of a single entity. Multiple sources of evidence for this case study have been collected and used. Data were collected from the school years 2005-2006 through 2010-2011. This case study included data from programs, events, and unintended processes, as well as field notes and school demographic data.

Merriam (1998) defined case study research as “an examination of a specific phenomenon, such as a program, an event, a process, an institution, or social group” (p. 9). The intention of conducting case study research was to produce information, with rich description and complexity, in a given setting. Case study theory was selected because it is unique; descriptive, interpretive, and/or evaluative (Merriam, 1998). The frame of reference for selecting Century Elementary and the Grafton Public School District as a research location was the researcher’s working knowledge of the site.

The researcher applied case study methodology to study the school district’s process and structure for identifying an important issue in education, implementing

and leading school reform initiatives. This study has focused on specific phenomena: events, programs, processes, and staff, along with multiple circumstances surrounding events, programs, processes, and staff. The study is sequential, meaning data were collected over time.

Grafton Public School District and Century Elementary were specifically selected as the natural setting because the researcher is tasked with leading and implementing school reform initiatives at Century Elementary School. Reform initiatives affected and continue to affect the Grafton School District; and ultimately, the staff and students. Case study and grounded theory have provided rich descriptions within real-life contexts, having strategic importance to the problem of implementing school reform initiatives.

Researcher's Role

The researcher is the chief investigator, and the primary conductor of the data analysis. During a review of the literature, the researcher examined school reform initiatives and their effect on student achievement for the purpose of gaining some background on the school district in this study and identifying how the Grafton School District addressed school reform.

The first responsibility of a researcher is to develop a clear definition of his or her role including: identifying purpose, biases, and site selection (Glesne, 2006). At the time of this study, the researcher was the elementary principal for the Grafton Public School District, Grafton, North Dakota. The researcher had a direct relationship with selected key stakeholders because this was a site-specific study.

Other key stakeholders had minimal relationships with the researcher. Glesne (2006) asserted, no matter how qualitative researchers view their role, relationships develop.

The researcher selected Century Elementary School as the case study site because in her role as the elementary principal it was her responsibility to implement and lead school reform initiatives. The selected school district offered the researcher the opportunity to lead school reform initiatives, as they were deficient or nonexistent at the building level and at the district level when the study was initiated in the 2005-2006 school year. The researcher had a strong bias in support of developing a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives.

School District Description

Grafton School District is located in the heart of the Red River Valley in northeastern North Dakota. The region prides itself as having some of the finest agricultural land in the world. It is an ideal area for the production of top-quality sugar beets, potatoes, edible beans, and small grains. Grafton is considered by residents in the rural and outlying communities as a hub for the area.

At the time of this study, the city population was approximately 4,500. The city was also home to over 250 businesses including: service, retail, and professional. Grafton High School, Century Elementary, and the North Valley Career and Technical school have been part of a complex shared with the Grafton Parks and Recreation District. Included in this complex has been the Centennial Center for events, ice hockey, and figure skating. Baseball, football, and soccer fields have made up the remainder of the complex.

Upper Valley Special Education Unit (UVSE), Headstart, and Migrant Headstart have been located within close proximity of the complex. Central Middle School has been located in the city's center business area. There has been a strong partnership among all individual educational entities, which offers the entire area a multitude of essential services and provides educational opportunities for preschool and school age children as well as adults which would not otherwise be available in a rural community. Grafton Public Schools, the Upper Valley Special Education Unit, and the North Valley Career and Technology school have been members of the Red River Valley Education Cooperative (RRVEC), which has been a part of an eight-region state network comprising the North Dakota Regional Education Association. At the time of this study, the RRVEC represented nearly 13,000 K-12 students and approximately 1300 teachers in 20 member school districts.

During this study, Century Elementary was connected to Grafton High School; however, both schools had separate building plant operations (e.g., classrooms, gymnasium, music room, technology labs, library, and common area). Each building had a common area; however, they shared the elementary commons for the purpose of serving lunch.

At the time of this report, Century employed twenty-nine certified teachers, nine para educators, and had contracts with the Upper Valley Special Education Unit for five certified special education teachers to deliver specialized student education and special services. Teachers ranged in age from early twenties to sixty-two. One third of the teachers were thirty-five and below, one third of the teachers were thirty-six to forty nine, and one third of the teachers were fifty and over. Eleven teachers

had over twenty years teaching experience, eight teachers had ten or fewer years of experience, and ten teachers had eleven to nineteen years of teaching experience.

Century configured the student body into four classrooms per grade level section for kindergarten through second grade and three classrooms per grade level section for grades three and four. Each classroom was assigned one certified classroom teacher. Paraprofessional support was assigned to a student or students with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). The elementary school also employed one full time certified teacher for each of the following areas: instructional coach, library, music, physical education, English as a Second Language (ELL), and technology instruction. Three certified teachers supported Title I instruction. The school counselor was contracted for eighty percent time. These certified personnel provided instruction and support to all students in all classrooms.

In the 2010-2011 school year, a prekindergarten program was piloted and offered for half a day, three hours Monday through Friday in the morning. In the 2011-2012 school year, two sections of prekindergarten (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) were offered. Century's education program has been supported by the federal Title I, Title II, Title III (English Language Learners), and 21st Century Before and After School funding. At the time of this report, all certified teachers were highly qualified in the areas they taught. All para professionals met the Title I North Dakota state para educator qualifications. A full-time interpreter was present daily for Spanish-speaking students and parents. Grafton school district, community, and surrounding area have been unique in many ways, offering the researcher an unique experience.

In 2005-2006, Century employed twenty-seven certified teaching staff, nine para educators, and contracted with the Upper Valley Special Education Unit for four certified special education teachers to deliver specialized student education and special services. Teachers ranged in age from early twenties to sixty-two. Nine teachers were below thirty years of age, one teacher was between thirty-one and thirty-nine, twelve teachers were over forty, and nine teachers were over fifty-five. Three teachers retired at the end of the 2005-2006 school year, and three teachers left the Grafton School district for other teaching positions.

During the 2005-2006 school year, Century was configured kindergarten through Grade 5. At the end of the 2005-2006 school year, the fifth grade was moved to Central Middle School; changing Century's configuration to kindergarten through fourth grade. During the 2005-2006 school year, Century had four classrooms in each section of kindergarten through second grade and three classrooms for each section of Grades 3, 4, and 5. Each classroom was assigned a highly qualified certified classroom teacher. The elementary school also employed one full time certified staff for each area: library, music, and physical education. The school counselor was contracted for eighty percent time. The ELL teacher was contracted for fifty percent time, having a split contract, weighted heavier (more days) in the fall and in the spring, thus benefiting migrant students. The curriculum coordinator was contracted for fifty percent time, having a contract with North Valley Career and Technology Center for another fifty percent time which totaled a full time contract. Century's education program was supported by the federal Title I, Title II, Title III (English Language Learners), and 21st Century Before and After School funding. All certified

teachers were highly qualified in the areas they taught. All para professionals met the Title I North Dakota state para educator qualifications. A full-time interpreter was present daily for Spanish-speaking students and parents.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the staff had out dated reading and math materials they referred to as curriculum resources, no alignment between classrooms at grade level, and no alignment between grade levels or programs. Each teacher used what was available for teaching or what they were comfortable using. Title I, Special Education, ELL, and ESP programs were not aligned; teachers in these programs did not attend the same professional development as other teachers or have resources aligned with classroom instruction. Little technology was available to staff or students. The elementary had a computer lab funded through the ESP program. The technology lab had minimal use during school hours. No technology instruction was available for students. Summer education programs included ESP, Migrant Education, and Upper Valley Special Education offered Extended School Year (ESY) education service to students on Individual Education Plans (IEP) if ESY was identified on their IEP. Programs operated in silos, meaning there was no alignment with curriculum, instructional practice, assessment, professional development, or resources during the summer just as programs during the school year operated in silos. There was no identified curriculum, no program alignment, little resources for support; no professional development aligned to programs, little technology, no identified school reform initiatives, even the playground equipment was outdated and old. The school building was modern and up-to-date.

Although at the time of this study, the researcher was employed by the district and worked in the building she researched, the study had to be approved by the chief district officer, the superintendent. The researcher scheduled a specific conference date and time to have a face-to-face discussion with the Grafton Public School District Superintendent to introduce this study and determine his willingness to participate in the study. Following his verbal approval, the researcher provided him with a letter (Appendix C) describing the study and a template of a letter for him to sign showing his consent of the study and his agreement to participate (Appendix D). The researcher's letter introducing the study requested the superintendent to return a letter based on the template, written on school district letterhead paper, indicating understanding of his involvement in the study, the purpose of the study, and the research methods outlined in the study. The Superintendent's signed letter is in Appendix E.

A meeting was scheduled with the researcher's doctoral advisor for approval of the topic proposal. Upon securing her advisor's approval and following University of North Dakota procedure; a topic proposal doctoral committee member meeting was scheduled. The doctoral committee approved the topic proposal January 26, 2012. Subsequently, with committee endorsement, the topic proposal was submitted to the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval from the University of North Dakota. IRB approval was granted February 27, 2012 (Appendix F).

Data Collection

The literature review and the methodology used for this study (qualitative research methods, case study and grounded theory) provided the researcher with a plan for what type of data to collect. To minimize the effect of bias and increase validity of the data, multiple sources of collected data were used to provide a valuable “rich” description of the data. Public documents, building and district level demographic data, researcher’s field notes, and compiled results from surveys and committee meetings were collected.

Public documents consisted of information on student achievement stored on the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction website. Items included, characteristics of quality schools, Adequate Yearly Progress reports for school years 2005-2006 through 2011-2012, school district report cards through the years 2005-2011, information relating to the North Dakota school improvement process, and North Dakota mandated long-range planning reports. Local public documents consisted of building and district information, both positive and negative reports regarding school improvement, goal setting and long-range planning meetings, field notes, school demographic data, as well as grievance letters and letters of response specifically addressed to the elementary principal. A federal civil rights report and a state special education complaint were reviewed as well.

Data Analysis

Understanding the analysis process of qualitative data, Slavin (2007) stated, “Qualitative research is descriptive usually in the form of words or pictures, rather than numbers” (p. 123). The collected data was in various forms, some of the survey

results were in charts and graphs, and other data was in narrative form and not reduced. Analyzing the richness of the collected data, and then comparing that data as closely as possible to data recorded and then transcribed was part of the analysis process.

Qualitative research is concerned with process (Slavin, 2007). The researcher builds abstractions over time as he or she categorizes observations; theory emerges over time from the interconnections between the collected pieces of evidence. Borgatti (1996) described the analysis step of grounded theory as concerned with understanding the world by using categories drawn from respondents' answers, then crafting implicit systems to be explicit. The fundamental design of this step in the grounded theory method is to create a database, identify variables, and group similar variables into categories and concepts with interrelationships. The qualitative research approach assumes nothing is trivial and everything has the potential to be a clue to understanding what is being studied (Slavin, 2007).

Creswell (2009) supported Slavin (2007) and Borgatti (1996) by creating a diagram illustrating a stepladder approach to the steps in the qualitative research process (p. 185). He suggested a linear, hierarchical approach building from the bottom to top. In practice, Creswell views the process as more interactive. His diagram begins with first collecting raw data, second organizing and preparing data for analysis, third reading through all the data, fourth coding the data by hand or using technology, fifth differentiating the codes into themes and description, next interrelating themes and descriptions (e.g. case study and grounded theory), then

interpreting the meaning of the themes and descriptions, and finally validating the accuracy of the information.

Collection and Analysis of Data

For this case study, multiple methods for collecting data and multiple sources of data were used. Data were collected from Century Elementary and Grafton Public School District public documents and compiled minutes of committee meetings, public demographic and academic data from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction website, field notes from meetings, and informal interviews of feedback from activities and teachers.

Collection and analysis of data at the elementary level.

The first intentional data collection by the researcher was designed as an activity, not for this research study, and was paralleled with a team building activity for elementary teachers and para professionals. The collection fielded fifty-eight items identified by teachers as goals they would like to achieve at Century. The researcher was overwhelmed with their intensity to complete the request for information as well as their response. It was clear; teachers wanted and appeared ready for change. Teachers, seemingly, were excited someone was interested in their feelings about their work, the circumstances surrounding their work, and the lack of resources to be able to carry out their work in school. The researcher's intention was to use the information to bring change to Century Elementary, as identified in her portfolio as the new elementary principal. At the time, the researcher was assigned the role of bringing change. The superintendent expressed to the researcher, "The staff is ready for change; bring change."

During the researcher's first year as principal at Century Elementary, the only support for change included the researcher (elementary principal) and the newly hired curriculum coordinator. The curriculum coordinator, an experienced school administrator, took charge and immediately started implementing change, conducting a needs assessment of curriculum and resources available to teachers. The result from the needs assessment was dismal. There was no identifiable curriculum. Little resources were available, and those resources were not aligned at grade level and were scattered around the building, across grade levels, or to programs. Professional development was not meaningful to teachers. The researcher was fortunate to have the curriculum coordinator's knowledge, experience, and administrative background for support to formulate a plan to bring change.

The curriculum coordinator attended all elementary meetings and met with grade level teachers and specialists throughout the school year. She attended district goal setting and long-range planning meetings as well as school improvement meetings. The researcher (elementary principal) and the curriculum coordinator met often to discuss and determine what next steps were needed.

