Implementation of a District-Initiated Inquiry Process in a Southern California School District

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Jose Francisco Escobedo

Committee in Charge:

University of California, San Diego

Professor Janet Chrispeels, Chair
Professor Bud Mehan

San Diego State University

Professor Margaret Basom

2008
The Dissertation of Jose Francisco Escobedo is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________

Chair

University of California, San Diego
San Diego State University
California State University, San Marcos
2008
DEDICATION

The completion of this study would not occur without the support of family, friends and my divine spiritual companion I call Jesus. My wife has been a constant supporter and my best friend throughout these difficult years. I have been truly blessed to have worked with a wonderful chair, Janet Chrispeels and two colleagues, Anisha Dalal and Brian Bristol. I would be remiss not to mention my parents, Francisco and Celina, who dedicated their lives in providing me an education and taught me the value of hard work.
We don’t accomplish anything in this world alone…and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one’s life and all the weaving of individual threads from one another that creates a masterpiece.

*Sandra Day O’Connor*
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epigraph</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vita</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Accelerated School Model ................................................................. 12
Figure 2.2: Student – Based Decision Making: Essential Questions ..................... 15
Figure 2.3: BASRC Cycle of Inquiry .................................................................... 16
Figure 2.4: Leadership Matrix ............................................................................. 20
Figure 2.5: 4I Framework .................................................................................. 29
Figure 2.6: Single and Double Loop Learning ..................................................... 30
Figure 2.7: IRI Model ......................................................................................... 33
Figure 2.8: Principal Evaluation Rubric for Case Study District – 2D – Develop a
Culture of Inquiry .............................................................................................. 66
Figure 3.1: Highlights from Peer Principal Evaluation ......................................... 93
Figure 3.2: Demographic Comparisons ............................................................... 94
Figure 4.2: Timeline Describing the Inquiry’s Evolution through a Series of District
Initiatives ........................................................................................................... 100
Figure 4.2: Charter School A’s Academic Performance Index ............................ 105
Figure 4.4: Principal A’s Force Field Analysis Describing the Forces Surrounding the
Implementation of the District-Initiated Inquiry ............................................... 120
Figure 4.5: Teacher’s Conceptual Framework on how the District-Initiated Inquiry
Process is Implemented in Charter School A ................................................. 124
Figure 4.6: Teacher A's Force Field Inquiry Analysis Illustrating the Opposing and
Supporting Forces Teachers Perceive Surrounding the Implementation of the District-
Initiated Inquiry Process ..................................................................................... 130
Figure 4.7: Charter School B’s Academic Performance Index ............................ 133
Figure 4.8: Principal B's Force Field Inquiry Analysis Illustrating the Opposing and Supporting Forces Mrs. Chavira Perceives Surrounding the Implementation of the District-Initiated Inquiry Process. ................................................................. 141

Figure 4.9: Looking at Student Work Protocol Used by Charter B’s Teachers .......... 146

Figure 4.10: Teacher B's Force Field Inquiry Analysis Illustrating the Opposing and Supporting Forces Teachers Perceive Surrounding the Implementation of the District-Initiated Inquiry Process. ................................................................. 149

Figure 5.1: District’s Inquiry Process describes the theoretical construct each principal was to follow when making a school-level decision. This construct became adopted Board of Education Policy in 1998. ................................................................. 155

Figure 5.2: Principal’s Inquiry Process Describes the Prevailing Perception on how the District-Initiated Inquiry Process is Implemented at a School Site......................... 1586
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Document and Archival Record Collection Strategy ................................. 82
Table 3.2: Principal Standard Evaluation Tool ............................................................. 84
Table 3.3: Data Collection Timeline ............................................................................ 88
Table 4.1: Harris Interactive Survey Results ................................................................. 107
Table 4.2: Principal Evaluation Rubric Matrix: Standard Number 2D ....................... 108
Table 4.3: Major Themes in Video: Working Differently ............................................. 110
Table 4.4: Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry ....................................... 115
Table 4.5: Checklist Matrix: Conditions Inhibiting Inquiry ........................................ 119
Table 4.7: Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry ....................................... 127
Table 4.8: Checklist Matrix: Conditions Inhibiting Inquiry ........................................ 130
Table 4.9: Harris Interactive Survey Results ................................................................. 134
Table 4.10: Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry .................................... 138
Table 4.11: Checklist Matrix: Conditions Inhibiting Inquiry ...................................... 140
Table 4.12: Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry .................................... 148
Table 4.13: Case-Ordered Meta-Matrix: Principal’s Perspective on Inquiry Practice 151
Table 4.14: Case-Ordered Meta-Matrix: Teacher’s Perspective on Inquiry Practice 153
Table 5.1: Presence of Support for Propositions ......................................................... 173
VITA

1982  Bachelor of Science, Yale University
1989  Elementary Education, Multiple Subject, California Clear Credential, University of California, San Diego
1995  Master of Arts, San Diego State University
1998  Fellow, Principal Executive Program, University of California, San Diego
2008  Doctor of Education, University of California, San Diego; San Diego State University; California State University, San Marcos

WORK EXPERIENCE

Assistant Superintendent, Educational Leadership, South Bay Union School District Imperial Beach, 2007 to present
Principal Research Analyst, American Institutes of Research, 2007 to present
Adjunct Professor, San Diego State University, 2001– present
California Regional Vice-President of Achievement/Operations, Edison Schools, 2004-2006
Principal, Chula Vista Elementary School District, 2000 – 2005
Principal, National School District, 1996-2000
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Implementation of a District-Initiated Inquiry Process
in a Southern California School District

by

Jose Francisco Escobedo

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

University of California, San Diego, 2008
San Diego State University, 2008
California State University, San Marcos, 2008

Professor Janet Chrispeels, Chairperson

The purpose of this study was to explore how a district-initiated inquiry process affected principal and staff behaviors, while being incorporated into school practices. This study contributed to the limited literature about the use of the inquiry process as a reform strategy within the context of a district-initiated inquiry process. Research suggests that an inquiry process is the construct for quality decision-making practices that lead schools toward sustainable change (Reeves, 2006, Copland, 2003). Previous studies of this case study district indicate that the change strategies implemented at the
district level helped raise student achievement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). To address this purpose, an exploratory and descriptive multiple case study design was applied on two elementary charter schools in a Southern California School District. The primary data source for this study was interviews of principals and grade-level leadership teams. Secondary data sources were district and school documents, which included surveys, published articles on the district, and principal evaluations.

This study examined the phenomenon of inquiry as it was enacted in two elementary charter schools in a district that committed to using the process nine years ago. I found that after several years principal leadership behaviors did change as a result of implementing the district-initiated inquiry process, and structures were created to enhance the collaboration and time needed to practice inquiry in the school setting. Although the district-initiated inquiry process propelled inquiry as a decision-making tool to the forefront, external entities, such as the Ball Foundation, embedded the processes needed to operationalize this inquiry construct.
Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1998 the case study district began a districtwide reform initiative to improve student learning. A key component of this initiative was to shift from a school-staff focused site-based management system to one that focused on students and their needs. To facilitate this process, the district developed, and the Board of Education adopted an inquiry process that made students the focal point of all decision-making. This study explores how two elementary principals and the teachers in their schools understood and used the inquiry process to promote desired organizational change, build leadership capacity, and foster teacher collaboration focused on student achievement. Inquiry is the act of asking specific, focused questions that encourage discovery and reflection among all stakeholders. As shown through the literature review, use of inquiry supports organizational change and the development of leadership capacity.

Rationale

Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner (2000) assert our public school structures and organizational practices have remained virtually unchanged since the Civil War era. Our current educational institutions are designed to transmit our culture, promote staff compliance with rules and regulations, maintain the status quo, slow or impede efforts to innovate, question, and take risks; and at the same time, political leaders are demanding that all students reach higher levels of achievement. Consequently, innovation is stifled in the schools that might need it the most if they are to take students most disadvantaged by poverty to high levels of learning. The reality is
that many educational systems cannot adapt to changing environments and are ill-equipped to meet the diverse needs of our information-age students. Senge, et al. (2000) proposes redesigning schools to meet the increased demands for teaching diverse students. The inquiry process could be one means of promoting greater innovation and redesign to better meet the needs of 21st Century students.

Elmore (2000), while conducting a historical study of education, discovered the institution’s tendency to divert and water down change. He claims schools are not built to undergo substantial reform or innovation. Promoting sustainable change in our educational institutions becomes a daunting and often excruciating task. As an educator committed to enhancing the learning experience for all students, it is important to explore how inquiry has been used in one district that has received national recognition as a responsive and high-performing district (Togneri & Anderson, 2003).

Leadership is crucial. Because the principal is instrumental in shaping the instructional climate for improvement and student achievement (Cooley & Shen, 2000), we cannot ignore the contributions principals make to the school system. According to many researchers, the principal’s leadership does make a difference (Reeves, 2006; Deal & Peterson 1990; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Thernstrom (2003) claims principals are responsible for the lack of innovation in schools, while operating in a bureaucratic and political straightjacket. The nature of their jobs encourages inertia and doing a good job requires the principal to play by the rules and stay out of trouble. These rules are often created by powerful teacher unions which limit opportunities for implementing innovative measures (Thernstrom, 2003). Therefore, it was important to investigate if principals
were better able to guide their staff in innovation and change when provided with training and support in implementing an inquiry process.

Traditionally, school principals take few risks and demonstrate little innovation (Elmore, 2000, Senge, 1996). The fast-paced environment of the educational profession, the high-stakes accountability and punitive measures in the era of No Child Left Behind Act (2001) increased the risks for principals if they did not follow district directives or showed substantial results in meeting preset student achievement targets. They also often remained isolated in their jobs, with few support structures to assist them. The pressures of the job also meant they had less time to interact with stakeholders to determine how to best educate all students. The lack of time and structures for collaboration in school settings can lead to inconsistencies in the quality and effectiveness of educational programs and subsequent results for students. In these high-pressure settings, principals often resort to a “top down” decision-making approach for solving problems. They tend to focus on compliancy and following district mandates. A critical question that this study explored is how have principals’ leadership behaviors been affected by implementing a districtwide inquiry process.

*Significance of constructive conflict to innovation and change.* Studies by Modlin (1996), Black (2003) and Sexton-Bryson (2004) all indicate principal effectiveness can be increased by collaboration. Principals promote creativity through collaboration with teachers, training opportunities, and interactions on all levels in a school setting to help all students be successful. Yet collaboration also often brings conflict, which principals may or may not be able to use effectively to promote change. The inquiry method may be a vehicle to elicit and channel constructive conflict in a
school system. Some studies suggest the inquiry method enhances the quality of professional learning communities that foster decision-making and collaboration (Copland, 2003, Jones & Yonezawa, 2002, Copland, 2001, DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Efficacious principals focus on developing relationships and interactions among staff members. This begins with embracing the concept that conflict, managed correctly, such as through the tool of the inquiry method, can bring about positive results in a school.