In the fall of 2005, the researcher carefully, however crudely because of inexperience, conducted the procedure of coding the fifty-eight data items (goals teachers identified) gathered at the beginning of this study. First, the researcher made pencil notes on the sides of the items, next she went back over the items with different color highlighters for the purpose of coding, and then assigned the coded items to categories. All coded items colored orange were categorized *staff, social, and communication*. All coded items colored blue were categorized *discipline and respect*.

All coded items colored yellow were categorized *Building Level Support Team*. All coded items colored pink were categorized *curriculum mapping*. All coded items colored green were categorized *assessment and data*. All coded items left white were coded *technology*.

The researcher wishes to re-emphasize that at the time of initial data collecting, the researcher had no formal training nor had taken any graduate course work in the area of qualitative research. The researcher is truly a field practitioner interested in drilling down to the practicalities of problem solving and working with teachers to help them with our work, educating children. Finally, the researcher identified themes which seemed evident and relevant. The researcher formulated interpretations based on the data for the purpose of implementing the next steps in the study.

The themes became the ground work for change and years later continued to be the foundation which determined decisions affecting education at the elementary level at Century. From the first day of collecting data and determining themes to the end of the research study, everything focused on initial themes (formed from those initial 58 teacher goals). Cluster committees were formed to address each theme.

The focus of work within cluster committees has evolved and changed over the years. As new data were collected and analyzed, new codes were assigned to data and then analyzed. Eventually, cluster committee work was abandoned and replaced with professional learning communities (PLCs), because the elementary teachers continued to need a method to discuss and solve problems. “Think Tank” meetings were implemented in the 2009-2010 school year and were continuing to be held at the time of this report during the months of February, March, and April for the purpose of

addressing issues and problems affecting elementary programs and partner programs (e.g., school day, afterschool, summer school, and migrant school). Think Tank members, with the elementary principal as mediator, have been finding solutions to identified needs, and then planning implementation strategies.

Over the course of the study, three data sets were collected and analyzed according to Creswell's (2009) eight step approach for analyzing data as outlined in Figure 9.1 of the book, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (p. 185). Step 1 involved collecting raw data. Data for the elementary was easily accessible; stored, and used during the school year in the principal's office. The researcher revisited the initial raw data collection, studied the fifty-eight goals, and rechecked codes to make sure coding was accurate. The superintendent of Grafton's public school district provided school district data consisting of goal setting, school improvement, and long range planning meeting agendas and minutes, along with power point presentations in electronically transmitted files. In an effort to complete Step 2, organizing and preparing data for analysis, the researcher printed hard copies of each electronic file, including the power point presentations. The researcher organized all data chronologically fall to spring, separated by school year, into a three ring binder.

Next, the researcher created a data source matrix document in which to write notes and relevant findings for each school year. This document structured Creswell's Step 3, reading through all data, by organizing data for a quick-view process, providing a medium to view or review specific notes from the raw data. This data source matrix helped visualize data as the researcher simultaneously coded each

response, Step 4. Steps 5 and 6, consisted of formulating themes and descriptions. Step 7 interrelated the themes (using grounded theory, and case study methods for my research). Finally Step 8, interpreting the meaning of themes/descriptions, was completed. Table 6 illustrates the initial goals collected from teachers and coded from elementary school raw data.

Table 6. List of Elementary School Codes, 2005-2006.

1. Fish Philosophy - motivational speaker	2. Consistency in enforcing playground rules
3. Staff unity	4. Consistency in enforcing lunchroom rules
5. Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) improvement, Building Level Support Team (BLST)	6. Time to accomplish grades in Powerschool
7. Alleviate running in the hallways	8. School nurse
9. Staff committee	10. Making parents more aware of their responsibilities
11. Teacher input on lyceums	12. Improve check-out system for audio visual equipments
13. Cross grade level activities (i.e. reading and writing)	14. Better staff communication and get-togethers
15. Update audio visual equipment	16. Color code hallways
17. Computers for student use in classrooms	18. Clear set of rules for playground
19. System for computer sign up	20. Enough playground equipment
21. Consistency for rules (ball retrieval on playground)	22. Enough playground equipment
23. More equipment for outside use	24. Sound absorbing barriers in the lunch room
25. Set standards for gift fund	26. Clearly specify door for visitors to use
27. ID name identifier - school safety	28. Set rules and parameters on gift giving within classrooms – balloons/deliveries

Table 6. Cont.

29. Color code identifier for visitors	30. Color code system for morning
31. Eliminate balloons and flowers delivered to students at school	32. Backpacks dropped outside - recess/classroom doors
33. Address attendance and tardy issuers	34. BLST – TAT, Step 1
35. Continue monthly potlucks	36. First aid training
37. Positive open-minded attitude toward change	38. School nurse
39. Continue to promote positive parental communication	40. Discipline plan and procedures
41. Re-establish gift fund	42. Review of field trips – increase
43. Get a die-cut machine	44. Increase staff get-togethers and potlucks
45. New computers for special education teachers and Title I teachers	46. Respect
47. Laptops for regular Ed teachers	48. Increase public relations school web page
49. Have fun!	50. Playground equipment increase amount /update and fix
51. Monitor attendance	52. Earth Day - landscape /gardens
53. Closed-captioned TV or at least some TV	54. Theme-based activities school wide
55. Consistency in enforcing discipline	56. Curriculum mapping
57. Reading – results usage	58. NWEA assessment – results usage

Table 7 illustrates categories that emerged from the initial raw data (58 goals teachers gave to researcher during the first year of the study). From each category, the researcher inferred a theme. Figure 1 shows how the researcher interpreted themes to define one overarching goal or interpretation of data being collected.

Table 7. Transforming Elementary Categories to Themes, 2005-2006.

Category 1 Staff, Social, and Communication	Category 2 Data and Assessment (NWEA and NDSA)	Category 3 Discipline and Respect	Category 4 Curriculum Mapping	Category 5 Building Level Support Team (BLST/ TAT)	Category 6 Technology
Theme 1 Staff would like to be able to meet regularly, increase public relations, celebrate success, continue to be motivated, and have a positive and open mind.	Theme 2 Staff would like to be able to disaggregate, interpret, and use assessment results.	Theme 3 Staff would like to implement and support behavior program. Increasing playground equipment would help with discipline. School safety is important and must be addressed.	Theme 4 Staff would like to communicate and collaborate with each other about curriculum across curricular areas and between grade levels.	Theme 5 Staff would like to establish a BLST to be able to create a support team for classroom teachers for academic support and behavior support.	Theme 6 Staff would like to increase their use, and knowledge, as well as student use and knowledge, in the area of technology.

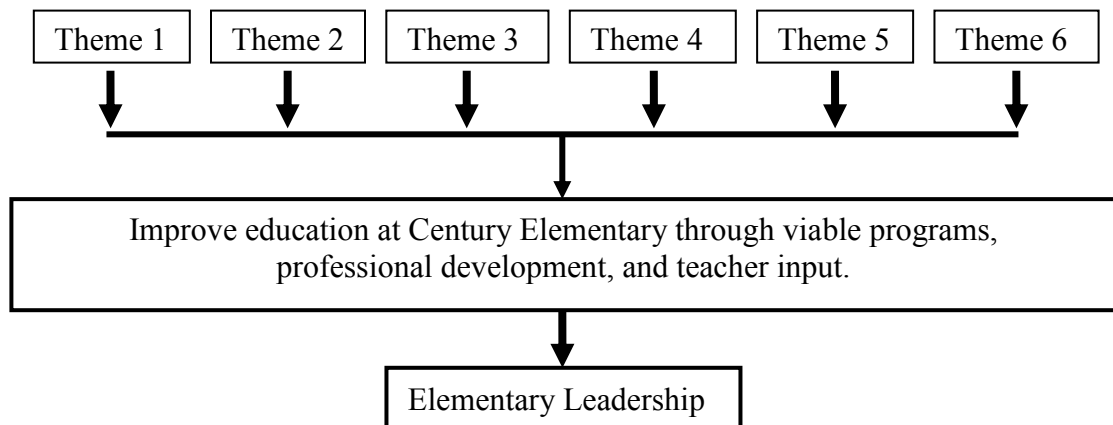


Figure 1. Transforming Themes to Interpretations.

While the researcher coded the initial 58 goals, she also established written leadership goals and a written five year strategic plan including: goals and objectives,

an action plan, along with outcome activities based on the collected 58 goals data. The researcher conducted surveys and collected written responses about impressions people had concerning various events after those events took place for the purpose of improving those activities for the next school year. All responses were added to emerging codes and often supported the codes that had already emerged during earlier data analysis. To further support data collection, the researcher conducted informal interviews at subsequent times and points throughout the study, reconfirming the reliability of earlier data. The researcher continually analyzed notes from informal interviews and field notes during the study. The codes that emerged from informal interviews were: “meaningful and purposeful professional development,” “time to plan,” “time to analyze student data,” and “address student discipline.”

Throughout the six school years of this study, the researcher probed multiple teachers for constructive feedback by going directly to teachers and asking for feedback on school improvement initiatives such as: professional development, common plan time/student schedules, before and after school programs, assessment practice, and technology. All codes continued to be consistent with Century themes and interpretations as well as consistent with district themes and the identified school improvement areas. When the researcher first approached teachers for constructive feedback or for their impressions of how an event went after the action took place, they were hesitant to share their thoughts. At the time of this report, however, after action conversations had been frequent. Teachers expected to provide feedback to the researcher because they knew she would ask. And if the researcher did not ask, they

openly shared relevant information that could be used to enhance programs or activities.

Although the researcher did not have complete control of the application of change theories, because of school dynamics – Year 1 (2005-2006) determined Year 2 (2006-2007) action planning, and Year 2 (2006-2007) influenced Year 3 (2007-2008) action planning, and so on through to Year 6 (2010-2011), action planning included: (a) creating guiding coalition teams made up of teachers at the elementary school level, these teams became known as six cluster committees with the specific assignment of addressing themes that emerged from the initial 58 goals gathered in 2005-2006 by discussing and problem solving, (b) the cluster committees – one committee to address each theme – were responsible to meet monthly with the elementary principal to problem solve and plan, (c) cluster committees were responsible to report their working plan results at monthly all staff meetings. Cluster committees were abandoned and replaced with research-based professional practices beginning in the 2008-2009 school year.

Grafton administration (e.g. elementary, middle, and high school principals and Grafton's superintendent) formed a leadership team developing written plans for the following areas: school improvement, technology, professional development, a seven year curriculum and purchase cycle, English as a Second Language (ELL), schoolwide Title I, school counseling, and Special Education. Outcome activities for Year 2 (2006-2007) included:

1. A curriculum and purchase cycle;
2. Beginning a pilot literacy program;

3. Beginning site visitations;
4. A review of research-based instructional programs and materials;
5. Forming collaboration between Title I, ELL, Special Education, and ESP;
and
6. Making recommendation to hire a district curriculum
coordinator/instructional coach.

All data was recorded and filed, then used with staff at meetings as well as being communicated often. Year 2006-2007 was a critical year of change at the elementary and the district level; this school year became the foundation for the stages of developing a process and structure for implementing reform initiatives. Leadership at the district level, a new superintendent, was the most significant variable.

Collection and analysis of data at the district level.

The second set of data was collected at the district level. Goal setting meeting agendas and compiled results, school improvement meeting agendas and compiled results, and long-range planning meeting agendas and compiled results were reviewed. District codes and categories that emerged from raw data are illustrated in Appendix G (2005-2006), Appendix H (2006-2007), Appendix I (2008-2009), Appendix J (2009-2010), and Appendix K (2010-2011). There were no data available for the 2007-2008 school year. District personnel had no explanation for why the data was missing.

Figure 2 illustrates how categories derived from district data were transformed into themes, and subsequently interpretations.