Uline, Tschannen-Moran, and Perez (2003) state that conflict, “…when well managed, breathes life and energy into relationships and can cause individuals to be much more innovative and productive…Thus, conflict can become a necessary locus of energy, rather than a source of harm” (p. 782). Therefore, principals must recognize that staff members they work with will most likely “…avoid or suppress conflict because they fear uncontrollable consequences resulting from a lack of self-efficacy and skills to manage conflict constructively” (Uline, Tschannen-Moran, & Perez, 2003; p. 785).

It is the principal’s responsibility to find ways to create practices that support inquiry so staff members grow to trust each other as their needs and ideas are incorporated into joint solutions. These interactions around inquiry develop individuality so staff members feel more powerful, capable, efficacious, and connected to others. In summary, schools that wish to reap the benefits of the inquiry method need to understand common responses to the inquiry method and support organizational participants to create strategies to deal with conflict that lead to constructive outcomes. A major thesis of this study was that principals and staff members who evolve through
the use of the inquiry method contribute to building highly collaborative professional learning communities in their schools.

**Role of professional learning communities.** Professional learning communities are highly collaborative and are linked to long-term sustainability in educational reform efforts (Datnow, 2005; Fullan, 1999; Lambert, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2004). Reform efforts require continuous learning about instructional pedagogy and curriculum implementation. This continuous learning is both an individual and a social activity (Shiu & Chrispeels, 2004). Therefore, collective learning demands an environment that guides and directs the acquisition of new knowledge about instruction. In this environment, principals must create conditions that value learning as an individual and collective good. Site principals must create environments in which individuals expect to have their personal ideas and practices subjected to the scrutiny of their colleagues, and in which groups expect to have their shared conceptions of practice subjected to the scrutiny of individuals and the collective (Elmore, 2000). Collaboration creates cooperation that requires an understanding that learning evolves out of differences in expertise, not differences in formal authority. This study examined how teacher leadership team members at each of the schools used the inquiry process to foster a professional learning community.

**Inquiry’s role in creating change.** A significant factor in creating sustainable change is the decision-making processes used in schools. Research suggests that an inquiry process is the construct for quality decision-making practices that lead schools toward sustainable change (Reeves, 2006, Copland, 2003). Inquiry occurs through collaboration with all stakeholders. When a principal collaborates with staff members,
sustainability can be enhanced. Principals who move away from traditional “top down”
decision-making approaches within a school provide spaces for teachers to lead from
their expertise. Distributed school leadership shapes the instructional environment, and,
in turn, is more likely to influence teacher behavior and student achievement (Cooley &

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how principals and teachers in two
elementary schools implemented a district initiated inquiry process that was specifically
designed to shift schools from a school/staff focus to a student-centered focus. The
specific research questions that guided the study were:

1. In what ways do principals, teachers and the leadership team members
   perceive the implementation of the district’s inquiry process in their
   schools?

2. How do principals and teachers perceive the effectiveness of the inquiry
   process on their own learning and the school’s work?

3. How has the inquiry process influenced the leadership behaviors of the
   principal?

Overview of Methodology

For this study I used a descriptive and exploratory multiple case design to
conduct the research (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) defines a case study as “an empirical
inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context,
especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly
evident” (p. 13). In this study, the two schools had clear and distinct boundaries, but
they were also embedded in a larger district culture and required to be responsive to federal and state mandates. These larger contexts blurred boundaries and affected how each school responded to the inquiry process. The case design also allowed me to bring together multiple data sources such as extant survey data, school and district documents, and individual interviews with principals and teachers to explore the phenomenon of a student-focused inquiry process. I used a comparative case approach as a way to understand the inquiry process more deeply because it is well-known that context matters (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998). The schools may not respond in the same way to the inquiry process as initially proposed and operationalized because of each school's unique culture, organization, and leadership.

**Significance of study**

The significance of this study is that there are few, if any, studies of an inquiry model approved by a school board and implemented in a school district. It is important to understand how this process has been accepted, implemented, modified and sustained since its adoption in 1998. The two schools that are the focus of this study are unique in that they were relatively new (one was six years old, the other three years). How and in what ways do schools new to the system take up previously adopted practices? What supports and constraints facilitate the use of the inquiry process in these new schools?

This study contributed to the literature by exploring how an inquiry process that focused on student achievement contributed to creating professional learning communities and collaboration. Extant research (Folkman, 2003, Copeland, 2003) suggests that an inquiry process is the preferred method to stimulate change in a professional learning community, but we know little about how leadership teams use
inquiry to facilitate change (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The inquiry process was highly
dependent on the relationships and interactions developed among teachers. The inquiry
process was a creative problem-solving process in which the school improvement
planning team investigated the causes of priority needs identified in a needs assessment,
researched potential solutions that addressed the needs, and selected improvement
strategies that best fit the unique needs of the school.

This study was also significant because it contributed to the leadership literature
by researching practices educational leaders used to support an inquiry process in their
schools. Hopfenberg et al. (1993) described inquiry as a framework for change that
yields systemic results and suggested templates that allowed for individuals to be more
creative in generating solutions in difficult circumstances. Their description of an
inquiry model, however, does not provide insights into the actions and behaviors of
principals that may support or hinder teacher inquiry. Lastly, this study provided an
opportunity to investigate the use of a district initiated inquiry process and how it
created professional development support for teachers to collaborate, and how it
enabled schools to better meet the needs of students.

Summary

This study contributed to the limited literature about the use of the inquiry
process as a reform strategy within the context of a district initiated inquiry process.
Previous studies of this district indicated that the change strategies implemented at the
district level helped to raise student achievement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). It is not
clearly evident how the phenomenon, inquiry, was practiced in a school setting. In this
study, I examined the phenomenon of inquiry as it was implemented in two elementary
schools in a district that committed to using the process nine years ago. It is important to see if after several years and a change in district leadership, the process will be maintained. This study made a unique contribution to the body of literature by capturing how the inquiry process was implemented in schools, and provides insights how principal leadership behaviors changed as a result of implementing this district-initiated inquiry process.
Chapter 2
Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to recognize how a Southern California School District operationalized a district inquiry practice. This inquiry model may be the only inquiry model approved by a School Board and implemented in a school district. This study examined a specific inquiry framework used in the case study district for the purpose of guiding decision-making and addressing critical issues of student learning. This model created the opportunity to improve student learning, collaboration among teachers, and deep conversations that have students at the center of all conversations.

This review presents a body of research on inquiry, organizational learning, district reform and leadership. Each section is organized by a description of the concept, an overview of significant or conceptual applications, and a synthesis of major empirical studies. The review begins with inquiry as the core focus of the study and is followed by what studies have shown about how inquiry is manifested in the organization. The review concludes with what is known about how leaders practice inquiry.

Inquiry

Description

Inquiry, the process of asking reflective and focused questions, may be a catalyst that promotes organizational learning. Yonezawa and Jones (2002) defined inquiry as a sense-making process about an issue, problem, or experience. Inquiry groups in schools are unique in that they are semi-structured spaces for authentic dialogue about lived
experiences in schools and classrooms. Hopfenberg, Levin, Chase, Christensen, Moore & Soler (1993) described inquiry as a way to recreate and transform schools into a vibrant community of learners. The inquiry process is used to work toward solutions for challenges identified by the school community. Inquiry is the relationship between the present situation and the vision one has for the school. The inquiry process is about educators, parents, children, and other community members asking questions, sharing perspectives, and working collaboratively toward a common vision. This review provides an exhaustive synthesis on inquiry through the lens of leadership as a problem-solving model in schools.

Inquiry Models

Three specific models are described in this review of literature. They are (a) the Accelerated Schools model, the inquiry model used by several schools in the Southern California case district and well-known by its superintendent who started the districtwide inquiry initiative, (b) the case study district’s own version of the inquiry process, and (c) the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC). This review describes what is known from studies of these processes and they seem to facilitate support and place pressure on organizations. These models helped frame this study and assisted in understanding the findings and creating plausible explanations for how the district adopted and other inquiry processes may have influenced leadership behaviors and reform practices in the case study schools in this investigation.

Accelerated schools model. Henry Levin’s model for Accelerated Schools draws on the concepts of a scientific inquiry process and is used to develop and test hypotheses about observed phenomena (see Figure 2.1). The Accelerated Schools
model (ASM) uses inquiry to explore alternative strategies to meet specific school problems. Levin (1998) stated that “inquiry has been found to be the most frustrating and yet the most liberating part of the change process (p. 53)” It is frustrating because it works in opposition to the traditional school practice of making quick decisions and because many school staff members have had little or no experience with such a process. Conversely, the process is liberating because it allows planning teams to solve complex school problems.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 2.1. Accelerated School Model**

In this process, the school improvement team is integral in implementing the inquiry process. Its role is to: (a) investigate the causes of the priority needs identified in the needs assessment, (b) research potential solutions that will address the needs, (c) select improvement strategies that will best fit the unique needs of the school, (d) implement the plan, and (e) evaluate and reassess those strategies. The first phase focuses on clarifying a potentially wide area of concern. This is done so the team can
fully comprehend the specific nature of the problem. Brainstorming is the second phase where any thought or suggestion is reflected and considered by the team. As the team moves through the third stage, they analyze potential approaches or resolutions and then they concur as to which one would create the best opportunity for solution. The team then synthesizes the possible solutions into a plan for an experimental program molded to the school’s special needs. In the fourth stage, these solutions are approved by a leadership committee and the school implements the program on a trial basis. The final phase is when the leadership team and school community assess and appraise the solution or program to determine whether it has addressed the specific issue (Hopfenberg, 1990).

The Accelerated Schools model places strong emphasis on school-based governance and places decision-making in the hands of the staff members, parents, and students so they take responsibility for transforming the school’s culture and practices (Levin, 1998). Hopfenberg et al. (1993) described inquiry as a framework for change that yields systemic results. They suggested the guidelines of a creative strategy; allow individuals to generate many creative, often more effective solutions that would not be possible otherwise. This study examined a specific inquiry framework used in a Southern California School District for the purpose of problem solving.

Southern california case study district inquiry model. The Southern California District in this study underwent an extensive reorganization to incorporate an inquiry approach designed to induce the schools’ focus on student needs. The inquiry process, decision-frame and steps taken by the district to implement the process was strongly influenced by Levin’s Accelerated Schools model. Roles of the central office
departments were redefined, resources were shifted to schools to better meet student needs, and the model of “site-based decision making” was reframed to a “student-based” decision-making model to become the new mode of operation (Gil, 2001). This decision-making model was refined to meet the needs of schools by creating a more purposeful framework when the word student was substituted for the word site. The purpose of the inquiry model of Student-Based Decision Making was to put students first when making site and district decisions. Figure 2.2 presents four key questions that were to serve as the heart of the inquiry process and to guide decision-making in the district and at all schools, when it was adopted by the Board of Education in 1998 (Gil, 2001).

Similar to the ASM, the district envisions that the weight of decision-making is given to many stakeholders and is not to be a top-down approach. Involving multiple stakeholders in the decision process was seen as one way of transforming school’s practices and culture (Levin, 1998).