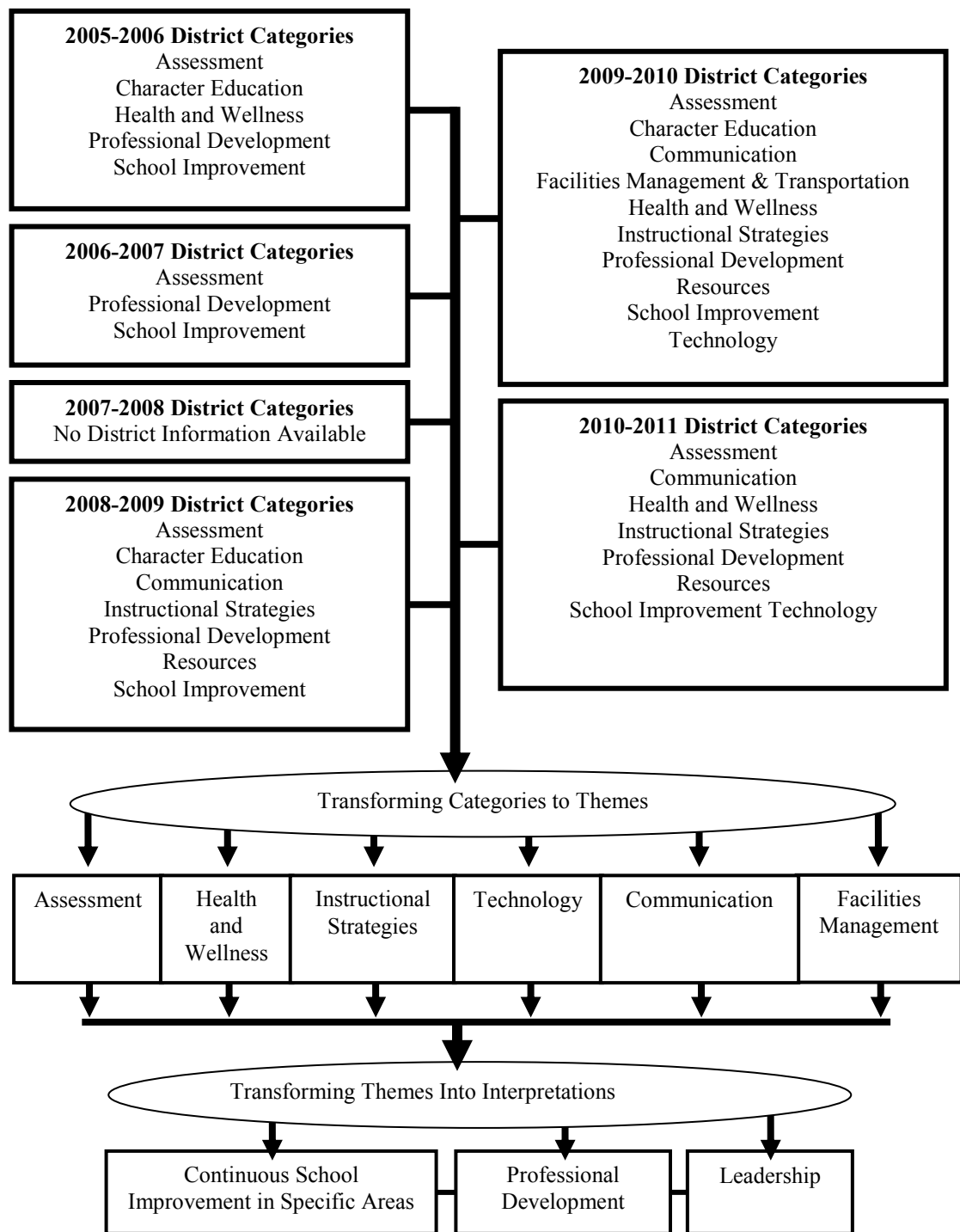


Figure 2. District Categories, Themes, and Interpretations.

Relationship of elementary level and district level data.

The third set of data analyzed was the relationship between interpretations derived from Century Elementary data collections and interpretations obtained from Grafton School district data collections (see Figure 3).

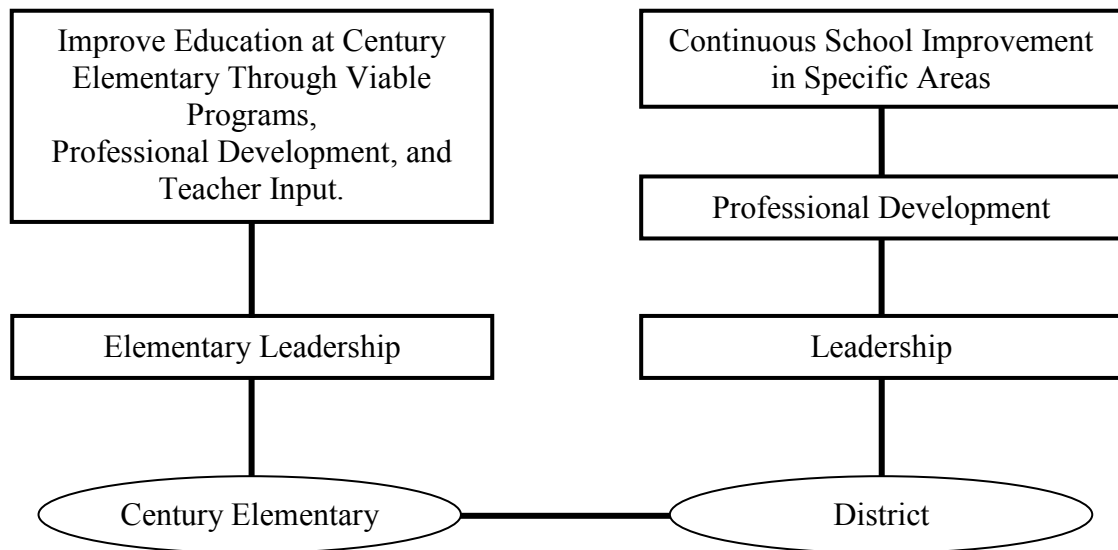


Figure 3. Relationship Between Century Elementary Interpretations and the School District Interpretations.

Figure 4 represents the logical progression of ideas that emerged during data analysis while combining three sets of data to illustrate a thorough data-collection model. The purpose of this study was to develop a “process” and “structure” for adopting and leading critical school reform initiatives within an elementary school setting. Figure 4 models the “structure” that was developed as a result of this study.

The model for “Implementing School Reform Initiatives” was constructed by the researcher to illustrate how important it is for elementary categories “to interact” with categories at the district level. It is also important “to align” categories at the

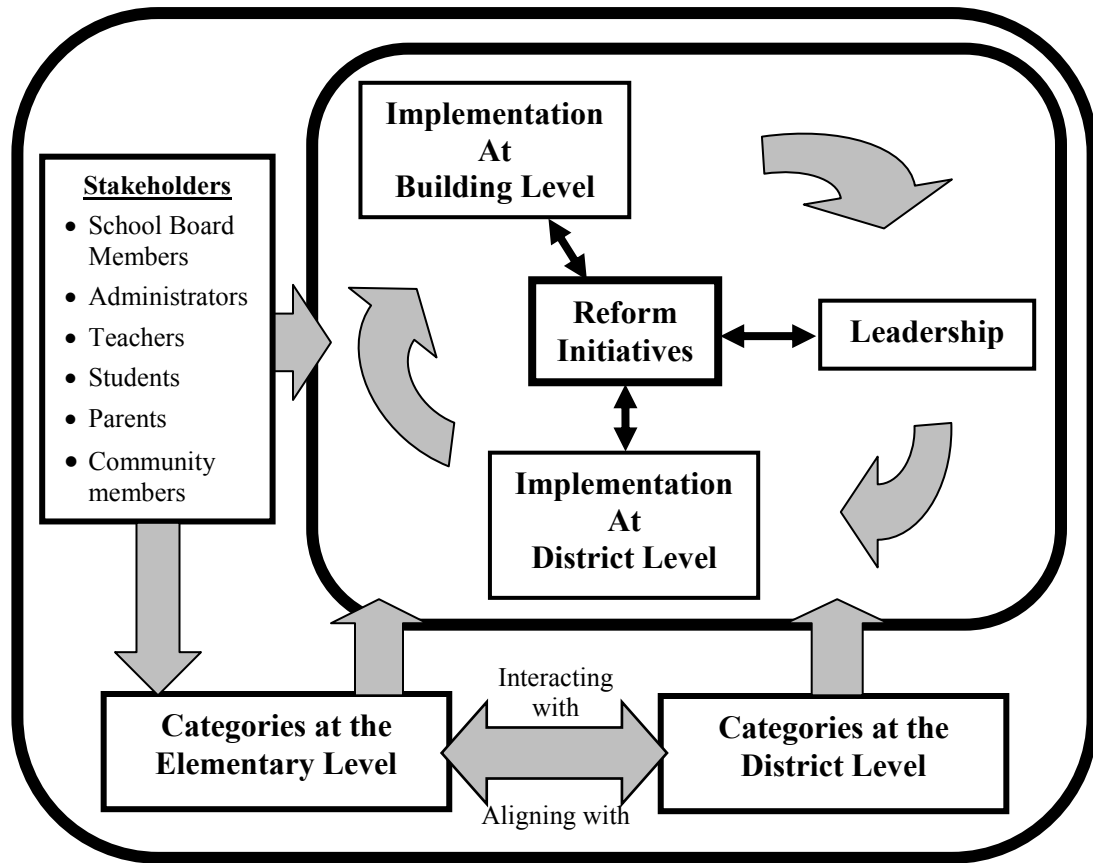


Figure 4. Model for Implementing School Reform Initiatives.

elementary level with categories at the district level. This alignment between elementary and district level categories needs to be influenced by all stakeholders through their input. The model above represents evidence (descriptive results of data analysis) from six years of research that implementing school reform initiatives requires elementary personnel and district personnel to interact and align their actions to achieve needed reform, and to put reform initiatives into practice at both the building and the district levels.

The smaller of the bolded round corner boxes shows how reform initiatives affect everyone at the school building level, the district level, and school personnel in

leadership roles. Leaders (the superintendent and building principals) interact with each other to begin the process of needed change, including alignment of objectives (or categories) at the district level and the school building level. At times it may be a messy process. The whole process is affected by input from various stakeholders, represented in the model above by the arrow that points from the stakeholder box to the bolded round corner box containing reform initiatives. Another arrow points from the stakeholder box to the box containing elementary categories because stakeholders are active at the elementary level as well. The arrow from the stakeholder box to the elementary category box actually represents influence at the district level as well since the elementary and district levels are constantly interacting.

Stakeholders interact with leadership influencing implementation of reform initiatives at the building level and district level. Stakeholders are often involved in determining which reform initiative to implement, so stakeholders are often involved with interacting and aligning categories at the building and district level. At Century Elementary, a systems approach has been taking place defining a critical component, strategic planning, for implementing school reform. Stakeholders involved at the elementary and district level are vital to gathering needs assessment information. The two arrows pointing up from the category boxes to the large box represent a circular route of information flow.

Events attended by stakeholders from both the district level and the elementary school level are: goal setting meetings, school improvement meetings and activities, long-range planning, and partnership programs. Such events build alignment between objectives originating at the district level and objectives originating at the elementary

level. Alignment between objectives at the district and elementary level occurs when stakeholders from each level interact at meetings both attend.

Categories that emerged from the data analysis in this study represented areas where many reform initiatives have taken place. So, in the model in Figure 4, categories refer to areas where reform has taken place or needs to take place. The two boxes in the bottom of the diagram connected with a double ended arrow show that leaders in elementary schools must interact with leaders at the district level to align their common objectives and achieve needed reform. The model also shows that programs must interact and align with common objectives; ultimately strategic planning for change. Programs include: curriculum, goals and feedback, parental involvement, environment, professionalism, and leadership. The grounded theory model designed as a result of this study and portrayed in Figure 4 symbolizes the foundation for the paradigm shift that took place between stakeholders and leadership in Grafton's school district during the past several years; past thinking and practice shifted or evolved into current thinking and practice.

The grounded theory model that emerged from this study and is found in Figure 4 displays the logical sequence of events which supports this case study research and qualitative descriptive analysis. The model is based on codes, categories, themes, and interpretations that emerged as a result of this study.

Summary

This chapter presented the research design of the study: research methods, the researcher's role, case specific site selection, data collections, and the analysis of data. Chapter IV provides the results of the study.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this longitudinal case study was to describe a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives; specifically at Century Elementary, Grafton, North Dakota. Chapter III presented the findings from collected sets of data – one data set at the elementary level, and one data set at the district level. Data sets were analyzed and relations identified between elementary and district levels. After examination (mindful studying) and analysis of the data, codes, categories, themes, and interpretations were identified. Chapter IV makes available tables, constructed chronologically, indicating the development of procedures and structures implementing reform initiatives. The researcher had some control applying change theories; however, district leadership controlled the random application of change theories and models put to practice.

Tables in Chapter IV depict elementary and school district themes and interpretations; interjecting where change was applied to answer the three research questions:

1. What factors facilitated or hindered the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives?
2. What role did key stakeholders play in the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives?

3. What effects did the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives have on student achievement?

Change Application in Practice

The role of administration is to implement change strategy by using change theories and models to create a plan for implementing change led by strategic leadership helping staffs become the catalyst for change. In this study, administration had to implement change strategies while, simultaneously, developing a process and structure for implementing critical school improvement initiatives.

The following tables present in chronological order findings of this study over a period of six years of applying change to practice. Five change strategies were applied randomly throughout the six years of the study. Lewin's (1947) three stage change model was applied. Also applied was Margaret Wheatley's (1999) creating a boundary less and seamless organization. Kotter's (1996) eight steps to change, developing a strategic plan, Michael Fullan's (2010) *Motion Leadership*, and Van Clay and Soldwedel's (2009) applying systems thinking and building successful partnerships were also utilized.

AYP Results

Table 8 represents Century Elementary AYP reports. Of the six years of data, Century made adequate yearly progress three of those six years. Remember, though, that standards have been slowly raised so that by the school year 2013-2014, adequate yearly progress means 100% of students must be proficient on their NDSA at that time and on into the future. It is getting harder and harder for schools to make adequate

yearly progress as mandated in NCLB. That is why it is so necessary to change the way we do things so we can implement better ways of teaching and reaching students.

Table 8. Century Elementary – Adequate Yearly Progress Report.

School Year	Progress Report
2005-2006	AYP Not Met
2006-2007	Met AYP
2007-2008	AYP Not Met
2008-2009	Met AYP
2009-2010	Met AYP
2010-2011	AYP Not Met

The following eighteen tables are presented in chronological order displaying three sets of factors for each year of data. The researcher was looking for factors that facilitated or hindered change for each year as explained in Research Question #1. In each set of three, elementary school factors are listed first, school district factors are listed second, and where appropriate, combined elementary and school district factors are listed third. Following each table is a brief discussion of findings. Findings are listed under headings of facilitated, hindered, key stakeholders, and reform initiatives. Tables were designed to help the researcher understand change strategies put into practice in the field over a period of six school years.

Year 1, 2005-2006

Findings at the elementary level.

Table 9 summarizes what took place during the 2005-2006 school year at the elementary level. This was the initial school year change was implemented.

Table 9. Century Elementary Factors, 2005-2006.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Elementary leadership created a sense of urgency by providing staff with an event engaging them in an activity to identify improvement goals they felt were needed at Century.	Teachers Administrators	X X	
Leadership provided staff the opportunity to connect with other staff through a team building activity.	Teachers Administrators	X X	
Elementary leadership enabled teachers to create guiding coalition teams by creating cluster committees based on their 58 identified goals which determined common themes (listed below). There was one cluster committee for each theme: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff, Social, and Communication, 2. Data and Assessment, 3. Discipline and Respect, 4. Curriculum Mapping, 5. Building Level Support Team (BLST), and 6. Technology. Teachers were assigned cluster committees founded from their interest and area of expertise. Teachers were selected from each grade level or specials area for committee work.	Teachers Administrators	X X	
District Curriculum Coordinator facilitated action from the curriculum mapping committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implemented a process for identifying curriculum resource strengths and weaknesses. 2. Implemented the process of meeting with grade level teams. 	Teachers Administrators	X X	
A time for each cluster committee was established each month to meet with the elementary principal for the purpose of identifying action items for next steps, discussing issues, and problem solving.	Teachers Principal	X X	
Staff were given time at each monthly staff meeting to report their work, have open large group discussion, and obtain whole group feedback.	Teachers	X	

Facilitated.

Teachers began to work outside their grade level and with other staff members. Teachers identified problem areas within their committee; they took action, discussed possible solutions, and determined best possible resolutions. Then, they reported each month at the elementary staff meeting, opening their topics for group discussion and feedback. This resulted in teachers having the opportunity to discuss, problem solve, and make decisions affecting their work. Cluster committee work facilitated the process of developing a structure and process for implementing school reform initiatives. The curriculum coordinator implemented the process of identifying curriculum and resource strengths and weaknesses and created time to meet regularly with grade level teacher teams resulting in staff further identifying the need for improved curriculum, professional development, and resources.

Hindered.

No factors were identified that hindered the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives at this time.

Key stakeholders.

At this point, key stakeholders included mainly teachers and the elementary school leaders (administrators). Teachers and administrators worked together to identify goals and implement a structure for change.

Reform initiatives.

The 2005-2006 school year was the researcher's first year on the job as elementary principal. No reform initiatives were being implemented and there was a

great need for change. During this year, teachers and administrators worked together to identify needed reform.

Findings at the district level.

Table 10 summarizes what took place during the 2005-2006 school year at the district level.

Table 10. School District Factors, 2005-2006.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Conditions created by district leadership	Teachers	X	
North Dakota's superintendent is a member of the North Dakota Governor's Commission on Education Improvement.	Elementary Administrators	X	
	District Administrators	X	
Fall goal setting meeting	Parents		
School improvement meetings	Teachers		
	Administrators (superintendent)		
	School Board Members		
	Community Members		
	Students		
Annual all staff district meeting	Teachers	X	
	Administrators	X	
Increased staff to include a 50% district curriculum coordinator shared with North Valley Career and Technology Center	Teachers	X	
	Administrators	X	
NWEA assessment – implemented	Teachers	X	
NWEA professional development – administration	Administrators	X	
	Students	X	
Curriculum mapping – implemented	Teachers	X	
Curriculum mapping – one half day (one time) during the school year provided to implement new curriculum.	Administrators	X	
	Students	X	

Facilitated.

Parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and community members had an opportunity at the goal setting meeting and the school improvement meetings to hear school district demographic and achievement data, as well as participate in activities where they could express their concerns as well as applaud what was taking place in the area of improvement; ultimately, all present had a voice for improvement. NWEA assessment practice and curriculum mapping were implemented and supported with professional development. District leadership added support personnel, a 50% district wide curriculum coordinator. School reform initiatives: assessment practice, curriculum mapping, professional development, and supporting personnel reflected the initial identification by district leadership to initiate school reform.

Hindered.

No follow up or next steps initiatives were taken by district leadership. Procedures for next steps were not outlined or identified at the district level from the public meetings. Further support for two school reform initiatives implemented at the fall goal setting meeting, NWEA assessment practice and curriculum mapping, did not take place (2005-2006). District leadership met one time, in the spring of the school year, with all staff district wide, but no next steps were identified at that meeting, either. Only district demographic information was presented.

Key stakeholders.

Because the fall goal setting meeting and school improvement meetings were pretty much open to the public, stakeholders included: parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives discussed and implemented during this school year included: improved leadership, assessment practice, curriculum mapping, professional development, and adding support personnel.

Combined elementary level and district level findings.

Table 11 compares factors at elementary and district levels to summarize at a glance what took place during the 2005-2006 school year over different levels of administration in the school district.

Table 11. Combined Century Elementary and School District Factors, 2005-2006.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Elementary leadership: 1. Created a sense of urgency and took action, 2. Created guiding coalition teams.	Parents Teachers Administrators School Board	 X X X	
District leadership: 1. Implemented assessment practice supported with one time one day professional development for administrators, 2. Implemented curriculum mapping and provided an afternoon for implementation, 3. Increased personnel to support school improvement initiative by adding a 50% time district-wide curriculum coordinator.	Members Community Members Students	 X X X	

Facilitated.

School reform initiatives were in the infancy stage in the area of assessment practice and curriculum mapping. The district recognized the need to support staff in the area of curriculum. All stakeholders appeared ready and supportive of change.

Hindered.

No one person appeared to be hindering the development of a process and structure for change. Everyone felt change was needed. No follow up action taken or no next steps were identified at the meeting.

Key stakeholders.

Stakeholders involved in reform initiatives included: parents, teachers, administrators (elementary and district level), school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives discussed and implemented during this school year included: improved leadership, assessment practice, curriculum mapping, professional development, and adding support personnel.

Year 2, 2006-2007

Findings at the elementary level.

Table 12 summarizes what took place during the 2006-2007 school year at the elementary level.

Table 12. Century Elementary Factors, 2006-2007.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Elementary leadership continued to support guiding coalition teams.	Teachers Administrators	X X	
Elementary leadership took action founded in the district fall goal setting meeting by developing a plan and working with district leadership to facilitate improvement in the area of student safety and student supervision aligned with the 2006-2007 district initiatives; character education and health and wellness.	Elementary Administrators District Administrators Teachers Students	 X X X X	
1. Recess time for elementary students was changed from after lunch to before lunch. Supervision changed from only para professionals to teachers and paraprofessionals. This action produced a formal grievance against the elementary principal by teachers.	Teachers Para Professionals Students	 X X	X
2. Lunchroom was supervised only by para professionals and changed to include teachers. This action produced a formal grievance against the elementary principal by teachers.	Teachers Para Professionals Students	 X X	X
3. Lunch times were extended from 20 minutes to 25 minutes allowing three lunch periods where each grade level has had 15 minutes to eat with only one grade level in the lunchroom at a time. This plan reduced the number of children in the lunch room and lowered the noise level.	Students Cafeteria Staff Para Professionals Teachers Elementary Administrators	 X X X X	
4. A passage route was designed and put into practice for students entering and leaving the lunchroom.	Students Para Professionals Teachers	 X X	
5. Table top displays including teacher names were placed on tables for children to identify their designated table and seating area.	Teachers Students Elementary Principal	 X X X	

Table 12 Cont.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Teacher leadership begins to emerge through cluster committee work.	Teachers, Elementary Administrators	X	
1. Staff, Social, and Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created guidelines for a staff gift fund Created guidelines for staff celebrations 		X	
2. Data and Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated NDSA data disaggregation identifying general strengths and weaknesses of students within core curricular areas: reading, language arts, and math curriculum 			
3. Discipline and Respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created playground guidelines 			
4. Curriculum mapping – <u>Abandoned</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum coordinator position was vacant 			
5. Building Level Support Team (BLST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented the North Dakota state BLST process Applied the process and put to practice with teachers 			
6. Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared a sign up system for teachers to use the tech lab 	Teachers Elementary Principal	X X	
Cluster committees continued to meet monthly with the principal to identify actions needed, steps to take to put actions into practice, to problem solve, and to determine resolutions for the areas needing improvement. They reported their work to colleagues at monthly staff meetings.			

Facilitated.

At this time, teacher leaders were emerging from cluster committee work.

Staff were becoming more comfortable working outside their group of teacher friends, grade level, and with other staff members. Teachers were identifying more intense problem areas within their committees; and they were determining and implementing solutions. Teacher leaders from cluster committees reported each month at elementary

staff meetings; resulting in more teachers responding to discussion and offering feedback. Teachers' inputs were affecting their work in a positive manner.

Hindered.

The grievance filed against the elementary principal over teachers having to supervise recess and the lunchroom was investigated by the superintendent. His finding supported the principal. Improved playground/lunchroom supervision responsibilities and safer conditions for students aligned with health and wellness and school safety initiatives at the district level. However, the grievance filed against the elementary principal caused disruption amongst staff.

At this time, there was still no curriculum coordinator to support staff or to facilitate development of curricular initiatives.

Key stakeholders.

Initiatives implemented this year affected students, cafeteria staff, para professionals, teachers, the elementary principal, other elementary administrators, and administrators at the district level.

Reform initiatives.

School improvement initiatives included: leadership, teacher leadership, assessment practice, technology, increased communication among teachers and between teachers and administrators, professional development, efficient use of technology, and the district initiatives of health and wellness, and school safety.

Findings at the district level.

Table 13 summarizes what took place during the 2005-2006 school year at the district level.

Table 13. School District Factors, 2006-2007.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
<p>Conditions created by district leadership included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The district hired a new superintendent. 2. The superintendent was a member of the North Dakota Governor's Commission on Education Improvement. 3. District leadership held monthly informative meetings for all staff members. 	<p>Administrators Administrators Administrators Teachers</p>	<p>X X X X</p>	
<p>District leadership met often with building principals and assistant administrators. Building principals and assistant administrators were assigned areas of responsibility concentrating on school improvement initiatives. This action reflected district leadership's respect for competency in their work. This action created a guiding coalition amongst school leaders. Areas included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elementary principal – writing a school wide professional development plan with a professional development calendar reflecting all professional development activities 2. High school assistant principal/Athletic Director/ district technology coordinator – writing a technology plan for hardware, software, and other equipment. A rotation schedule was put in place for replacement of old technology as well as acquiring new technologies. 3. Century Elementary/middle school/ high school principals – establishing a seven year curriculum and purchasing cycle. 4. High school principal – responsible for assessments NDSA/NWEA and for developing an assessment calendar for the district. 5. Middle school principal – developing a district wide safety plan. <p>Teacher leaders were assigned and responsible for character education and health and wellness planning.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District counselors – were responsible for character education and health and wellness planning. 	<p>Administrators Teachers Students Elementary Principal Teachers Administrators Teachers Para Professionals Students Other staff Principals Teachers Students High School Principal Middle School Principal Teachers Students Counselors Teachers Students</p>	<p>X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X</p>	

Table 13 Cont.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
<p>District leadership took action to move reform initiative forward.</p> <p>1. District leadership contracted with a consultant to provide a half day professional development in the spring of the school year for district-wide staff introducing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Learning Communities (PLC's), assessment practice, common curriculum standards, common language, and instructional model (comparison ~traditional vs. curriculum standards and assessment for learning). 	<p>Teachers</p> <p>Administrators</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
<p>Fall Goal Setting Meeting</p> <p>School Improvement Meetings</p> <p>1. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking.</p> <p>2. Established clear school improvement goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment Character Education Professional Development Health and Wellness 	<p>Parents</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Administrators</p> <p>School Board Members</p> <p>Community Members</p> <p>Students</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	

Facilitated.

During the 2006-2007 school year, the superintendent was a member of the North Dakota Governor's Commission on Education Improvement and took an active role aligning recommended improvements at the state level to improvements implemented at the local level. Next steps initiatives and procedures were put into motion immediately; building principals and administrative support staff were directed to address improvement areas based on the superintendent's assignments. Action was taken immediately with the new information and directives from the superintendent.

The district all-staff meetings changed from yearly to monthly. All district initiatives were presented to all staff. Parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, and community members continued to have a voice for improvement.

Hindered.

There was no obvious resistance at this time to new initiatives being put into place.

Key stakeholders.

There were many changes taking place that affected all members of the community including: parents, teachers, administrators, para professionals, counselors, non-professional school staff, school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Many reform initiatives were implemented at this time: leadership, teacher leadership, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curriculum, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety, health and wellness, resources needed, and technology.

Combined elementary level and district level findings.

Table 14 compares factors at elementary and district levels to summarize at a glance what took place during the 2006-2007 school year over different levels of administration in the school district.

Table 14. Combined Century Elementary and School District Factors, 2006-2007.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
<p>The district created a sense of urgency; action was taken.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Created guiding coalition teams. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building administrators Teacher leaders emerging Goal setting / school improvement Empowered others to act. Began the process of change strategies in the school culture. 	<p>Parents</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Administrators</p> <p>School Board Members</p> <p>Community Members</p> <p>Students</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	

Facilitated.

The building level leaders, teacher leaders, and district leadership began building a coalition team to implement change. The school board, school improvement committee, and the goal setting committee supported the changes.

Hindered.

None of the people involved appeared to be hindering the process at this stage.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders at this time included: parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives included: leadership, teacher leadership, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curriculum, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety, health and wellness, and technology.

Year 3, 2007-2008

Findings at the elementary level.

Table 15 summarizes what took place during the 2007-2008 school year at the elementary level.