The initial question allowed teachers, principals, and instructional leadership teams to reflect on their vision for the school in terms of student outcomes. They gathered evidence or data to support decision-making. The second question was value-laden and ensured decisions adhered to legal and moral constructs. The next question served as the center of the process where all crucial stakeholders, specifically, staff members, parents, community, and district office collaborate. According to the model, data was analyzed and fiscal and personnel impact were considered when making a decision. The final question considered student interests on an individual and aggregate level.
Teachers, principals, and instructional leadership teams did not have to follow this inquiry process in a linear fashion. The elements in each question could be addressed throughout the decision-making process. Schools in the district were vested with considerable authority to adopt a variety of school reform models, including the Accelerated School model, but whatever model was adopted they were to use the decision and inquiry frame. What appeared unique about this district model was that there were no specific steps or order to follow, unlike the ASM process. The purpose of this study was to understand how this district inquiry process was adopted, adapted, and implemented in two elementary schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-Based Decision Making: Essential Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving Student Learning, Ethical Responsibility, and Involving All Stakeholders are three principles we work with in the decision-making process. The following essential questions provide guidelines as we apply these principles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW DOES THE DECISION IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING?**

- Rationale or evidence that it makes a difference for all children
- Support our vision statement

**IS THE DECISION ILLEGAL, UNETHICAL, OR IMMORAL?**

- Support our values statement

**IS THERE ADVERSE IMPACT ON OTHERS?**

- Collaboration with staff, parents, community
- Data collection/research
- District included in problem-solving process
- Fiscal and personnel impact

**HOW ARE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS BALANCED WITH GROUP NEEDS?**

Equity-- Adopted by Board of Education, May 19, 1998

*Figure 2.2. Student – Based Decision Making: Essential Questions.*
Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) model. The Bay Area School
Reform Collaborative (BASRC) offered a construct useful for describing how an
inquiry process is used by teachers, instructional leadership teams, and principals.
Copland (2003) investigated a sample of 118 schools in the Bay Area Region over a
period of five years. The BASRC model sought to “reculture” schools in ways that
support whole school change. BASRC’s theory of action holds that the important work
of reforming schools must be done primarily by the schools themselves. Its overall
strategy for promoting school reform uses a school-based cycle of inquiry and marshals
diverse forms of knowledge to support teachers’ learning and improvement as seen in
Figure 2.3 (Copland, 2003).

Figure 2.3. BASRC Cycle of Inquiry.

Copland (2003) described the six-step cycle of inquiry intended to help schools
investigate and respond to questions about policies and practices. The first three steps
include proposing a broad problem statement, selecting and narrowing a question for
investigation and identifying measurable goals. The third step recognizes that setting
specified targets is a measure for determining the success or failure of an action. The step of setting measurable goals distinguishes it from the ASM approach. The ASM model urges the school to brainstorm all possible solutions and then concur on which the school will try first. The idea that there might be multiple solutions does not seem to be present in the BASRC model. The fourth and fifth steps in the BASRC inquiry cycle include creating and implementing a particular action, in other words, making the connection between knowing and doing. The ASM model differed slightly at this stage in that it proposed developing a pilot test to ensure it addressed the problem. The final step in both models was to collect and analyze the results from data generated by the action taken. Again, both models then cycled back to the first step as the problem statement was refined in light of new evidence. This model offered a conceptual framework for the study as a way to capture how teachers, instructional leadership teams, and principals may implement the inquiry process. It is important to note that neither the ASM nor BASRC model directs the inquiry. In other words, although both inquiry processes were established to help meet student needs, it would be possible to formulate a problem statement that focused more on adult needs in the school, such as improving professional culture. Sometimes such a step may be crucial to eventually get to student learning, but the focus of the case district’s inquiry questions seemed specifically to keep the school focused on students. Additionally, Figures 2.1 and 2.3 do not make explicit mention of who was to be involved in the process. The case district’s decision-frame seemed to indicate more explicitly that all stakeholders are to be involved.
Empirical Studies Surrounding Inquiry

After conducting an extensive review of studies about the inquiry process, four significant empirical studies supported the idea that the inquiry process is a method to frame problem-solving strategies. One such study, in the areas of cognitive science and linguistics, pointed to the paramount importance of framing. Deutschman (2005) defines framing as the mental structures that shape the way we see the world. Lakoff, (cited in Deutschman, 2005) defined frames as part of the “cognitive unconscious”, and the way we derive our frames springs from language. Argyris (1985) stated that frames act as templates we attempt to fit over situations in order to make sense of them and give meaning to what we see. Deutschman (2005) argued the challenge in trying to change how people think is that their minds rely on frames, not facts. To some extent the IRI inquiry model seems to best reflect the concepts of frames articulated by Deutschman. Argyris (1985) stated inquiry builds on a frame that regards errors as the basis for further inquiry. The idea of a pilot in the AMS model seemed to reflect that making mistakes was allowable because the group had already explored that multiple solutions could be conceivable. Inquiry creates the desired framing that allows people’s voices to be heard and shared. An important component of this study was to understand whose voices were heard in the inquiry process.

Stephen Covey (2004) defined the epitome of leadership as the ability to find one’s voice and inspire others to find their own, as manifested in the following quote:

They serve and inspire others. They apply principles that govern growth and prosperity in human beings and organizations-principles that draw the highest and best from a “whole person” body, mind, heart and spirit. Equally
significant, they choose to influence and inspire others to find their voice through these principles as well (p. 26).

*Inquiry affects student achievement.* The act of asking focused questions has been linked to improved student achievement. Reeves’ (2006) research study, involving data from over 300,000 linguistically and ethnically-diverse students from rural, urban and suburban school settings, associates leadership inquiry practices with student achievement. Reeves (2006) study linked *SMART* school plans with student achievement. *SMART* plans incorporate goals that are specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, within appropriate timeframes, and extend the organization to its highest capacity. His study included a review of over 280 school plans. The review of each plan was double-blinded with an inter-rater reliability greater than 80 percent. An evaluation rubric was used to analyze 24 external factors related to student achievement. The analysis of planning, implementation, monitoring and its relationship to student achievement and educational equity were the rubric’s fundamental features. Relevant to this study, it is important to note that the case district’s process did not specifically mention explicit measurable goals, however, the first question relates to how the decision will improve student learning.

The central findings of the Reeves (2006) study were: (a) demographic characteristics are significant, but not determinative of student achievement, (b) dramatic differences in the impact of inquiry, and (c) potential insight into monitoring of professional practices. The study’s findings showed poverty, combined with the designation as an English Language Learner, has an overall 52 percent effect on achievement, while instructional practices, such as inquiry, has a 48 percent effect on
achievement. The impact of inquiry was the strongest variable directly related to student achievement. Teachers and leaders with “high inquiry,” believe instructional practices are the primary cause of student learning. Conversely, educators with “low inquiry” believe external demographic factors are the cause of student learning.

Reeves’ (2006) study supported the “Pygmalion Effect.” Educators who believe all students can learn with appropriate instruction have a positive correlation to student achievement. This study concluded with the notion that leadership behavior was paramount to student success. As a result of his study, Reeves created a “Leadership for Learning Framework” to guide leaders to reflect on their practice (see Figure 2.5).

![The Leadership and Learning Matrix](image)

*Figure 2.4. Leadership Matrix.*

Reeves (2006) emphasized that leaders who sustain improvement over time are those who fall into the “Leading” and “Learning” categories. These leaders have a high
understanding of the necessary decisions that will improve student achievement. The leaders in the “Lucky” quadrant experience high student achievement in their schools in spite of poor teaching practices. The schools led by these Lucky leaders choose the path of least resistance; prefer popularity over effectiveness, and have learning environments that typify excessive worksheets and fluffy projects. In the “Loser” quadrant, the leaders engage in self-defeating behaviors by doing the same thing and expecting different results. Although Reeves’ study lacked the qualitative evidence on how leaders practice “inquiry,” the data suggests that adult beliefs directly influence student achievement.

Inquiry shapes the neural network. The quality of inquiry may be connected to prior formation of beliefs that are fixed in peoples’ mind maps. The outcome of the “Pygmalion Effect” may be supported by recent neurobiological experiments. Sensory experiences are thought to be heavily shaped by interactions between expectations and incoming sensory information. The intensity of expected and experienced pain was captured through the use of combined psychophysical and functional MRI (fMRI) techniques. Koyama, McHaffie, Laurienti and Coghill (2006) conducted an experimental design where 1-2 days after training sessions, subjects underwent fMRI scans of 30 stimulus trials. Each trial lasted 120 seconds and consisted of a 30 second rest and a 30 second painful stimulation, with a variable rest period between and after each trial. Ten adult subjects participated in this study (8 males, 2 females, 5 whites, 4 Asians, 1 black). When the intensity of expected pain was manipulated, the expectations of decreased pain powerfully reduced both the subjective experience of pain and activation of pain-related brain regions. In experiments using expectations of decreased
pain, nearly 85% of the variability could be accounted for by changes in the expectation magnitude of pain. Careful analysis of neocortical activity using intracellular recordings confirm that a mental representation of an impending sensory event can significantly shape neural processes that underlie the formulation of the actual sensory experience (Beck and Eccles, 2006; Koyama, et al. 2006, Schwartz, Stapp, & Bearegard, 2005). Although these studies are limited to pain sensation, it provides insight as to how positive expectations may cause the “Pygmalion Effect.” For example, if the teacher expects the students do well, it is likely to affect her actions (e.g. more time for response to a question, more praise, providing more challenging work, etc.) which in turn creates a stimulus-response in the student that may actually cause physiological changes in the students’ neural network. Although this study is not a test of teacher expectations, it does offer an opportunity to explore how regularly asking how the school’s and teachers’ decision improve student learning influences teachers’ perceptions of the ability to influence student learning.

Inquiry’s effect on school reform. The Accelerated Schools Model, which purports using inquiry as a problem-solving strategy, has shown substantial increases in student achievement, parent participation, community projects, student research, and artistic endeavors. Bloom, Ham, Melton and O’Brien (2001) studied the model’s effects in reading and mathematics achievement scores of third-grade cohorts in eight elementary schools during a five-year period. The average third grade reading and math test scores experienced an overall 0.19 and 0.24 standard deviation above the respective baseline averages. These differences, which are statistically significant, are small to modest by the conventional standards of evaluation research.
In another study, Ross, Wang, Sanders, Wright & Stringfield (1999) examined the progress after two and three years of 25 elementary schools in Memphis City that began restructuring in 1995 compared to schools that did not participate in restructuring in the district. Data analyzed in this study were derived from scores on the Terra Nova (a form of the CTBS-5), the state-mandated achievement test, for five subjects (math, reading, language, science, and social studies) over a five-year period for grades four and five. These schools showed gains in student achievement of eight percentile points in a national evaluation and about 40 percentile points in an urban sample of six schools when compared with similar schools not undertaking reforms (Ross et al., 1999). Although the sample sizes in these studies were small and localized in a specific geographical area, the conclusion suggests that schools based on the Accelerated Model project were superior to local traditional schools.