Table 15. Century Elementary Factors, 2007-2008.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
<p>Century Elementary Leadership:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Empowered staff to continue to take action 2. Continued to support guiding coalition teams and their work. 3. Introduced communicating the vision of changing instructional models including assessment practice and progress monitoring 4. Generated short term wins. 	<p>Teachers Administrators Students Parents Community Members</p>	<p>X X X X X</p>	
<p>Leadership and teachers held open house meetings explaining the new instructional model throughout the school year for parents and community members to see presentations and to visit classrooms, seeing the new instruction model in practice. Newspaper interviews were conducted and articles were in the Walsh County Record.</p>	<p>Administrators Teachers Parents Community Members</p>	<p>X X X X</p>	
<p>Century leadership enabled cluster committee work to continue.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff, Social, and Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (no change) 2. Data and Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoted a more in-depth study of student NDSA data. • Created color coded charts and graphs identifying strengths and weaknesses by test item. • Implemented DIBELS assessment. 	<p>Teachers Administrators Teachers Administrators</p>	<p>X X X X</p>	

Table 15 Cont.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
3. Discipline and Respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designed designated age appropriate playground play areas for K-1, 2-3, and Grade 4. Selected playground equipment for designated play areas \$50,000.00- (installed in the summer). Recess and lunchroom plan continued. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaced older traditional lunchroom tables with family style tables reflecting a family environment. Reinstated the Second Step Character Education program into lessons at all grade levels. 	Teachers Administrators	X X	
4. Curriculum Mapping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers met regularly with the new district curriculum/reading coach. Release time for grade level teachers was established to review/discuss/ explore new curriculum (substitute teachers were hired). The process was lead by the district curriculum coordinator/reading coach. District-wide curriculum and purchase cycle document was put into practice. Began piloting a variety of literacy programs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previewed and selected research-based literacy programs to pilot Collaboration between programs: ELL, Title 1, Spec. Ed, and ESP for the purpose of purchasing materials aligned with classroom instruction. Off site school visitations took place for the purpose of exploring literacy curriculum. Teacher leaders emerged and attended an RtI instructional model workshop sponsored by the North Dakota State Special Education Department. Begin changing from a traditional model to a research-based instructional model. 	Teachers Administrators	X X	
5. Building Level Support Team (BLST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Began exploring a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program. 	Teachers Administrators	X X	

Table 15 Cont.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
6. Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology committee was abandoned and replaced with the district initiatives. 80% Technology instructor was hired for elementary technology instruction and technology facilitation. A K-4 technology curriculum was established. 	Teachers Administrators	X X	
Professional development reorganized at the building and district level targeting reform initiatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment and progress monitoring Health and Wellness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Safety Technology Professional development changed to a combined planning process with input from teachers, building principals, curriculum coordinator/reading coach, special educators and then selected based on the initiatives and teacher/administrator learning needs. Building principals and district leadership work collaboratively designing PD for staff. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are implemented at individual buildings and district wide.	Teachers Administrators	X X	
Remaining cluster committees continue their work and reporting process.	Teachers Administrators	X X	

Facilitated.

During the 2007-2008 school year, teacher leaders were providing guidance from their cluster committee work. Professional Learning Communities were being established with membership across grade levels and including a building specialist. Teachers were learning, discussing, and building trust between themselves and the district because they had a voice, and their voice was being heard. The process of

abandonment was emerging, replacing cluster committees with the PLC concept. The elementary school along with the school district was transforming into an organization utilizing a systems approach model for implementing school reform initiatives.

Hindered.

There were no signs of anyone hindering the transformation of the school environment or the initiatives being implemented.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders of reforms occurring included: administrators, teacher leaders, teachers, students, parents, and community members.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented included: leadership, teacher leadership, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curriculum, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety, health and wellness, and technology.

Findings at the district level.

Table 16 summarizes what took place during the 2007-2008 school year at the district level.

Table 16. School District Factors, 2007-2008.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Conditions created by district leadership:			
1. The superintendent was a member of the North Dakota Governor's Commission on Education Improvement.	Administrators	X	
2. The district held monthly informative meetings for all staff members.	Administrators Teachers	X X	

Table 16 Cont.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
<p>District leadership met often with building principals and assistant administrators.</p> <p>Building principals and assistant administrators continued work in their assigned areas of responsibility concentrating on school improvement initiatives.</p> <p>District leadership partnered with RRVEC for regional professional development opportunities aligned with district initiatives.</p> <p>District leadership supported professional development with quality one-time presenters which stimulated teacher growth in identified areas needing improvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructional Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Classroom management > Poverty 2. Technology 	<p>Administrators</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Students</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	
<p>Fall goal setting meeting</p> <p>School improvement meetings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking. 2. Established clear school improvement goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment • Character Education • Professional Development • Health and Wellness 	<p>Parents</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Administrators</p> <p>School Board Members</p> <p>Community Members</p> <p>Students</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>	

Facilitated.

Teacher leaders were providing guidance from their cluster committee work.

Professional Learning Communities were established with membership across grade levels and a building specialist. Teachers were learning, discussing, and building trust between themselves and the district because they had a voice, and the voice was being heard. The process of abandonment was emerging; teachers began moving away from traditional staff meetings lead by the principal to a PLC concept. The elementary

school along with the school district was transforming into an organization utilizing a systems approach model for implementing school reform initiatives.

Hindered.

There was no indication that anyone was hindering the process at this time.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders at this time included: administrators and teachers, parents and students, school board members, and community members.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented at this time included: leadership, teacher leadership, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curriculum, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety, health and wellness, and technology.

Combined elementary level and district level findings.

Table 17 compares factors at elementary and district levels to summarize at a glance what took place during the 2007-2008 school year over different levels of administration in the school district.

Table 17. Combined Century Elementary and School District Factors, 2007-2008.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Century Elementary initiatives were supported at the district level and Century Elementary supported district initiatives. Action continued directly relating to school improvement initiatives.	Parents	X	
	Teachers	X	
	Administrators	X	
	School Board		
	Members	X	
1. Creating a guiding coalition team	Community		
2. Empowering others to act	Members	X	
3. Facilitating change	Students	X	

Table 17 Cont.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Grafton School District invited area schools to share professional development opportunities.	Parents	X	
	Teachers	X	
	Administrators	X	
Grafton School District participated in the RRVEC professional development opportunities because the RRVEC had aligned PD initiatives with area school district needs.	School Board		
	Members	X	
	Community		
	Members	X	
	Students	X	
Grafton School District supported professional development with quality one-time presenters which simulates teacher growth in the identified areas needing improvement.			
1. Ruby Payne – Poverty			
2. Love and Logic			
3. Instructional Strategies			
4. ND EduTech for Technology PD			

Facilitated.

The buildings level, district level, and outside agencies had created a partnership to continue to implement and grow change, creating conditions for advanced improvement, thus facilitating the development of a process and structure for implementing school reform initiatives. Teacher leaders at the elementary level were partnering with district, regional, and state initiatives. Teacher leaders were present at school board meetings, school improvement meetings, and goal setting meetings. Communications with parents and the community about changing instructional practices were emerging.

Hindered.

No one was identified as hindering the process at this time.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders at the elementary level and the district level combined included: parents, administrators, teacher leaders, teachers, school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives at the elementary and district level were numerous at this time and included: leadership, teacher leadership, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curriculum, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety, technology, and establishing partnerships with outside agencies for resources.

Year 4, 2008-2009

Findings at the elementary level.

Table 18 summarizes what took place during the 2008-2009 school year at the elementary level.

Table 18. Century Elementary Factors, 2008-2009.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Century Elementary Leadership: Began practicing consistency implementing new approaches in to the school culture. 1. Empowered others to act 2. Continued to create a guiding coalition team 3. Communicated the vision of change 4. Generated short term wins 5. Transformed to a systems approach model.	Teachers Administration	X X	

Table 18 Cont.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Leadership and teachers continued to hold open house meetings explaining the new instructional model throughout the school year for parents and community members to see presentations and to visit classrooms, seeing the new instruction model in practice. Newspaper interviews were conducted and articles were in the Walsh County Record.	Administrators Teachers Parents Community Members	X X X X	
Teacher leadership is evident as reflected in activities of the cluster committees: 1. Staff, Social, and Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans celebrations 2. Data and Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned – Replaced with PLC and reading coach activities 3. Discipline and Respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned – Replaced with RtI-Behavior program 4. Curriculum mapping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned – Replaced with curriculum coordinator and reading coach and PLC 5. Building Level Support Team (BLST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned – Replaced with RtI-Academic instructional program and RtI-Behavior instructional program 6. Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abandoned – Replaced with district planning and a 100% FTE technology teacher, K-4 	Teachers Administrators Students	X X X	
Programs and Resources supporting instruction 1. Reading coach 2. PLC 3. Common planning time with instructional coach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant student schedule year to year 4. Response to Intervention –Instructional model 5. Elementary school adopted a literacy program aligned with and supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title I ELL Special Education Extended School Day Program Migrant education 5. Response to Intervention –Behavior model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (Year 1 – exploration) 	Students Teachers Administrators	X X X	

Table 18 Cont.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Professional development was reorganized at the district, regional, and state level targeting the district initiatives: 1. Instructional Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment • School Safety 2. Technology	Teachers Administrators	X X	
An elementary teacher was removed from the classroom for causes unrelated to the changes taking place within the school. The teacher was replaced with a long term substitute teacher for the remainder of the school year. This upset the other teachers and made it difficult for them to focus on school reform.	Teachers		X

Facilitated.

Leadership understood the importance of abandoning programs/committees when they were no longer useful or had become outdated. Leadership understood transforming a school into a systems approach type of organization assimilated all staff into the organization focusing on the vision and mission of the school and the school district, since the school's vision and mission were now aligned with the district's vision and mission.

Hindered.

An elementary teacher disrupting students and staff was removed from the classroom for causes unrelated to the changes taking place within the school. However, this upset the other teachers and made it difficult for them to focus on school reform.

Key stakeholders. . .

. . . included: administrators, teachers, parents, students, community members.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented at this time included: Leadership building programs, teacher leadership programs, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curriculum development, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety programs, technology related initiatives, establishing partnerships with outside agency for resources, and transforming to a systems approach organization at the building level and district level.

Findings at the district level.

Table 19 summarizes what took place during the 2008-2009 school year at the district level.

Table 19. School District Factors, 2008-2009.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Conditions Created by District Leadership: Superintendent was a member of the North Dakota Governor's Commission on Education Improvement.	Administrators	X	
Building principals continued in their assigned areas of responsibility (they received their assignments during the 2006-2007 school year as outlined in Table 18).	Administrators	X	
Fall goal setting meeting School improvement meetings Strategic planning is emerging. 1. Established and communicated clear school improvement goals 2. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking 3. Professional development and resources focus on student learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Instructional Strategies<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Assessment> School Safety• Technology	Parents Teachers Administrators School Board Members Community Members Students	X X X X X X	

Facilitated.

District leadership understood the importance of: abandoning programs that were no longer effective or relevant, establishing clear school improvement goals, and strategic planning.

Hindered.

Nothing was identified that could be considered attempts to hinder reform initiatives.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders in the process of implementing reform initiatives continued to be: administrators, teachers, students, parents, school board members, and community members.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented included: leadership programs, teacher leadership programs, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), curriculum assessment and development, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety, technology, establishing partnerships with outside agency for resources, and transforming the school system into a systems approach organization.

Combined elementary level and district level findings.

Table 20 compares factors at elementary and district levels to summarize at a glance what took place during the 2008-2009 school year over different levels of administration in the school district.

Table 20. Combined Century Elementary and School District Factors, 2008-2009.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
District improvement initiatives are focused on student learning:	Parents	X	
	Teachers	X	
	Administrators	X	
Fall goal setting meeting	School Board		
	Members	X	
School improvement meetings	Community		
	Members	X	
Strategic planning is emerging	Students	X	
1. Established clear school improvement goals			
2. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking			
3. Professional development and resources focus on student learning			
• Instructional Strategies			
> Assessment			
• School Safety			
• Technology			

Facilitated.

The district was in the abandonment process. Programs, past practices, and ways of conducting daily school business were changing. Goal setting meetings, school improvement meetings, and strategic planning was emerging into an amalgamated systems approach to building an organization with a systems approach to doing business. Resources made readily available facilitated the development of a process and structure for implementing school reform initiatives.

Hindered.

Nothing appeared to be hindering the evolution of the school system at this time.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders continued to include just about everyone in the community, including: administrators, teacher leaders, teachers, parents, school board members, community members, and last but not least, students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives were communicating clear school improvement goals and collective leadership; and strategic planning was emerging.

Year 5, 2009-2010

Findings at the elementary level.

Table 21 summarizes what took place during the 2009-2010 school year at the elementary level.

Table 21. Century Elementary Factors, 2009-2010.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholder	Facilitated	Hindered
Century Elementary leadership: Administrators were anchoring new approaches in the culture of the school (institutionalizing the new approaches). Elementary leadership and teacher leaders invited educators from other schools to visit the elementary school and see programs in practice. Teacher leaders presented at local conferences.	Teachers Administrators	X X	
Staff, Social, and Communication (cluster committee) 1. Abandoned – Replaced with a social committee. The Social Committee plans social events for elementary staff. PLCs were in place. 1. Teachers were engaged in book studies. 2. Teachers had collegial discussion focused on research-based practice.	Teachers Administrators Teachers	X X X	

Table 21 Cont.