A third study of the BASRC model identified how a region-wide reform effort promoted shared leadership within schools using the BASRC inquiry cycle. Researchers used principal and teacher surveys and selected 16 schools for closer study using observations of principal gatherings. These schools were not selected randomly, but instead were selected by recommendations by BASRC personnel or identified by members of the research team as potentially rich samples. Academic Performance Index (API) were used as part of the analysis to demonstrate the effects of implementing BASRC during a one-year span (1999-2000). Ninety-one percent of the surveyed principals suggested a change in teacher leadership while seventy-one percent indicated the BASRC work promotes teacher’s input in school decision-making. The survey responses from teachers and principals correlated significantly, and 15 out of 16
schools exceeded the targeted API growth. The rich data from surveys and observations gathered is tempered by the low teacher sample size (N=27) and the limitation of conducting this study in one district. This impedes the generalizability of this model as a framework to change school leadership and improve student learning.

Summary

The models presented all had similarities. They were very inclusive with their operationalization. They included parents, students, teachers, administrators and community members. Each model was designed to actively involve high levels of collaboration dependent upon relationships focused on solving problems. Reflection on critical questions to thoughtfully provide feedback was also emphasized in each model. The focus on data to drive the conversations and to provide meaningful dialogue to help solve problems was stressed. This structured process and focus on results allows schools to be accountable for their conversations and creates a tone of responsibility at the individual and at the group level for higher results in student achievement.

However, some characteristics of the Southern California case study district model differed from these other models. Where there were some similarities in each model, the planning and implementation phase was not part of the Southern California case study district board-adopted inquiry process. The student based decision-making questions as presented in Figure 2.2 were not to be asked in a linear fashion. Nor were these questions to be presented in a cyclic fashion. The questions were principles to guide the leader and teams and to help them focus on students. Other differences lie in the scope of who was involved in the inquiry model. In the BASRC and Accelerated School models, site-level inquiry was the focus; whereas, in the Southern California
case study district, the scope of its model incorporated not only school sites, but the
district office as well. This study, however, was focused on the how the inquiry process
was implemented and perceived at the site level.
Organizational Learning

Description

Inquiry does not become institutionalized unless it is taken on by individuals within an organization. Individual inquiry shapes organizational inquiry. The inquiry models and empirical studies reviewed in the literature support Dewey’s (1938) (cited in Aryris & Schön, 1996) definition of inquiry:

Doubt is construed as the experience of a ‘problematic situation’ triggered by a mismatch between the expected results of action and the results actually achieved. A mismatch or surprise blocks the flow of spontaneous activity and gives rise to thought and further action aimed at re-establishing that flow (p. 26).

The way inquiry manifested in an organization through specific individual behaviors will be covered in the next section. The following section defines organizational learning and its application in a school setting, provides organizational learning models, and describes empirical studies on schools that are implementing the concepts of organizational learning.

Argyris and Schön (1996) define organizational learning as:

Organizational learning occurs when individuals within an organization experience a problematic situation and inquire into it on the organization’s behalf. They experience a surprising mismatch between expected and actual results of action and respond to that mismatch
through a process of thought and further action that leads them to modify their images of organization or their understandings of organizational phenomena and to restructure their activities so as to bring outcomes and expectations into line, thereby changing organizational theory-in-use (p. 16).

Argyris (1993) further asserted that organizations come alive through the thoughts and actions of individuals. However, Crossan, Lane, and White (1999) argued enduring organizations are made up of rules and routines that exist independently of any one individual. Crossan et al. (1999) further contended that organizational learning involves a tension between exploration of new learning and exploitation of what has already been learned. While new ideas and actions flow from the individual to the group and organizational levels, previous learning feeds back from the organization to the group and individual levels, thus affecting how people think and act, thereby linking cognition to action. Through systems, structures, strategies, and procedures, the learning becomes institutionalized. The following section provides models on how organizational learning is institutionalized.

Argyris and Schön (1996) defined organizational inquiry when individuals in an organization participate in an inquiry process resulting in a learning product. Individual inquiry feeds into and shapes organizational inquiry which in turn shapes the further inquiry carried out by individuals. The learning products are (a) interpretations of past experiences of success or failure, (b) descriptions of the shifting organizational environment and its demands on future performance, (c) descriptions of conflicting views and interests that arise within the organization under conditions of complexity
and uncertainty, (d) images of desirable futures and ways they may be achieved, and (e) critical reflections on organizational theories-in-use and proposals for their restructuring. These qualify as products of organizational learning when changes in behavior result in changes in organizational theory-in-use and the learning is embedded in images of the organization held by the individual.

Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1985) described three propositions that contribute to organizational learning. They were: (a) participants will all make mistakes; (b) the consequences their actions yield are necessary, but unintended, and (c) errors are puzzles to be engaged or are the raw materials for learning to occur. The following section will describe four organizational inquiry models, 4I Framework, IRI model, Single and Double Loop Learning, and Model I and II.

Organizational learning models

4I framework. Crossan et al. (1999) present a 4I framework for organizational learning that includes four processes of intuiting, interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing. The process of intuiting is recognizing a pattern or possibility and occurs at the individual level. Interpreting which occurs at the group level is about the refinement and development of intuitive insights primarily through conversation with others. Conversation allows the interpretation to be richer and robust. The process of integrating, which occurs at the group and organizational levels is developing shared understanding and taking coordinated action by members of the workgroup. The last step of the process, institutionalization, occurs only at the organizational level when routines become embedded. Figure Example 2.5 depicts this framework. This study explored which of these processes seem evident in the case study schools.
Figure 2.5. 4I Framework

*Single and double loop learning.* In our everyday world, there is a difference between the espoused theory and theory-in-use. Argyris et al. (1985) and Argyris and Schön (1996) define the espoused theory as the attitudes, beliefs, and values that explain or justify a pattern of activity, while theory-in-use is constructed from individual’s behavior. An error occurs when there is a mismatch between values and behaviors. Argyris et al. (1985) posit that for learning at the individual, group, and organizational level to occur, errors must be discovered and corrected. Argyris and Schön (1996) contend that one way to correct errors is to change the behavior and still maintain existing organizational values, thus resulting in single loop learning. Conversely, he argues that errors can also be corrected by questioning the
organization’s norms, rules and policies (theory in use), resulting in double-loop learning. Double-loop learning occurs through questioning, information-gathering, and reflection to address errors as seen in Figure 2.6. Therefore, Argyris and Schön (1996) argue that double loop learning allows organizations to question the status quo by addressing the norms that govern its existing theories-in-use for long term effectiveness. The case study inquiry model, which asks how will the decision improve student learning or how are individual and group needs balanced, offers the potential for double loop learning. If participants use these questions to probe underlying reasons for existing practices that may not be putting students first and then address them. There is also the potential that the questions will be posed, but no real changes made.

Scott (cited in Mulford, Silins, & Leithwood, 2004) argued that schools engage exclusively in single loop learning. Mulford et al. (2004), however, pointed out that there is limited research about the conditions influencing the phenomena of single loop learning in schools. This study provides an opportunity to explore the conditions under which the district-initiated inquiry process might promote either single or double loop learning in the case study schools (see Figure 2.6).

\[\text{Figure 2.6. Single and Double Loop Learning}\]
Argyris et al. (1985) described Model I and Model II as two levels of organizational learning that help individuals in organizations reflect on their existing theories in use and learn alternate theories. An individual’s theory in use is understood primarily through conversation and patterns of behaviors. Argyris and Schön (1996) stated that when individuals deal with issues that are embarrassing or threatening, their reasoning and action conform to Model I behaviors. Leaders aligned to organizational norms craft their positions, evaluations, and attributions in ways that inhibit inquiries into them. Argyris (1993) describes the four governing values of Model I as follows: (a) achieve the defined purpose, (b) maximize winning and minimize losing, (c) suppress negative feelings, and (d) behave according to what is considered rational. The resulting leader’s behaviors are: (a) advocate your position, (b) evaluate the thoughts and actions of others as well as your own, and (c) attribute causes for what you are trying to understand. The consequences of leaders using Model I strategies are defensiveness, misunderstanding, and self-fulfilling prophesies. As a result, the members of the organization are left with a feeling of minimal control to initiate change. Folkman (2003) argues that systemic defensive routines inherent in Model I significantly limit individual, group, and organizational learning and the ability to engage in productive problem-solving. He asserts this creates an environment in which people feel helpless, cynical and pessimistic. A learning organization exists only when the cycle of defensive reasoning is broken and a collaborative environment is created.

Furthermore, Argyris and Schön (1996) suggested that the outcomes of Model I inhibit double loop learning.
Argyris and Schön (1996) asserted an enduring learning organization must relinquish its Model I design and implement Model II actions. A leader who exhibits Model II behaviors allows the exchange of valid information, promotes free and informed choice, and fosters internal commitment. The consequences of these leadership behaviors include minimally defensive interpersonal and group relationships, high freedom of choice, and increased risk-taking. Argyris and Schön (1996) insist when Model II action strategies are implemented, double loop learning and effectiveness are likely to increase. All individuals in the organization learn a new theory in use that leads to double loop learning. The study examined if the teacher and principal behaviors in the case study schools are characteristic of Model I or Model II action strategies, or a combination of both.

IRI inquiry model. Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1998) reinforced the importance of inquiry as a factor for promoting organizational change. The Information, Relationships and Identity (IRI) model (Figure 2.7), assumed that organizations are organic and, therefore, self-organize. It viewed the organization as a living organism where change occurs through the myriad of relationships that make meaning out of the work. This is reinforced by Argyris (1993) who emphasized that organizations are highly dependent on the individuals.

The intricacies between relationships and meaning-making were a major premise of this model. This tangled web of relationships and meaning-making characterized all living systems including organizations (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998). This model purported inquiry as a medium, in which individuals through relational bonds create mutual meaning and plan further action on the organizational
structure and system. Leaders may have used the district-initiated inquiry model to move the school forward by changing teacher behaviors. As Figure 2.7 illustrates, an organization is fashioned through the inner workings of the structure, identity and relationships that are present within that organization. This interplay then creates action, trust and meaning, which they argue propels an organization forward. Once these practices become part of the organization and everyday operations and the routines are embedded into the systems of the organizations then learning becomes engrained in the organization. An emphasis of the current study was to find out if the schools had learned to incorporate these affective practices into their routines and therefore were experiencing increased effectiveness through a change in the processes, systems and structures in the overall organization.

Figure 2.7. IRI Model.

Since inquiry is a meaning-making process, the IRI model does pose some interesting ideas in terms of components (process structure, system) that may need to be in place for inquiry to occur. All the inquiry processes outlined above certainly focus
on information gathering as a central part of inquiry, so it is not surprising that information is in place at the center in the IRI model, and that the purpose of the inquiry is to take action.