Century Elementary Factors	Stakeholder	Facilitated	Hindered
<p>Instructional coach position was established.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adult classroom 2. Met regularly with teachers and grade level teams 3. Lesson planning 4. Lesson modeling 5. Curriculum alignment with ELL, Title I, Special Ed, ESP, and migrant programs was in place 	Teachers	X	
<p>Assessment practice was in place.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NWEA, AIMSweb, and NDSA 2. Student progress was being monitored. 3. Assessment data was being reviewed and used to inform instruction. 	Teachers Students	X X	
<p>Safe Schools</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RtI- B school-wide program was in place. 2. Exploration for an RtI – B classroom in process. 3. Tiered behavior program was emerging. 	Students Teachers	X X	
<p>Student selection plan was being utilized for the next school year.</p>	Students Teachers	X X	
<p>Think Tank – Each spring important decisions affecting summer school, programs, and the next school year were being brought to teachers for their input.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Three in-depth meetings were being held each school year. 2. Teachers from each grade level and specials area were attending for the purpose of meaningful and purposeful planning. 	Teachers Administrators	X X	
<p>First year teachers were reassigned to another grade level for the next school year, different from their first year assignment for the purpose of experience at different grade levels.</p>	Teachers	X	
<p>A teacher was removed from the classroom for inappropriate activity outside the school that had nothing to do with the reform initiatives taking place. However, the teacher's removal affected the equilibrium of colleagues and disrupted the progress of implementing needed reform initiatives.</p>	Teachers		X

Facilitated.

The elementary staff was putting into practice the school reform initiatives proposed over the last few years. The school was becoming proficient with practice. Professional and collegial discussions were being held and teachers had influential input into decision making. Teachers were being given the opportunity to teach different grade levels from year to year, and they understood their movement between different grade levels could be beneficial to their teaching practice and children's learning because teachers could better distinguish growth in children pertaining to grade levels. Teachers could better understand appropriate levels of development of children at a particular grade if they had teaching experience at different grade levels. Leadership and teacher leadership were gaining momentum and building capacity.

Hindered.

A teacher removed from a classroom caused distraction among staff. Teachers stopped focusing on initiatives for a time and focused instead on either issues surrounding the teacher that was removed or issues in assimilating a new teacher into the system in the middle of a school year.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders at this time included: administrators, teacher leaders, teachers, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented included: building leadership skills, especially, teacher leadership skills; assessment practice; Professional Learning Communities (PLCs); curriculum assessment and development; exploring new

instruction models/methods; school safety; technology; establishing partnerships with outside agencies for resources; and transforming the school (and district) into a systems approach organization. The systems approach helped Century Elementary administrators communicate clear school improvement goals, helped develop a collective leadership, and strategic planning was emerging.

Findings at the district level.

Table 22 summarizes what took place during the 2009-2010 school year at the district level.

Table 22. School District Factors, 2009-2010.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Conditions created by district leadership: The superintendent was a member of the North Dakota Governor's Commission on Education Improvement.	Administrators	X	
Superintendent assigned building principals areas of responsibility.	Administrators	X	
Fall goal setting meeting School improvement meetings Strategic Planning was emerging 1. Established clear school improvement goals 2. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking 3. Professional development and resources focused on student learning: • Instructional Strategies > Assessment • School Safety • Technology	Parents Teachers Administrators School Board Members Community Members Students	X X X X X X	

Facilitated.

Administrative leadership, teacher leadership, and teachers were working toward communicating school improvement initiatives between themselves, school board members, parents, and community members.

Hindered.

Nothing was identified at this time as hindering the initiatives being implemented.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders at this time included: administrators, teacher leaders, teachers, parents, school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented included: leadership development, professional development, available resources, instructional strategies, assessment, school safety programs, technology, and school improvement goals. The school board, school improvement committee, and goal setting committee were all working on the clearly communicated goals and reform initiatives.

Combined elementary level and district level findings.

Table 23 compares factors at elementary and district levels to summarize at a glance what took place during the 2009-2010 school year over different levels of administration in the school district.

Table 23. Combined Century Elementary and School District Factors, 2009-2010.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
District improvement initiatives were focused on student learning:	Parents	X	
	Teachers	X	
	Administrators	X	
Fall goal setting meeting	School Board		
	Members	X	
School improvement meetings	Community		
	Members	X	
Strategic planning was emerging.	Students	X	
1. Established clear school improvement goals.			
2. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking.			
3. Professional development and resources focusing on student learning:			
• Instructional Strategies			
> Assessment			
• School Safety			
• Technology			

Facilitated.

Everyone involved appeared to be cooperating with implementing reform initiatives at this time.

Hindered.

No person or organization appeared to be hindering the implementation of reform initiatives at this time.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders at this time included: parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, community members, and students. Stakeholders were aware of the organizational changes taking place within the district. Awareness created understanding, thus facilitating change.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented throughout the district at this time included: goal setting, school improvement strategies, and strategic planning. Strategic planning focused on school improvement goals, developing collective leadership, professional development, acquiring needed resources, instructional strategies and assessment, school safety, and technology.

Year 6, 2010-2011

Findings at the elementary level.

Table 24 summarizes what took place during the 2010-2011 school year at the elementary level.

Table 24. Century Elementary Factors, 2010-2011.

Elementary School Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Century Elementary Leadership: Continued anchoring new approaches in the culture (institutionalizing the new approaches).	Teachers Administrators	X X	
Elementary leadership and teacher leaders invited educators to visit the elementary school and see programs in practice. Teacher leaders presented at local conferences.	Administrators Teachers	X X	
Teacher leadership is evident. 1. Instructional Coach 2. PLC 3. Common Planning Time with Instructional Coach <ul style="list-style-type: none">Constant student schedule year to year 4. Response to Intervention – instructional model 5. Elementary adopted a literacy program aligned with and supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Title IELLSpecial EducationExtended School Day Program 6. Response to Intervention – behavior model (Year 2)	Teachers Administrators Students	X X X	

Table 24 Cont.

Elementary School Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Professional Development is reorganized at the district, regional, and state level targeting district initiatives: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructional Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment 2. Technology 3. School Safety 	Teachers Administrators	X X	
A classroom teacher was removed during the school year for illegal activity outside the school that had nothing to do with the changes taking place within the school. The remaining teachers lost focus for a time on the change process, concentrating on employment issues rather than reform initiatives.	Teachers Students	X	X
A Federal Civil Rights complaint was filed against the elementary	Parents Administrators Teachers	X X	X
A state special education complaint was filed against the elementary	Special Education Administrators Special Education Teachers Administrators	X X	X

Facilitated.

The elementary staff was putting into practice school reform initiatives. The school was in an advanced stage of emerging and becoming proficient with practice in the areas of instructional strategies, assessment, up-to-date technologies, and school safety programs. Teacher leaders were presenting new practices in the areas of instructional strategies, assessment, up-to-date technologies, and school safety programs at school board meetings, goal setting meetings, and school improvement meetings. Teacher leaders were presenting past and present instructional models and behavior models at regional conferences. Teacher leadership was building capacity and exploring next steps in regards to further implementing school reform initiatives.

Daily practice of implementing reform initiatives facilitated the development of a process and structure for implementing school reform initiatives.

Hindered.

One teacher was removed from the classroom for illegal activities outside the school. The activities were unrelated to changes taking place within the school but the teacher's removal caused a great deal of disruption to the staff's equilibrium and created concern among colleagues. A federal civil rights violation was filed against the elementary school. A state special education complaint was filed against the elementary. Each one of these activities caused a great deal of disruption because staff turned their focus on legal issues rather than reform initiatives. Collectively these activities almost brought a halt to all changes being implemented.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders included: administrators, teacher leaders, teachers, parents, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Reform initiatives being implemented at this time included: leadership, teacher leadership, assessment practice, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), assessing and developing curriculum, exploring new instruction models/methods, school safety, technology, establishing partnerships with outside agencies for resources, and transforming the school district into a systems approach type organization with clearly communicated school improvement goals, collective leadership, and strategic planning.

Findings at the district level.

Table 25 summarizes what took place during the 2010-2011 school year at the district level.

Table 25. School District Factors, 2010-2011.

School District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Conditions created by district leadership: Assigned building principals areas of responsibility	Administrators	X	
Fall goal setting meeting	Parents	X	
	Teachers	X	
School improvement meetings	Administrators	X	
	School Board		
Strategic Planning was emerging	Members	X	
1. Established clear school improvement goals	Community		
	Members	X	
2. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking	Students	X	
3. Professional development and resources were focusing on student learning:			
• Instructional Strategies			
> Assessment			
• School Safety			
• Technology			

Facilitated.

The district was putting into practice processes which facilitated the development of a social or administrative structure (a school environment) for implementing school reform initiatives. The school, with practice, was becoming proficient at operating within this new structure. District leadership was building capacity. Goal setting meetings, school improvement programs, and strategic planning were creating organizational change and affecting the entire school district. A systematic approach to implementing reform initiatives was becoming a component

of the entire school district's transformation. The school district was becoming a regional hub for school reform initiatives and was reaching out to smaller districts.

Hindered.

Nothing and no person appeared to be hindering change at the district level at this time.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders included: administrators, teachers, parents, school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

Administrators at the district level were utilizing strategic planning to focus on: defining clear school improvement goals, professional development in the form of building leadership, instructional strategies and assessment, school safety, technology, and resources to facilitate student learning.

Combined elementary level and district level findings.

Table 26 compares factors at elementary and district levels to summarize at a glance what took place during the 2010-2011 school year over different levels of administration in the school district.

Table 26. Combined Century Elementary and School District Factors, 2010-2011.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
District improvement initiatives were focused on student learning:	Parents	X	
	Teachers	X	
	Administrators	X	
Fall goal setting meeting	School Board		
	Members	X	
School improvement meetings	Community		
	Members	X	
	Students	X	

Table 26 Cont.

Combined Century Elementary Factors and District Factors	Stakeholders	Facilitated	Hindered
Strategic planning was emerging 1. Established clear school improvement goals 2. Established a foundation and motivation for a continuum of collective leadership thinking 3. Professional development and resources were focusing on student learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Assessment • School Safety • Technology 	Parents Teachers Administrators School Board Members Community Members Students	X X X X X X X	

Facilitated.

Stakeholders were aware of the organizational changes taking place within the district. Stakeholders were building capacity – refining the importance of goal setting, school improvement, and strategic planning to a formal systematic process and taking an organizational approach to implementing initiatives. All actions facilitated the development of a process and structure for implementing school reform initiatives.

Hindered.

No person or group of people appeared discontented or appeared to be dragging their feet when it came to the changes taking place. Everyone appeared to be working well together for the good of the school district and engaged in improving student learning.

Key stakeholders.

Key stakeholders included: parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, community members, and students.

Reform initiatives.

By the end of the 2010-2011 school year, reform initiatives had addressed practically every aspect of school administration and student learning. Reform initiatives covered: professional development, developing leaders/leadership, student schedules, curriculum, alignment of curriculum across grade levels, assessment practice, before and after school programs, student safety, character education, health and wellness, instructional strategies, technology, resources and support, communication, and partner programs with area agencies.

Research Question 1

What factors facilitated or hindered the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives? The data showed nine factors facilitated the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives:

1. The superintendent (2005-2006) created a sense of urgency for building principals to bring change to their schools, including the elementary school this researcher was principal of.
2. The new superintendent (2006-2007) expedited the sense of urgency. The new superintendent was a member of the North Dakota Governor's Commission on Education Improvement. He recommended improvement initiatives at the state level be aligned with initiatives at the local school level.

3. Elementary teachers had input into deciding what areas needed improvement.
4. Teachers participated in small cluster committees, creating guiding coalitions for the purpose of discussing and solving their problems at the elementary school. Think Tank meetings provided teachers another method for valued input.
5. The superintendent (2006-2007) formed an administrative leadership team to address school reform initiatives. He also formed teacher leadership teams.
6. The Professional Learning Community concept was implemented district wide.
7. Teacher leaders utilizing the Think Tank, discussed, planned, and customized an implementation process with the elementary principal for new reform initiatives.
8. District and elementary leadership initiated an alignment of programs through school day programming and cultivating partnerships with outside agencies/programs.
9. The elementary principal had an understanding of barriers, and was able to find work arounds to circumvent the barriers.

Data showed six factors hindering the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives:

1. District leaders taking no action or no “next steps” during the 2005-2006 school year.

2. Elementary teachers filing a grievance against the elementary principal during the 2006-2007 school year.
3. During the first couple of years of this study (2005-2006, 2006-2007) the district did not employ a curriculum coordinator.
4. Removing two teachers from the classroom between 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 caused disruption among staff.
5. A federal civil rights violation investigation during the 2009-2010 school year caused disruption for school district leaders.
6. A state special education violation investigation during the 2009-2010 school year caused disruption for school district leaders.

Research Question 2

What role did key stakeholders play in the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives? The data showed four roles key stakeholders played in the development of a process and structure for adapting and leading school reform initiatives.

1. Stakeholders were willing to provide input to identify areas needing improvement at the elementary school.
2. Stakeholders were willing to participate in activities to move forward with the implementation of developing a process and structure for incorporating reform initiatives into the education system.
3. Stakeholders were willing to take leadership roles.
4. Stakeholders made resources available.

Research Question 3

What effects did the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives have on student achievement? The data showed three effects the development of a process and structure for adopting and leading school reform initiatives may have had on student achievement.