Reeves (2006) discovered the potential positive impact of inquiry processes on student achievement scores. His study identified that when leaders promote finding solutions to advance learning via instruction rather than blaming external variables, the organization is challenged to find the meaning behind why students fail to achieve. The collaborative efforts of individual members of the organization through the web of relationships such as teachers, instructional leadership teams, and principals may be the catalyst the system needs to accelerate student achievement. The IRI model seems to lack the level of specificity required to understand how principals, instructional leadership teams, and teachers use inquiry to solve specific issues at a school site. Nevertheless, the major concepts in this model may serve as useful analytical hooks to use in interpreting and making meaning of interview data collected for this study.

Learning Organizations

_Description._ Argyris and Schön (1996) posit an organization learns when it acquires information of any kind and by whatever means. They further asserted the schema of organizational learning includes some informational content, a learning product, a learning process, and a learner. Senge (1990) defined learning organizations as:

organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together (p. 3).
The successful organizations will discover how to tap people’s commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization. Senge (1990) suggests the heart of a learning organization is a shift from being separated from the world to being connected to the world and from seeing problems as caused by someone or something to seeing how actions create the problems that are experienced. A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality.

Senge (1990) suggested that learning organizations differ “from traditional, authoritarian controlling organizations” (p. 5) because they require mastery of five disciplines. The five disciplines of a learning organization are systems thinking, building a shared vision, mental models, team learning, and personal mastery. Lifelong learning requires practicing and enhancing each of these disciplines. The constant effort of combining these disciplines creates a synergistic effect.

Senge (1990) described the discipline of systems thinking as a conceptual framework or a body of knowledge and tools developed to make patterns of events and details clearer. It allows one to see the whole picture, to understand the interrelationships within a system, and to manage change effectively. He also described the discipline of personal mastery as continually clarifying and deepening one’s own personal vision. Mastery indicates a level of proficiency. Personal mastery begins with the individual clarifying what really matters and living to reach his or her highest aspirations. The level of personal mastery of members of a learning organization drives the organization’s commitment to and capacity for learning. Mental models are deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, pictures or images that influence how one
understands the world and takes action. Many insights fail to be implemented into practice because they conflict with powerful mental models. Strong mental models may cause individuals in organizations to revert to Model I behaviors. The discipline of working with mental models includes bringing one’s images of the world to the surface, carrying on conversations that balance inquiry and advocacy, and making one’s thinking open to the influence of others, possibly resulting in more Model II behaviors.

The discipline of building a shared vision is the ability to craft a picture of the future one seeks to build. Building a shared vision includes organizing people together around a set of principles and guiding practices. People excel and learn through genuine commitment with shared visions. Team learning begins with dialogue that undermines or accelerates learning. These teams are the fundamental units in organizations and are the driving force for organizational learning to occur. This study offers an opportunity to understand the ways in which the inquiry process may be supporting grade-level team learning. Does asking how to improve student learning and any of the other questions help build a shared vision?

Mastering all five disciplines to build a learning organization requires sustained effort and cultural shifts in the organization. Individuals and teams are working to improve themselves and move the organization forward. The study examined if the district-initiated inquiry process became a mental model for teachers, grade-level teams and principals and how it promoted Model II behaviors.
Organizational Learning Applied to a School Setting

Description. Crossan et al. (1999) earlier in the review suggests learning becomes institutionalized through systems, structures, strategies, and procedures. Systems and structures exist in the school setting to support organizational learning; however, Leithwood and Louis (1998) caution that the school setting is a complex social system. Mulford, Silins, and Zarins (2002b) define organizational learning applied to school settings as the way the school staff, collaboratively and continuously learn and apply their learning. Organizational learning is promoted in schools in which staff members communicate with each other in an open and supportive way and actively seek information to improve their work. In these schools, staff members are looking for opportunities to increase their knowledge, improve their skills and have access to sufficient resources and time to develop professionally.

Leithwood and Aitken (cited in Argyris & Schön, 1996) similarly defined a learning organization as “a group of people pursuing common and individual purposes with a collective commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes” (p. 63). Leithwood also referred to organizational learning as learning that occurs in small groups or teams and across organizations as a whole. In a school system, productive learning occurs when staff members use external and internal sources of information and pay attention to important assumptions about the school. The teachers learn and think about their roles in new ways. Factors such as district initiatives, school culture, and the principals’ transformational leadership practices also contribute to organizational learning in
schools. The study explored how teachers, principals, and grade level teams learn in systematic ways through the application of the district-initiated inquiry process. The study also explored how the case study district inquiry initiative transformed principal leadership practices.

*Seven stages of a learning organization.* Mulford et al. (2004) asserts that organizational learning occurs in stages. The stages are characterized by seven dimensions that define schools as learning organizations. The first stage of organizational learning is developing common understanding. Developing this understanding is dependent on dialogue, which manages risk and conflict while building honesty and trust. The remaining stages allow links to the outside, critically examine current practices, and to develop shared values and a vision for the school. The processes, content (or identified changes), and shared values are used to actually make the changes and repeat the stages of continuous learning and improvement. (Mulford et al, 2002b). These stages are described as:

1. Employ the processes of environmental scanning.
2. Develop shared goals.
3. Establish collaborative teaching and learning environments.
4. Encourage initiatives and risk taking.
5. Review regularly all aspects related to and influencing the work of the school.
6. Recognize and reinforce good work.
7. Provide opportunities for continuing professional development.

Environmental scanning refers to broadening the scope of information, policy, theory, and practice by looking closely at school activities. The process of environmental
scanning informs the school’s development and decision-making processes. Argyris and Schön (1996) earlier referred to the exchange of valid information as significant of Model II behaviors that help individuals change their viewpoints. Mulford et al. (2002b) described the development of shared goals as making a commitment to a coherent sense of direction that guides the school’s everyday actions and decisions and shapes long-term planning. The inquiry process in the study allows individuals to check if their actions are aligned to the school’s goals. Mulford et al. (2002b) reinforced a collaborative teaching and learning environment is established when there is a climate of openness and trust which promotes collaboration, cooperation, support and involvement in the functioning of the school. The school staff members’ ability to take initiatives and risks is the extent they are open to change and feel free to take professional risks toward personal and whole school improvement. Reviewing and reflecting on programs and practices leads to further evaluation and potential action. Valuing effort, initiative, and achievement is a crucial process to recognize and reinforce positive aspects of the organization. Continuing professional development encourages school staff members to obtain opportunities and resources to learn, develop, and implement the necessary knowledge and skills for improving the school’s performance. In this study we investigated how these seven dimensions were employed in the case study schools.

*Professional learning communities.* DuFour and Eaker (1998) referred to the term *professional learning community* instead of learning organization. A professional learning organization is one where “educators create an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve
what they cannot accomplish alone” (p. xii). Hord (2004) defines them as communities of continuous inquiry and improvement. School staff members are continually engaged in reflection, inquiry, problem-solving, learning and teaching together. Senge (1990) uses the term *team learning* and emphasizes its importance because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations. DuFour and Eaker (1998) espouse a professional learning community places greater emphasis on relationships, shared ideals, a strong culture, and commitment.

DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) stated that when a school functions as a professional learning community, the educators embrace high levels of learning for all students as their primary purpose and the reason for the schools existence. In order to achieve this purpose, the members of a professional learning community are guided by a clear and compelling vision of what the organization must become to serve all students. They make collective commitments to clarify what each member will do to create such an organization and use results-oriented goals to mark their progress. Members work together to clarify what each student must learn, monitor each student’s learning on a timely basis, provide systematic interventions that ensure students receive additional time and support for learning when they struggle, and extend and enrich learning when students master the intended outcomes. Professional learning communities exist to ensure that all students learn essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

DuFour et al. (2006) discovered that a professional learning community is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals linked to the purpose of learning for all. The teams in a PLC engage in
collective inquiry about best practices in teaching and learning. The members of the team learn how to learn together and focus their collective inquiry on the right questions that will improve student learning. The leader’s role is to ask the right questions, facilitate the dialogue, and help build shared knowledge. In a professional learning community, collaboration represents a systematic process in which teachers work together interdependently in order to impact their classroom practice in ways that will lead to better results for their students, for their team, and for their school.

DuFour et. al. (2006) contended that the members of a PLC are never satisfied with the status quo and look for better ways to achieve goals and accomplish the purpose of the organization. The members of a PLC are engaged in an ongoing cycle of: (a) gathering evidence of current levels of student learning, (b) developing strategies and ideas to build on strengths and address weaknesses in that learning, (c) implementing those strategies and ideas, (d) analyzing the impact of the changes to discover what was effective and what was not, and (e) applying new knowledge in the next cycle of continuous improvement. The goal is not to learn a new strategy, but rather to create conditions for perpetual learning such as an environment which fosters innovation and experimentation.

Hord (2004) similarly described five characteristics of a professional learning community. They are: (a) shared leadership, (b) shared vision and values, (c) collective learning and its application, (d) supportive conditions, and (e) shared personal practices. The principal supports shared leadership by allowing staff members to give input and participate in decision-making at the school site. Shared values and vision refers to an unwavering commitment to student learning that is consistently articulated and referred
to in the staff’s work. School staff members engage in collective learning, seeking new knowledge, and apply the solutions that address students’ needs. They are grounded in reflective dialogue or inquiry and apply new ideas and information to problem solving. Supportive conditions are physical conditions and human capacities that encourage and sustain a collegial atmosphere and collective learning. Finally, shared personal practice involves the review of a teacher’s behavior by colleagues and includes feedback and assistance to support individual and community improvement.

*Empirical Studies of Learning Organizations*

*Organizational learning.* Mulford et al. (2002a) presented the findings from an Australian project, Leadership for Organizational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOLSO), a collaborative research project spanning over four years, 1997-2001. The purpose of the overall study was to investigate the effects of leadership and organizational learning on student outcomes. This study was a four-year, two-phase study funded by the Australian Research Council. It encompassed 96 secondary schools using a stratified random sample. Fifty of the schools came from the state of South Australia and the remaining 46 schools were selected from the state of Tasmania. A principal, teacher, and student database was generated from responses from two questionnaires used in this study, the Organizational Learning and Leadership and the Participation and Engagement Questionnaires.

As part of the first phase of the larger study, Leadership for Organizational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOLSO), Mulford et al. (2002b) conducted a study where they surveyed 2,503 teachers and principals from 96 South Australian and Tasmanian secondary schools to determine their perceptions of schools as learning
organizations, their views on school management, and the nature of principals’ leadership. The Organizational Learning and Leadership questionnaire was constructed using Mulford et al. (2002b) seven dimensions described earlier. Both teachers and principals responded to items representing the seven dimensions on a self-report using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The findings show that organizational learning is a uni-dimensional concept with four factors that contribute to an understanding of how the learning organization construct is defined in secondary schools. The four factors are: (a) trusting and collaborative climate, (b) taking initiatives and risks, (c) a shared and monitored mission, and (d) professional development. The findings also show the following five variables are direct predictors of organizational learning: (a) school autonomy, (b) staff valued, (c) leader, (d) distributed leadership, and (e) school profile, in other words, the size of the school and the school area. Resources and leader emerged as two dominant factors that have an overall effect on organizational learning. A significant strength of this study centers on how data analysis provides evidence of validity for applying the learning organization construct to schools and has identified four factors that contribute to how this construct is defined in secondary schools. A weakness in this study is the limitation to secondary schools. Although the study encompasses a large sample size, the schools are located in South Australia and Tasmania; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to schools in other geographic locations.