1. Century Elementary School made Adequate Yearly Progress four of the seven years 2005-2006 through 2011-2012.
2. The number of students identified on the NDSA as proficient and partially proficient in the areas of language arts and math increased each school year and the number identified as novice declined.
3. Seventy percent (70%) of Century Elementary second grade students (general population – all second graders) met benchmark status on the building level AIMSweb assessment at the end of the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and 2010-2011 school years.

The goal of No Child Left Behind where all students Grades 3-8 and 11 meet 100% proficiency on the North Dakota State Assessment 2014 is lofty and may never be attainable. All students are not going to meet one hundred percent proficiency.

What are needed are interventions and learning strategies designed locally and intentionally which will meet student needs especially students identified as at risk for academics and behaviors, as well as for students with individual plans concentrating on their individual disability. Schools and districts need local flexibility to meet the needs of their student populations. One size fits all plans do not work in any area.

Summary

Findings from the longitudinal case study where change theories and models were applied in practice resulted in the development of a process and structure for implementing school reform. District and elementary leadership applied Lewin's (1947) three stages of change. The first stage was applied Year 1 and Year 2, for the purpose of helping the staff understand the need for change. During the second stage, Year 3, staff began to understand change is a process (e.g. developing written plans for professional development, technology, and a curriculum and purchase cycle). As programs began expanding in Year 4 and Year 5, staff were understanding and accepting the change. Lewin's third stage of change, Year 6, established stability, and through continued professional development, focused on the critical improvement, quality teaching practice. Celebrating success has always been part of Century's culture; evidence being one of the original cluster committees formed dealt with socializing.

Michael Fullan's (2010) idea of leadership in motion was evident because district leadership constantly created inspiration and took action. Kotter's (1996) eight steps to change were intertwined and tangled throughout the six years. The eight steps did not always occur in order because teachers, initiatives, and programs were at different steps and stages at various times. Leadership understood the progression of the step and the stages people and programs were at throughout the years the study was conducted. Applying different change theories and models to the problem of implementing reform initiatives and documenting what occurred has allowed this

researcher to summarize the process for adopting and leading school reform initiatives into the following 10 stages.

- Stage 1 Establish leadership administratively by determining a reform initiative is needed.
- Stage 2 Focus on a unified system – administratively align building level initiatives with district initiatives.
- Stage 3 Create a sense of importance for change by involving all staff in identifying problems and creating solutions addressing the problems.
- Stage 4 Understand there will be challenges.
- Stage 5 Develop a process for accessing the root cause of a problem and then solve the problem.
- Stage 6 Initiate an appropriate change strategy to implement reform initiatives – use multiple strategies if needed.
- Stage 7 Plan for action – develop a written action plan. In the action plan, include: activities, resources, a timeline for completing activities, and define who the responsible party is (parties are) for completing activities.
- Stage 8 Abandon what is no longer needed or does not work.
- Stage 9 Manage, synchronize, and communicate to stakeholders often the stages each individual initiative is in:
 - Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4. . . .
 - Entry level learning, emerging, practicing, and refining.

Stage 10 Document implemented organizational change and communicate often to stakeholders.

The purpose of this longitudinal case study was to develop a process and structure for adopting and leading critical school reform initiatives within a rural North Dakota pre-kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school. The “structure” developed during this study was presented at the end of Chapter III and diagrammed in Figure 4. The “process” developed during this study has just been presented here as a 10 stage process.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Summary

Chapter V is the culmination of this longitudinal research case study. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides the discussion of the study; the next section presents the conclusions, followed by the recommendations in the third section, a short section on further research needed, and finally the summary.

Discussion

Based on this study, we could conclude school reform is complicated because many uncontrollable variables infiltrate the daily work of school leaders. School reform detracts their attention from the work that is important. This forces often well organized individuals into reactive situations, and therefore, causes the actions of leaders to degenerate or de-materialize (unravel) into a seemingly disorganized course of planning and action. School leaders have to be mindful to stay focused on specific concepts and continue to focus on those concepts as they are buffeted by the many forces and opinions around them.

The study results were presented in Chapter IV in tables reflecting six school years of events summarized for the purpose of explaining school reform must be implemented in developmental increments or stages. In Chapter IV, the researcher displayed a summary of an elementary school's yearly school events, a summary of yearly district level events, and then combined the events providing a snapshot view of

factors affecting an entire school district trying to implement reform initiatives. The tables were an attempt to reveal the magnitude of effort involved in developing a systems' approach to changing the way in which educators conduct their daily work in a school.

Reform initiatives emerged, throughout the longitudinal study, as vital components for school reform each school year. Established components were:

1. Know and understand which initiatives are needed, then take action for acceptable change in measurements so teachers can understand the change;
2. See to it teachers know and understand the change process;
3. Align professional development offered locally and regionally throughout the school year, invigorated with nationally known presenters initiating and internalizing the purpose for change;
4. Support program alignment, partnerships, and needed resources helping teachers establish stability for long term commitment and investment for change; and
5. Understand the barriers to success, persevere, deal with the barriers, stay the course no matter the difficulties, find work-arounds when barriers are insurmountable, abandon what does not work, and celebrate success.

The identification of school improvement areas – instructional strategies, technology, and health and wellness – solidified by written plans for each school improvement area further embedded commitment and investment for change into leaders, teachers, and school community stakeholders. The change process merged

Kurt Lewin's (1947) three stage model of change, Wheatley's (1999) earnest and fluid organization, Kotter's (1996) eight steps to change, and finally Michael Fullan's (2010) idea of *Motion Leadership*.

The researcher identified strategies which facilitated the development of a process for implementing critical reform initiatives. Factors facilitating development of a process were numerous. The major factor was implementation of change theories or change methods, including when and how they were applied throughout the six years of the study, and this affected the effectiveness of the process. Leadership was most significant. The researcher found several factors hindering development of the process which were:

1. No action taken in the area of school improvement during the first year of the study (2005-2006),
2. A grievance filed with the superintendent against the elementary principal by elementary teachers,
3. Elementary teachers removed from the classroom, and
4. A federal civil rights complaint and a state special education complaint against the elementary school.

The examination of the effect of developing a process and structure for implementing school reform initiatives on student achievement was significant. The elementary school made AYP four of the seven years the study was conducted. The elementary made AYP the year following the close of the study as well, 2011-2012, and this was the most significant school year because the achievement rate had been raised higher than ever before by North Dakota's Department of Public Instruction.

This statistic infers the development of school reform initiatives shaped the conditions for Century Elementary students to make AYP. The number of students identified on the NDSA as proficient and partially proficient in the areas of language arts and math increased each school year as those identified as novice declined. Seventy percent of Century Elementary second grade students (general population – all second graders) met benchmark status on the building level AIMSweb assessment at the end of the 2008-2009, 2009-2010, and the 2010-2011 school year.

The literature review made known Marzano's (2003) five school-level factors that represented the most current ideas associated with student achievement and school reform initiatives. Those five school-level factors, factors under the control of the school, included: guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals and effective feedback, parental and community involvement, safe and orderly environment, and collegiality and professionalism. Leadership is the overarching variable that impacts the effective implementation of Marzano's school-level factors.

This longitudinal case study assembled synthesized events over the course of six years. School-level factors that emerged in this case study were standards and curriculum, professional development, assessment practice, technology, discipline and respect, and PLCs. Leadership was the motivator for initializing change, which was derived from the superintendent and elementary principal working together along with teacher leaders and teachers. Continued focus by leadership, teacher leaders, and teachers on reform initiatives has changed the profile at Century Elementary school.

The school environment has shifted because the elementary principal constructed guiding coalition teams within the pre-kindergarten through fourth grade

organization as well as assembled a unified team to implement change. The teachers at Century, through leadership, were able to transform their school, moving from an undefined curriculum at grade levels and programs, under-developed assessment practice, random professional development, few resources, and no program alignment with outside partnerships to an organization with an established systems approach to administration of programs, resources, teaching strategies, etc. The system is now supported with effective resources – district leaders, an elementary principal, and highly trained teacher leaders.

Quality schools in North Dakota are currently determined based on AYP. The measurement of a school is more than one assessment one time a year. A quality school can be described as staff holding their programs to high standards, continually working to meet identified standards, and ensuring students make educational benchmark growth. When teachers hold high regard for their work, they are truly leaders in their profession. Teacher leaders from Century school are presenting established education and behavior programs, implemented within Century Elementary's overall educational program, to local, regional, and state educators at conferences. Presentations are founded in their development of the implemented school reform initiatives at Century.

Principals and teacher leaders do not have all the answers to address the many needs of staff. New learning is needed for staff and leadership through guided staff development, resourcefulness, and constant communication. Building principals know that teachers can bring needed change to a school if they are allowed to put forth effort into the change process. If teachers can identify and understand their current abilities

and work together as a team, then they can learn effectively and bring about organizational change. Educators striving to reach the level identified as a quality school will be required to address critical areas of school reform transmitting educational change resulting in successful academic achievement for their students.

Conclusions

Implementing school reform initiatives requires enough leadership capacity so leaders understand not only the need for school reform but also specifically which school reform initiatives are needed for their particular school. Once specific needed reform initiatives are identified, leaders can customize a plan of action using change models to implement the initiatives and thereby creating a system within the organization. Most important is continually communicating to stakeholders (teachers, parents, school board members) why reform is needed and why it is important.

Implementing acceptable measurements of change is important. Communicating the why, often to all stakeholders, is imperative in the process. School leaders must provide guiding leadership to stakeholders while putting into practice change theories and models resulting in developing a structure and process for implementing reform initiatives.

Understanding abandonment is an important aspect of the change process. Stakeholders must understand that abandoning practices and/or programs no longer necessary is acceptable; the fact that something does not work or is no longer needed must be recognized. Leaders will face barriers when trying to implement change, and they must persevere. They will find work arounds, ways of circumventing barriers.

Change takes time, tenacity, and the ability to build learning capacity between school leaders and stakeholders.

Recommendations

Research focused on school reform initiatives is imperative because our society's needs are rapidly changing. If education is to provide for students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, college, and beyond; if education is to prepare young people for the workforce; then school reform initiatives must continue to be implemented to meet changing student educational needs over time. Leadership must be attentive to students and their changing needs and progressively address those needs over time.

Recommendations for school leaders and principals who are struggling with leading school reform include:

1. Know and understand which school reform initiatives can be identified and are needed to improve education at the building and/or district level.
2. Take action; create a sense of urgency and importance teachers understand; formulate a plan and implement the plan of change in acceptable measurements.
3. Create guiding coalition teams for a specific purpose to implement change; have several teams focus on an identified purpose.
4. Support teachers with quality professional development aligned with school reform initiatives; simultaneously, align programs, build partnerships with outside sources, and involve stakeholders.

5. Understand there will barriers; persevere and deal with barriers; stay the course no matter the difficulties; find work-arounds and abandon what does not work; and celebrate success.
6. Take the initiative to move teachers where their expertise and experience can be most beneficial to students.

Administrators and educators who understand the importance of implementing school reform initiatives will prepare our students to think and respond appropriately to reform initiatives that address their future needs in order to live in a global society, a society we may not understand. Our students will live in a much different world than the world at the time of this study. Elementary principals are tasked with leading schools that prepare and guide teachers to new learning and understanding as well as prepare and guide students for their future. Change is necessary. Having an understanding of developing a structure and process for implementing school reform initiatives which can be customized and applied in any school will provide any school leader with the tools to become an enviable leader of an exemplary school.

Further Research

Research in the area of school improvement and school reform is needed; especially research conducted over time and specific to a locality. Further research is needed in the area of implementation and alignment strategies focused on local school needs. Reform areas including: teaching practice and supervision, implementing and aligning programs and curriculum, decisions for adopting common education standards, assessment practice, and student growth models are needed to reflect new learning forums. Traditional classroom teaching practices may not reflect quality

education for the next generation of learners. Research based best practices cannot be just adopted at a location because the strategies improved education in other school settings. Each locality has its own special needs and must identify best practices for that locality.

A second area for further research is educational leadership programs of study. Reform initiatives and school improvement strategies that work in some states, districts, and schools may not work elsewhere or even be needed. School leaders must know and understand specific school reform needs that will benefit their local programs, teaching practices, and student achievement. Administrators in their educational leadership programs of study must learn a variety of change theories and strategies, different systems approaches to organizational change, and be prepared to put the strategies to practice. However, learning the theory behind the practice does not prepare school leaders for their daily work in schools. Educational leadership programs must expand the experience of theory to include what theory looks like in daily practice. Theory must be put into practice to learn it. Discussion and reading are needed. Adults and children learn by putting into practice what they learn. Improvement takes place over time when specific practice is monitored and when feedback is provided.

Rationale and understanding of change strategies and school reform initiatives requires further research for a process and a structure to be effective at the local level.

Summary

Leadership is the over arching component of all school reform initiatives. Leaders must respond to, nurture, and promote a culture of and for learning,

addressing the needs of educators and students to ensure excellence in instruction resulting in attainment of high academic achievement. Elementary students deserve the highest quality of instruction, delivered with a method where they can acquire needed skills, supported with resources, and in an established well-built system.