Organizational learning influences student outcomes. In the second phase of the project, the Participation and Engagement Questionnaire was administered to students, identified by the school coordinators, who were seen to be representative of the general
population. Survey data from 3,500 students yielded measures of student family educational environment, student views of teachers’ work in the classroom, and student outcomes such as attendance, students’ self-concept, and participation in and engagement with school. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of leadership and organizational learning on student outcomes. One finding from this study is organizational learning is the only direct predictor of the teachers’ work. In other words, the level of organizational learning directly affects the teachers’ work with students in their classrooms. Another finding that resulted from the study is the teachers’ perceptions of the nature of principals’ leadership as well as administrative teams’ leadership is critical for promoting organizational learning and more student-centered classroom instruction. Therefore, organizational learning provides schools with a culture and a way of working that may improve school outcomes for students while restructuring schools.

*Learning organizations and professional learning communities.* Giles and Hargreaves (2006) conducted a qualitative case study, *Change Over Time*, over a four-year period to explore teacher and administrator perceptions of change over time in eight urban and suburban schools in the province of Ontario, Canada and New York State. The data collection included semi-structured interviews, ethnographic observations, and document analysis. The data was triangulated, coded, and organized thematically. The findings show that the learning organization and professional learning community models in these schools resist the conventional processes resulting from change but also default to the conventional patterns of schooling when faced with standardized reform. Because this study is limited to eight schools in Ontario, Canada,
and New York State, it may not be generalizable to other schools across the United States. However, it is interesting to note that schools in the case study district have been engaged in many unique self-selected reform models since 1998. The district-adopted inquiry frame provided an overarching guiding structure, but leaves schools to define their reform path and select improvement methods and strategies. District schools now face potentially more standardized reforms as the pressure of NCLB increases the demands for high performance from all students.

Patterns and themes emerged from the larger study, *Change Over Time* that warranted a subsequent in-depth case study on one of these schools, Blue Mountain. The common theme that emerged from the larger study was the negative impact of standardized reform in three of the innovative schools configured as learning organizations and professional learning communities. Blue Mountain achieved success for renewing teacher cultures, distributing leadership, and involving the community in decision-making. However, the findings in this study show that standardized reform encouraged regression toward the conventional curriculum and inhibited organizational learning across departmental boundaries. In addition, the positive professional culture at Blue Mountain was changed to a climate of blame resulting in undermined relationships among teachers as well as between teachers and students that hindered collaboration and teamwork. One strength in this particular study is that it emerged from the data analysis with a grounded theory from a larger qualitative case study. A weakness in this study is its generalizability to other schools because it is an in-depth analysis of one school. Furthermore, a case study was conducted on two other schools
in addition to Blue Mountain; however, no attempt was made to conduct a cross-case analysis of all three schools to further strengthen the findings from this study.

Teacher inquiry and professional learning communities. Snow-Gerono (2005) conducted a phenomenological case study of teacher researchers from four elementary schools, grades K-5, located in the United States, who participated in a yearlong internship as part of a Professional Development School partnership between their school and a northeastern university. The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of six of its veteran or mentor teachers on teacher inquiry and professional learning communities. A purposeful sample of teachers who identified with the characteristics of reflective teaching was selected to participate in this study. The primary sources of data collection were interview transcripts and field observation in the classroom. The data analysis included triangulation of the field notes, interview transcripts, and the researcher’s journal/participants’ inquiry documents. In this program, the mentor teacher and intern taught children together for an entire school year. The mentors worked closely with the teacher to plan the intern teacher education curriculum on an individual basis and engaged in inquiry with the teachers. The ancillary findings in this study are: (a) collaboration leading toward questioning and learning is an important aspect of professional learning communities, (b) community and accessibility to people is a necessary ingredient for cultivating inquiry, (c) inquiry becomes a collaborative experience with people who are supported and assisted with their questions, and (d) safety and a community is needed for risk-taking. Although this study utilized a strong methodology, the sample size may be too small to generalize the findings to other settings.
Summary

This section presented a review of the research on organizational learning. It also provided an analysis of empirical studies to reinforce the importance of the concepts discussed in the literature. Four models of organizational learning were introduced. Each of these models emphasized the importance of conversation to create meaning. All of these models recognized the importance of trust, collaboration and the need to be open to constructive criticism. As DuFour and Eaker (1998) pointed out, the concept of the professional learning community is unique to education. These communities are organized to encourage collaboration and lead toward questioning and learning important aspects of professional learning communities. In such communities, participants are supported and assisted with their questions, and there is safety needed for risk-taking is provided.

These empirical studies were discussed extensively because professional communities and learning organizations seem critical to the inquiry process. However the research in general focused only a small number of cases, raising a caution to not over-generalize the findings. It seems clear there is a close relationship between organizational learning, professional learning communities, and inquiry processes. The section explores the research on how individual school learning communities and inquiry process may be supported by district reform.
District Reform

Description

District reform has evolved as a result of decades of promoting that all students have an equal opportunity to obtain an equitable education. The origins can be noted during the Civil Rights era of 1960, which promoted the notion of creating a society centered on equal opportunity for all its citizens. Education was viewed as the primary government institution offering students access to knowledge and the social network necessary to gain the means to enhance life’s opportunities. During this time, glaring student achievement gaps among ethnic groups reflected the major inhibitor that impeded certain ethnic groups from gaining equity in our society.

The past five decades have been indicative of how the political arena has intervened to enhance this ideal of equity by focusing efforts on improving opportunities for student learning. This political intervention started with the passage of Title I, which was enacted in 1965 to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Similarly, the research community began investigating factors that improve or serve as obstacles to student achievement as a means to establish equity in education. The first landmark study occurred in 1966 as the Coleman Report linked poverty and achievement as the major predictor of student success. Using data from over 600,000 students and teachers across the country, the researchers found that academic achievement was less related to the quality of a student's school, and more related to the social composition of the school, the student's sense of control of his environment and future, the verbal skills of teachers,
and the student's family background (Kiviat, 2000). However, recent major studies investigating the effects of powerful classroom instructional strategies, leadership behavior, and district support has been correlated to improved student performance (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Marzano & Waters, 2006).

After two decades of failed efforts in pouring money to help combat demographic factors described in the Coleman Report, the 1990’s reflected a greater focus on school quality. Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) models were thought to be the elixir for school improvement. CSR models called for a coordinated approach to elevate school performance.

To stimulate whole-school reform across the country, Congress appropriated funds in FY1998 for the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to start the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRD) Program. ED allocated the funds on a formula basis to states, who made awards to support 1,840 mostly Title I schools "in need of substantially improving" their performance. Subsequent rounds of annual awards to support additional schools have continued through FY2003 (American Institute of Research, 2003, p. 8).

These models incorporate research-based teaching strategies, a prescribed leadership construct, and an integrated curriculum. The strategy differed from piecemeal and fragmented efforts that, in the past, have seemed only to lead to short-lived changes (Datnow, 2005). The CSR reform initiative was embraced by the case district and many of its schools applied for and received funding to adopt a CSR approved model, such as the Accelerated School Model.

*Empirical studies involving CSR.* The largest scale study to investigate the effectiveness of CSR efforts was conducted by the American Institute of Research (2003). Eighteen schools were selected for this investigation and the results on the implementation effectiveness on the school reform model were mixed.
Overall, the schools' implementation of CSRD at the 18 schools was uneven. Based on a 47-point instrument reflecting the 9 components and devised specifically for the Field-Focused Study, nine schools garnered 80 percent of the 47 points and could be labeled as "nearly fully" implementing CSRD. Another six schools garnered 65 percent of the 47 points and could be labeled as "partially" implementing CSRD. The remaining three schools all scored lower and were judged to be "poorly" implementing CSRD (p. 4).

Researchers concluded that student success depended upon how well the model was implemented (American Institute of Research, 2003).

Datnow and Murphy (2003) in their summary of major findings from diverse multi-year studies conducted by the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR), concluded that detailed quantitative and qualitative data gathered at sets of schools indicate that while some schools improved, others fell back. They noted that schools using similar reforms can have differing results with some schools showing dramatic improvement while others using the same reforms did not improve. Lastly, some schools failed to institutionalize reform models that have demonstrated multi-year successes while other schools have maintained successful reforms for 10 years or longer. They argued that in order for reforms to be sustained, coordinated and systematic support must come from multiple levels. Research on the role of the district office in improving teaching and learning has as it basis the effective schools research (MacIver & Farley, 2003) and those who criticized the approach for its failure to consider the district context (Cuban, 1984; Purkey & Smith, 1983).
Southern California Case Study District CSR Reform Model

The Edison Design became a CSR model the case study district used in its worst rated school in the district; not only did it have the lowest scores, it had a horrible reputation (Rutherford, 2006). The designers of the Edison School attempted to replace the traditional school organization with a leadership team that empowers a variety of stakeholders and includes them in the decision-making process (Edison Schools, 2003). Edison’s leadership structure empowers teachers to play a greater role in the administration of the school through the creation of lead and senior positions (Edison Schools, 2003). These positions act as organizational leaders for their teams, while assisting the principal in administrative, evaluation, assessment, curriculum design, and hiring duties (Edison Schools, 2003).

At all Edison schools the teaching ranks are divided into resident, senior and lead teachers. First-year teachers are given the title of resident teacher. These teachers work under the supervision of a lead teacher until they completed two successful years and are then considered a full teacher. The title of lead teacher is given to teachers who demonstrated exemplary teaching and leadership skills. The lead teacher is a multi-faceted position that allows teachers to straddle the boundary between teaching and administration. The responsibility of the lead teacher is to repost their grade lead team on the school’s leadership team. The leadership team served as the primary decision-making body for the school. As disseminators of the information covered during leadership team meetings, lead teachers act as a crucial link when they meet daily with grade-level teams (Rutherford, 2006).
The creation of distributed leadership has shown to contribute to the school’s organizational effectiveness (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003). These improvements may have influenced teaching and learning at the school (Rutherford, 2006). As a result of the CSR restructuring, there is evidence to gussets that when teachers became intimately involved in curricular decision-making, leadership, teaching improved, as did student learning (Rutherford, 2006).