This research was founded with the goal of developing a structure and process for implementing school reform initiatives in an elementary school setting benefiting all stakeholders; and ultimately, improving academic achievement. This research is not conclusive; however, when school leaders address school improvement initiatives with fidelity and build capacity among stakeholders to achieve great results, school leaders will have the ability to make necessary change to improve education practices that is best for students and their future in their local school setting.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

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If the publication is a periodical, indicate the month of publication.:

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Language(s): English
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Purpose of Publication: Dissertation or Thesis
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Description of the changes. Changing the heading of column 1 from "The School-Level Factors" to "Marzano's School-Level Factors." Changing the heading of column 3 from "Marzano" to "Marzano (from earlier research)" Comparing School-Level Factors Across Researchers The School-Level Factors Rank Marzano Scheerens and Bosker Sammons Levine and Lezotte Edmonds Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum 1 Opportunity to Learn Time Content And Coverage Time Concentration on Teaching and Learning Focus on Central Learning Skills Emphasis on Basic skill Acquisition Challenging Goals and Effective Feedback 2 Monitoring Pressure to Achieve Monitoring Pressure to Achieve High Expectations High Expectations And Requirements High Expectations For Student Success Parental and Community Involvement 3 Parental Involvement Parental Involvement Home-School Partnership Salient Parental Involvement Safe and Orderly Environment 4 School Climate School

Climate A Learning Environment Positive Reinforcement Pupil Rights and
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Fax: 201-236-3290
Phone: 201-236-3281
Vineta.Lewis@Pearson.com

Sep 24, 2012

PE Ref # 173080

NANCY BURKE
4321 US 2
Larimore, ND 58251

Dear Nancy Burke:

You have our permission to include content from our text, ***ASSESSMENT BALANCE AND QUALITY: AN ACTION GUIDE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS, 3rd Ed. by CHAPPUIS, STEVE; COMMODORE, CAROL; STIGGINS, RICK J.***, in your dissertation or masters thesis at .

Content to be included is:
pp. 14-15, 17 Tables 2-1 & 2-2

Please credit our material as follows:
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Sincerely,
Vineta Lewis, Permissions Supervisor

APPENDIX C

Letter to Superintendent Describing Study

Nancy Burke
4321 US Highway 2
Larimore, North Dakota 58251

February 29, 2012

Mr. Jack Maus, Superintendent
Grafton Public School District
1548 School Road
Grafton, North Dakota 58237

Dear Mr. Maus:

I am following up on our conversation regarding your participation in a research study that I will conduct under the direction of Dr. Sherryl Houdek, my advisor, at the University of North Dakota. The purpose of the study is to develop a process and structure for adopting and managing school reform initiatives within a rural pre-kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school. Hopefully, elementary principals will be able to use this process and structure to benefit staff, and ultimately, to improve student academic achievement.

I will use data collections that are public information including data taken from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) Web site. Other data will be collected from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Web site; including National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from the Institute of Education Sciences.

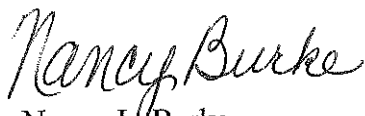
I am requesting data from Grafton Public School District and specifically Century Elementary School. Local school district data will include: school improvement surveys and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, various staff surveys and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, district “Goal Setting” documents and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, and elementary building level “Goal Setting” and “Think Tank” documents and compiled results from 2005-2011. I understand that all survey documents and compiled results are public information and have been shared with the

school community. I am also requesting to use student demographic, assessment data, and elementary programming information from 2005 to 2011. The data will be collected and accumulated at grade level. No individual student will be identified. No individual student data will be collected. Throughout the research process, I will provide copies of collected data, analyses, and interpretations for you to verify the accuracy and credibility of results and conclusions.

Please return a letter printed on school letterhead indicating your understanding of your involvement with the research study, a description of what you are agreeing to let me do, and an agreement to participate in the research study. I have enclosed a template for you to use in writing your letter of agreement. You may return your signed letter of agreement and to me in the enclosed envelope.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please contact my advisor, Dr. Sherryl Houdek, or me at my school office. This research project has been approved by UND's Institutional Review Board, February 24, 2012, and lies within the guidelines established by the University of North Dakota. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, please call 701-352-1739. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,



Nancy Jo Burke
Doctoral Student
University of North Dakota
701-352-1739
Nancy.Burke.1@sendit.nodak.edu

Sherryl Houdek, Ed. D.
EDL Department Chair
University of North Dakota
701-777-2394
sherryl.houdek@email.und.edu

APPENDIX D

Template of Letter Needed From Superintendent

Nancy Burke
4321 US 2
Larimore, ND 58251

Dear Ms. Burke;

As superintendent of schools for the Grafton Public School District, I give you permission to conduct your research within the Grafton Public School setting. The nature of your research has been explained to me. I understand that you will use data collections that are public information taken from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) Web site. Other data will be collected from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Web site; including National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from the Institute of Education Sciences.

I also understand data will be collected from Grafton Public School District and specifically Century Elementary School. Local school district data will include: school district school improvement surveys and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, various staff surveys and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, district “Goal Setting” documents and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, elementary building level “Goal Setting” and “Think Tank” documents and compiled results from 2005 to 2011. I understand the data collected from Century Elementary will include student demographic data, assessment data, and elementary programming data. The data will not identify individual students. Collected Century Elementary data will be accumulated at grade level.

I understand the data collected will be used to develop a process and structure for adopting and managing critical school reform initiatives pre-kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school. Elementary principals can use this process and structure to benefit staff and ultimately, to improve student academic achievement. I understand I will receive a bound copy of the research study following its completion. Sincerely,

Jack Maus, Superintendent of Schools
Grafton Public School District

APPENDIX E

Signed Letter From Superintendent

Grafton Public Schools
Grafton, North Dakota 58237

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Tom Torkelson, President
Russell Carignan, Vice
President
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Barry Kingsbury
Mark Presteng
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SUPERINTENDENT

Jack Maus
1548 School Road
701-352-1930
701-352-1943 Fax

ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR

Michael Hanson
1548 School
701-352-1930



SENIOR HIGH PRINCIPAL

Darren Albrecht
1548 School Road
701-352-1940
701-352-1943 Fax

**MIDDLE SCHOOL
PRINCIPAL
CENTRAL 5-8**

Jill Olson
Jeffrey Rerick
725 Griggs Avenue
701-352-1930
701-352-1120 Fax

**ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL
CENTURY K-4**

Nancy Burke
830 W 15th Street
701-352-1930
701-352-0163 Fax

Inspiring Excellence Building Character

February 30, 2012

Nancy Burke
4321 US Highway 2
Larimore, ND 58251

Dear Ms. Burke:

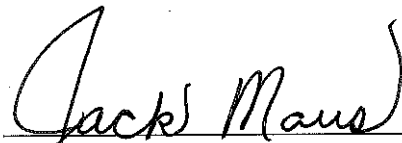
As superintendent of schools for the Grafton Public School District, I give you permission to conduct your research within the Grafton Public School setting. The nature of your research has been explained to me. I understand that you will use data collections that are public information taken from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) Web site. Other data will be collected from The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Web site; including National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from the Institute of Education Sciences.

I also understand data will be collected from Grafton Public School District and specifically Century Elementary School. Local school district data will include: school district school improvement surveys and compiled results from 2005 to 2011,

various staff surveys and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, district "Goal Setting" documents and compiled results from 2005 to 2011, and elementary building level "Goal Setting" and "Think Tank" documents and compiled results from 2005 to 2011. I understand the data collected from Century Elementary will include student demographic data, assessment data, and elementary programming data. The data will not identify individual students. Collected Century Elementary data will be accumulated at grade level.

I understand the data collected will be used to develop a process and structure for adopting and managing critical school reform initiatives at the pre-kindergarten through fourth grade elementary school. Results of this study may help elementary principals use the process and structure developed in your study to benefit staff, and ultimately, to improve student academic achievement. I understand I will receive a bound copy of the research study following its completion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Maus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "J" and "M".

Jack Maus
Superintendent of Schools
Grafton Public School District
Grafton, North Dakota

APPENDIX F

Approval From Institutional Review Board

U N I V E R S I T Y O F  N O R T H D A K O T A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
c/o RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AND COMPLIANCE
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
TWAMLEY HALL ROOM 106
264 CENTENNIAL DRIVE STOP 7134
GRAND FORKS ND 58202-7134
(701) 777-4279
FAX (701) 777-6708

<http://und.edu/research/research-economic-development/institutional-review-board/>

February 27, 2012

Nancy Burke
4321 US 2
Larimore, ND 58251

Dear Ms. Burke:


We are pleased to inform you that your project titled, "Charting the Journey: Leading Rural School Reform" (IRB-201202-283) has been reviewed and approved by the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (IRB). The expiration date of this approval is November 18, 2012.

As principal investigator for a study involving human participants, you assume certain responsibilities to the University of North Dakota and the UND IRB. Specifically, any adverse events or departures from the protocol that occur must be reported to the IRB immediately. It is your obligation to inform the IRB in writing if you would like to change aspects of your approved project, prior to implementing such changes.

When your research, including data analysis, is completed, you must submit a Research Project Termination form to the IRB office so your file can be closed. A Termination Form has been enclosed and is also available on the IRB website.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call me at (701) 777-4279 or e-mail michelle.bowles@research.und.edu.

Sincerely,


Michelle L. Bowles, M.P.A., CIP
IRB Coordinator

MLB/jle

Enclosures

APPENDIX G

District Codes and Categories, 2005-2006

Table 27. District Codes and Categories, 2005-2006.

District Codes (2005-2006)	District Categories (2005-2006)
Administrators and Title I coordinator to receive NWEA training	Assessment
NDSA results reviewed	
NDSA scores reviewed	
NWEA – Map assessment to be implemented, Fall 2005	
Seven-year historical table of math and reading scores reviewed	
Second Step Character Education program report	Character Education
Wellness and nutrition policies adopted	Health and Wellness
Wellness and nutrition policies to be reviewed	
Professional Learning Community Research (DuFour, Fullan, Stiggins)	Professional Development
School Improvement Exit Visitation report reviewed (end of cycle)	School Improvement
School surveys to be distributed	
School wide transition of high school from Targeted Assisted to Title I.	

APPENDIX H

District Codes and Categories, 2006-2007

Table 28. District Codes and Categories, 2006-2007.

District Codes (2006-2007)	District Categories (2006-2007)
Assessment of learning – for learning	Assessment
Develop collective thinking about assessment	
Framework for “Back to School” focusing on sound assessment practice	
Grafton Professional Development – written plan	Professional Development
PLCs were created at each building – Century Elementary/middle school/high school	
Professional Learning Community research (DuFour, Fullan, Stiggins)	
Staff survey results presented, “why” PLC	
Systems approach	
Clear focus, staff	School Improvement
Establish common language, K-12	
Minimize isolation	
Next steps	
Systems approach	

APPENDIX I

District Codes and Categories, 2008-2009

Table 29. District Codes and Categories, 2008-2009.

District Codes (2008-2009)	District Categories (2008-2009)
AYP reports	Assessment
Hold students accountable	Character Education
Connect with family and community	Communication
Change instructional strategies	Instructional Strategies
Provide interventions for struggling students	
Invest in professional development	Professional Development
Data-based data-driven decisions	Resources
Provide necessary resources	
Action plan for improving student academic performance	School Improvement
Higher aggressive achievement goals	
Restructure the school day	
Ten (10) strategies discussion to improve education	

APPENDIX J

District Codes and Categories, 2009-2010

Table 30. District Codes and Categories, 2009-2010.

District Codes (2009-2010)	District Categories (2009-2010)
AYP reports	Assessment
NWEA/DIBELS reports	
Student performance and achievement	
Behavior management	Character Education
Communication	Communication
Public/community relations	
Relations with area schools	
Facility improvement	Facilities Management and Transportation
Transportation	
Day Treatment	Health and Wellness
School safety and environment	
Response to Intervention (RtI) – Academic & Behavior	
Before/after school program, elementary/middle school/high school	Instructional Strategies
Curriculum	
Goal – improve student achievement	
High school electives and graduation requirements	
Instructional strategies – behavior management	

Table 30 Cont.

District Codes (2009-2010)	District Categories (2009-2010)
Overview of programs implemented – RtI/Positive Behavior Support (PBS)/Crisis Prevention Intervention (CPI)	Instructional Strategies (Continued)
Preschool	
Response to Intervention (RtI) – Academic	
Tier grouping, elementary/block scheduling, middle school	
Professional development	Professional Development
Professional Learning Communities	
Additional staffing	Resources
Grants (review of PEP/Title IID/Title I)	
Purchase research-based resources to support the curriculum	
Improvement plan	School Improvement
Lengthen the school day	
School-wide profile, three to five year district review	
Short term planning	
Long term planning	
Title I school-wide, elementary/middle school, high school	
Student engagement through technology	Technology
Technology demo	

APPENDIX K

District Codes and Categories, 2010-2011

Table 31. District Codes and Categories, 2010-2011.

District Codes (2010-2011)	District Categories (2010-2011)
Implement behavior data collection	Assessment
School Wide Information System (SWIS)	
Standards-based education and reporting	
Communication	Communication
Engage parents and families	
Improve communication	
Meaningful parent/teacher conferences	
Relations with area schools	
Demographics, poverty, and diversity	Health and Wellness
Health and wellness	
Promote health and wellness	
Response to Intervention – Behavior	
Safe environment	

Table 31 Cont.

District Codes (2010-2011)	District Categories (2010-2011)
Early childhood education	Instructional Strategies
Extended school program	
Instructional strategies	
Music	
Response to Intervention – Academic	
Special education	
Teaching and learning	
Administration/teacher leadership	Professional Development
Leadership and governance	
Resources and support	Resources
Ongoing and continuous improvement	School Improvement
Technology	Technology

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[111hr1enr/pdf/BILLS-111hr1enr.pdf](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-111hr1enr/pdf/BILLS-111hr1enr.pdf)

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