The advent of district reform

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the most recent form of political pressure to improve student achievement for all students, requires all students, in particular, students that historically have failed in the educational system, to reach proficiency in the areas of math and reading. With the passage of NCLB in 2001, public schools find themselves in the age of accountability (Datnow, 2007). Assuring that all students derive the maximum educational benefit from school and enter adulthood able to function as productive members of society has historically been the universal goal of educators. In the age of accountability, how this is accomplished has become the focus of researchers, politicians, policy-makers, school administrators, and teachers. NCLB has placed districts at the forefront of the reform process. Federal and state accountability mandates hold districts increasingly responsible for the improvement in teaching and learning in their schools. Under NCLB requirements, a district must provide support to a school in the first year after it misses its AYP goal. If the school fails to achieve progress for two consecutive years, the school is identified as in need of improvement and the district must provide technical assistance. After a school has been
labeled as needing improvement for four years, districts must take strong corrective action to bring about meaningful change.

Over the years, researchers have either ignored the role of the district or blamed districts for allowing ineffective schools to exist (Anderson, 2003). Elmore (1993) argues that there was little evidence that districts played a constructive role in instructional improvement. Others posit that school autonomy is the most effective prerequisite for school effectiveness and that school reform was destined to fail with the existing public education system as it inhibits the emergence of effective organizations and stifles student achievement (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Some scholars even questioned the need for school districts at all (Finn, 1991 as cited in MacIver & Farley, 2003; Tyack, 2003).

Many policy-makers, reform organizations, and foundations have a renewed confidence in the role of the central office in bringing about coherence in a complex policy environment and in promoting an environment of equity across all schools in a system. McLaughlin and Talbert underscore the importance of district leadership in stating that “districts matter fundamentally to what goes on in schools and classrooms and that without effective district engagement, school-by-school reform efforts are bound to disappoint” (2003, p. 5). There is a growing body of research that school districts are important agents of change and units of instructional renewal (Elmore, 1999; Hightower, 2002; Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; Marsh, 2000; Massell & Goertz, 2002). Recent studies demonstrate that specific practices at the district level can have a positive influence on student achievement and result in district
wide improvements in teaching and learning (Elmore, 1999; Ragland, Asera, & Johnson, 1999; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002; Togneri & Anderson, 2002; Marzano & Waters, 2006).

Empirical studies. A recent national study of the impact of NCLB reveals that indeed districts are allocating resources to increase the use of student achievement data to inform instruction in schools identified as needing improvement (Center on Education Policy, 2004). Studies of “successful” school districts show these districts have invested heavily in data-driven, decision-making (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001; Doolittle, Herlily, & Snipes, 2002; Tognieri & Anderson, 2003). Summarizing findings across several major recent studies of school districts, Anderson (2003) writes:

Successful districts in the current era of standards, standardized testing, and demands for evidence of the quality of performance invest considerable human, financial and technical resources in developing their capacity to assess the performance of students, teachers and schools, and to utilize these assessments to inform decision-making about needs and strategies for improvement, and progress towards goals at the classroom, school, and district levels” (p. 9).

Several studies have developed a list of common elements or practices that characterize districts evidencing improvements in teaching and learning. According to MacIver and Farley (2003) Murphy and Hallinger (1988) were among the first researchers to identify a group of high-performing districts and the characteristics they shared. They examined the overall level of student achievement across subjects, growth in achievement over time, and consistency of achievement across sub-groups over time and developed a list of district factors that were correlated with districts that were instructionally effective. District effectiveness was associated with strong instructionally focused leadership from the superintendent and district level
administrators, an established instructional and curricular focus, consistency of instructional activities, and an emphasis on monitoring instruction and curriculum. As organizations, these districts evidenced a balance of district control and school autonomy and collaboration with strong leadership.

Qualitative studies of high-performing districts in Texas (Ragland, Asera, & Johnson, 1999; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000) examined factors at the district level that led to high academic achievement for all subgroups in these districts. The researchers found important similarities among the successful districts and grouped them into themes similar to those identified by Murphy and Hallinger (1988). Themes included a climate of urgency to improve achievement for all students, a sense that student achievement was seen as the responsibility of every staff member in the district, a shared sense that the central office was a support and service organization for schools, coherent professional development based on research, and alignment of curriculum, instruction, instructional practice and assessment.

Elmore (1999) found that in his case study of New York’s District 2 that districts “can be seen as an ‘existence proof’ that it is possible for local districts to be agents of serious instructional improvement” (1999, p. 264). Specifically, District 2 used extensive professional development along with a strong culture that placed value on instructional improvement to change instructional practices that, over time, led to dramatic improvements in test scores for a diverse student population. Massell and Goertz (2002) in their 3 year study of standards-based reforms in 22 districts across eight states found three common strategies among these districts selected for their improvement and standards-based reform initiatives: increasing professional knowledge
and skill; the strengthening and alignment of instructional guidance; and the use of data to guide improvement in instruction.

**District Reform in the Southern California School District** The Southern California case study district entered a period of engagement with the Ball Foundation in 2000, forming the Community of Schools (CoS) initiative. This initiative was a means of establishing a four-year partnership to support the district’s inquiry process. The Ball Foundation forms partnerships with mid-sized urban school districts to accelerate the building of sustainable organizational capacity in its school and district partners by delivering professional development, coaching, consulting, and engaging in organizational learning (Ball Foundation, 2007). The Foundation contracted with Focus on Results to provide coaching and training for instructional leadership teams in partnership schools and the Instructional Services and Support Department. Each cohort of schools received 3 years of intensive training from Focus on Results. They attended national meetings and attended learning visits to other partnership sites.

The foundation developed a local community of practice with the first cohort of partnership schools after it ended its work with Focus on Results. Six schools worked to build a community of practice around independent reading. A community of practice (CoP) is a group of practitioners dedicated to learning with and from one another in pursuit of promising instructional, organizational and leadership practices that support increased student achievement (Ricci & Rogers, 2006).

More than fifty teachers and principals from six district schools attended all-day community meetings on November 1, 2004, December 7, 2004, February 9, 2005, April 13, 2005, and May 25, 2005. These meetings, designed by district practitioners with
Ball Foundation staff and consultants, featured a blend of building community within and across schools. They introduced new literacy content, and dialogued around how to implement independent reading practices.

Intentional communities of practice worked with the pre-existing social dynamic of adult learning and used it explicitly. The power of communities of practice is in making the invisible visible, and the tacit useable. Communities of practice focused on both the creating of community—connecting people around work that matters—and on practice—the technical and social architecture of how to do the work. An intentional Community of Practice became a social process for generating greater knowledge, rigor, consistency and innovation in complex systems, such as schools (Ricci & Rogers, 2006).

*Inquiry as core process.* The practice of communities of practice rests on intentional, affirmative inquiry-based conversation. The competing demands on teachers and administrators in public schools today have often created cultures of blame, fear, fragmentation and isolation. In such an environment, the vulnerability and exposure that is at the heart of shared inquiry and learning is difficult to call forth (Ricci & Rogers, 2006). At the center of the practice of a CoP is the assumption that the answers already exist somewhere in the community or can be found together. Communities of practice begin with the questions, “What’s working and why?” In addition, great care is given to create the conditions in which people can feel safe, develop trust over time, and experience both immediate and long-term positive impact on their practice. There became a significant call to principals to focus their efforts on
creating the conditions that will allow teachers to learn and use inquiry together (Ricci & Rogers, 2006).

Summary

Research provides persuasive evidence that specific factors at the district level have a positive impact on student achievement. Findings from studies of high-performing districts speak to policies and practices in place that support an ethical commitment to equity in student achievement. Strong leadership has been identified in the effective schools research and in the research on successful districts as being a critical component to improving teaching and learning. But in this complex environment of high-stakes testing and accountability, research indicates that strong leadership has many dimensions and that effective leadership can no longer be the sole responsibility of a single individual (Marzano et al. 2005). The Southern California School District partnered with external organizations to promote best instructional practices by establishing an environment to stimulate collaboration and inquiry throughout the district. The next section outlines the research on school leadership as it relates to the use of inquiry to enhance leadership capacity.
Leadership

An important point that is mentioned throughout the review of literature is the importance of leadership for promoting organizational and student learning. The research also suggests improving leadership is the key to large-scale school reform. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) state leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student learning. Leadership accounts for approximately one quarter of the total school effects that impact academic achievement. The next section of this review explores leadership in schools, provides models of leadership inquiry, and describes empirical studies surrounding the effects of leadership in schools.

Description

A critical factor in creating a school environment that fosters higher student academic performance is the principal’s role as a leader (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Gallmeier, 1992; Sagor & Barnett, 1994). Murphy (2002) asserts that the role of the principal changed significantly in the 21st century from the Industrial Age to the Information Revolution of today. During the Industrial Age, the principals were viewed as technical experts whose effectiveness was measured by efficiency and the quantity of work completed (Duke, 1987). From the 1920s through the 60s, the principal’s primary role was the administrative manager who maintained the status quo. This changed somewhat in the mid-1970s where the principal facilitated program and curriculum management responsibilities oriented towards school improvement and change. The principal’s role was to manage an externally devised solution to an educational problem
that centered on compliance, not on individual student or program results. In the 1980s, however, the notion of the principal as instructional leader evolved. As a result, the principal’s responsibilities shifted to leading the school’s instructional program by directing staff attention on student achievement (Hallinger & Murphy, 1992).

Murphy (2002) notes the post-Industrial society or Information Revolution of today is marked by the knowledge explosion, globalization and downsizing. The implication for the school principal is that he/she must create or facilitate innovative customized responses to meet the needs of a diverse student population. The principal must also participate in continuous learning opportunities to search for new information to solve problems. This resulting effect is a more lateral organization where leadership is shared as interactions with others increases. Rules change in order to individualize cases and innovation and creativity for assessment emerge. Principals are forced to redefine their roles to address the rapidly-changing environment but acknowledge the expectation that schools are learning communities.

Rost (1991) describes leadership in the Post-industrial Age as “an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (p.102). Changes that are purposeful and futuristic are what he refers to as intended changes. Therefore, the purpose of principal leadership then becomes to significantly change and reform schools in substantive ways to improve teaching and learning for all students (Matthews & Crow, 2003).

Leithwood (2003) suggests schools and students benefit from the positive effects of strong school leadership. Copland (cited in Datnow and Murphy, 2003), states “There’s no substitute for the principal of a school showing that this [leadership] is what

Datnow and Castellano (cited in Muncey & McQuillan, 1996) acknowledge the principal as critical to the success of school-wide reform efforts. Anderson and Shirley (1995) state “…the likelihood of project success tends to rest with the principal” (p. 421). Berends, Bodilly and Kirby (cited in Datnow and Murphy, 2003) in a four-year longitudinal study of New American Schools found principal leadership was the single most important predictor of reform implementation at the classroom and school levels. This study examines how engaging in an inquiry process initiated and supported by the district affects principal behavior.

Leadership for Inquiry

As argued earlier, inquiry, the process of asking reflective and focused questions, is a catalyst to promote organizational learning. School leaders incorporate inquiry when they inspire vision, create trust, and foster passion about the vision of the organization (Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005; Leithwood, 1998; Silins, Mulford & Zarins, 2002). Bolman and Deal (1997) asserted these conditions allow principals to be successful when implementing the inquiry model in an organization. Copland (2001) stated that principals who ask questions, explore data, and engage faculty and the broader community in inquiry can successfully transform their schools. Leadership
for inquiry is constructed on building relationships, developing personal mastery, and evoking distributed leadership (Senge, 1990).

Building relationships. Leithwood (2003) stated principals who use inquiry to develop people forms the “basics” of successful leadership. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) asserted that developing people is a core leadership practice for sustained change. The leader develops people by influencing their capacities and motivations so they achieve the organization’s vision. Principals are expected to exhibit strong leadership by modeling their values and beliefs through their own actions (Deal & Peterson, 1990). The behaviors that develop people include offering intellectual stimulation, giving individualized support, and providing appropriate models for best practices and beliefs fundamental to the organization. Hoerr (2005) stated, “Good leaders change organizations; great leaders change people….” Leadership is about relationships” (p. 7). Wheatley (1999) highlighted the importance of relationships, “power in organizations is the capacity generated in relationships” (p. 39). Wheatley (1999) found high-quality organizations are those that have the capacity for healthy relationships. The principal’s ability to develop people and create a culture of reflective practitioners has a positive effect on student achievement (Schön, 1982; Schön, 1987; Gil, 2001).

Developing personal mastery. A leader whose goal is to transform the organization will focus on having all employees develop personal mastery (Senge, 1996). The leader’s role is to integrate organizational goals with staff members’ personal goals to maximize output. Senge (1996) theorized personal mastery as being the source of energy that propels a learning organization. When employees express,
reflect on, and reframe their experiences, they may realize a disparity between reality and vision and this results in a feeling of tension or discomfort. Personal mastery is developed through this process of reflection and inquiry. This creative tension, the force elicited from the gap between the vision and current reality, generates the energy to change and promotes the use of the inquiry process. Leaders develop personal mastery through reflection and inquiry upon an action and this process creates an internal feedback loop. People with high levels of personal mastery dedicate time, effort and creativity to transform the organization. An interesting area of exploration in this study is the degree of personal mastery of the inquiry process by the principals in the participating schools.

*Evoking distributed leadership.* Copland (cited in Datnow and Murphy, 2003) reported principals using the inquiry process are a catalyst for creating distributed leadership which leads to transformational changes at the school site. The inquiry model used in these schools (see Figure 2.3, BASRC Cycle of Inquiry Model) moved away from individuals in traditional leadership roles (e.g., school administrators) and involved the broader school community (e.g., teachers, parents, and at the secondary level, students). Inquiry resulted in building a common vocabulary, maintaining the focus on one or two key issues, decision-making by consensus, and building leadership capacity at the school site. The principal created a culture and environment for reflective practices. DuFour and Eaker (1998) supported this notion where he advocates, “Principals of learning communities make conscience efforts to promote widespread participation in the decision-making processes at their schools. They understand they cannot do it alone” (p. 181). Copland (cited in Datnow & Murphy,
2003) stated “...the whole school community is both the site of inquiry and the focus of change” (p.169-170). Leaders of a professional learning community realize they need a team of individuals or a “guiding coalition” who share the same objectives to support the improvement initiative at the school site (DuFour et al. 2006).

**Case Study District Initiated Inquiry Model**

This section explores how teachers, principals, and instructional leadership teams implemented the inquiry process in the case study district.

*Student-based decision-making essential questions.* According to the Case Study District, there are four specific questions that all teachers, principals, and instructional leadership teams needed to consider when making a decision. These are:

(a) How does the decision improve student learning? (b) Is the decision illegal, unethical, or immoral? (c) Is there adverse impact on others? (d) How are individual needs balanced with group needs? The initial question allows teachers, principals, and instructional leadership teams to reflect on the vision for the school. They are gathering evidence or data to support decision-making. The second question is value-laden and ensures decisions adhere to legal and moral constructs. The next question is the heart of the process where all crucial stakeholders, specifically, staff members, parents, community, and district office collaborate. Data is analyzed and fiscal and personnel impact is considered when making a decision. The final question considers student interests on an individual and aggregate level. Teachers, principals, and instructional leadership teams do not have to follow this inquiry process in a linear fashion although the elements in each question are addressed throughout the decision-making process.
Gil (2001) purported two critical principal behaviors for leading the district-initiated inquiry process is “to invite others to share their ideas and be avid listeners” (p. 17). She advocated leaders modeling the inquiry process. Site leadership is critical for creating the environment in which openness, trust and risk-taking are present for inquiry to occur. To increase the likelihood that principals would model inquiry, the case study district-initiated inquiry model is incorporated in the principal evaluation tool. This model was converted into a rubric used annually to evaluate principals. This accountability model is based on a matrix that heavily involves the role of inquiry among all stakeholders. The process involves an ongoing peer and self-evaluation based on seven specific principal standards.

Inquiry is incorporated under Principal Standard No. 2, The Principal is Accountable for Building Leadership Capacity, Element 2D – Develop a Culture of Inquiry (see Figure 2.7). A proficient principal in this category is designated in the Applying cell. This descriptor implies the principal is using the inquiry model consistently. The principal creates opportunity for teachers and instructional teams to examine students’ work and analyze data, creates opportunities for stakeholders to develop a plan of action based on inquiry, and asks questions of staff that foster dialogue and reflection on data. In addition, the principal provides opportunities for examination of disaggregated data to reflect on instructional practices. Collaboratively, all stakeholders address areas of need, modify instructional practices and provide for a review of resources. The expectation, after three years of being a successful principal, is to be at the Innovating stage. At this stage, the principal uses the inquiry process to view mistakes as learning tools and levers to the change process. The principal and
staff members seek input from community and “Critical Friends” (i.e. experts outside of the school site) to collaborate with them on supportive statements and critical questions. This extant data in the case study district regarding the principal’s own engagement and the engagement of others will provide a valuable data point with which to compare interview data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2D. Develop a culture of inquiry.</td>
<td>Principal examines student work and analyzes data. Principal asks questions of staff that foster dialogue and reflection on data.</td>
<td>Principal creates opportunity for staff to examine students work and analyze data. The principal creates opportunities for stakeholders to develop a plan of action based on inquiry. Principal asks questions of staff that foster dialog and reflection on data. Principal provides opportunities for examination of disaggregated data to reflect on instructional practices. Collaboratively, all stakeholders address areas of need, modify instructional practices and provide for a review of resources.</td>
<td>Through the inquiry process mistakes are viewed as learning tools and levers to the change process. Staff seeks input from community and “Critical Friends” i.e. experts outside of the school site to collaborate with them on supportive statements and critical questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.8. Principal Evaluation Rubric for Case Study District – 2D – Develop a Culture of Inquiry.*

*Empirical Studies on Inquiry through a Leadership Lens*

*Leadership affects student achievement.* There were a number of studies conducted to determine the principal’s influence on student achievement. The study of the principal’s role in directly affecting student performance has yielded mixed results. Verona and Young (2001) found limited empirical data to show the impact of principal
leadership styles on students. There are other studies which state the effects on principal leadership on student learning are indirect (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1994; Pounder, 2003; Verona & Young, 2001). However the recent work of Marzano et al. (2005) suggest a number of studies that show direct and significant effects of principal leadership on student achievement. Their collective research identifies the principal leadership behaviors that have impacted student achievement.

One such study by Hallinger et al. (1990) determined the principal’s effect on school reading achievement. He administered a questionnaire to principals and teachers from 87 elementary schools in Tennessee. A criterion-referenced reading test was given to third and sixth graders in the fall and spring semesters of the 1984-85 school years to measure student achievement. The results of the study showed no direct effects of principal instructional leadership on student achievement. However, there was evidence that principals have an indirect effect on school effectiveness through actions that shape the school’s learning climate (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1990; Heck & Marcoulides, 1990).

A study conducted by Andrews and Soder (1987) determined if a relationship between principal leadership and student academic achievement existed. District staff participated in a survey administered during the spring semesters of 1984 and 1985. The gain in individual student scores on the California Achievement Test was used to measure academic performance. According to the survey results, the 33 elementary schools were categorized as being led by strong, average, or weak leaders. The findings demonstrated that the scores of students in schools with strong leaders were
significantly greater in both total reading and mathematics than those in schools led by average or weak leaders.

Marzano et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis to help distinguish principal leadership responsibilities that are essential for improving student achievement. From a total of more than 5000 studies, 69 met the researchers’ criteria for rigor to be included in the McRel study. Standardized test scores that measure student achievement (dependent variable) were linked to teachers’ perceptions on principals' leadership abilities (independent variable). A correlation of .25 was associated between principal leadership behavior and student achievement. This translates to one standard deviation increase in teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership and is associated with a 10 percentile gain on student achievement. The meta-analysis identified 66 leadership practices used to fulfill 21 responsibilities that have a significant relationship with student achievement. The top three leadership responsibilities were: (a) situational awareness, the ability to understand informal groups comprised of staff members and to predict what could go wrong from day-to-day, (b) monitoring / evaluating, the ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction and assessment, and (c) culture, the ability to share a vision and develop a purpose that promotes cohesion among staff members and students. These three leadership responsibilities may have an association between inquiry and the leader’s role for developing relationships.

The significant cross section of research spanning several decades in the area of school leadership is a strength in Marzano et al.’s. (2005) study. The meta analysis had a sample size of 2,802 schools, approximately 14,000 teachers, and 1.4 million students which is the largest sample for research on leadership practices. Although this sample
size enhanced generalizability, Leithwood (2005) has argued that school context may be a limitation. School context includes the size of the school (small versus large), geographic location (rural or urban setting), level of schooling (elementary, secondary), school/district size; and student population (diverse, economically disadvantaged, etc.), which are not taken into account in this study. Another plausible limitation in this study is the unrealistic expectation for a leader to simultaneously implement all 21 leadership responsibilities or an ideal set of leadership practices. Marzano et al. (2005), however, emphasized that leadership is a broader function shared by all; it is not the sole responsibility of the principal.

Mulford et al. (2002a) presented the findings from an Australian project, Leadership for Organizational Learning and Student Outcomes (LOLSO) that focuses on the nature of leadership contributions to organizational learning. It was a three-year, two-phase study funded by the Australian Research Council. It encompassed 96 secondary schools using a stratified random sample. Fifty of the schools came from the state of South Australia and the remaining 46 schools were selected from the state of Tasmania. In the first phase, the Organizational Leadership Questionnaire was administered to approximately 25 teachers who were selected randomly from a staff list. Survey data from 2,503 teachers and their principals from the schools provided information on the nature of organizational learning, sources of leadership, and leadership practices for the principal and management team. In the second phase of the project, the Participation and Engagement Questionnaire was administered to students, identified by the school coordinators, who were seen to be representative of the general year’s population. Survey data from 3,500 students yielded measures of student family
educational environment, student views of teachers’ work in the classroom, and student outcomes such as attendance, students’ self-concept, and participation in and engagement with school. The data were analyzed by using the statistical software package SPSS version 6.0.3. Reliability estimates for each scale from both questionnaires were calculated using Cronbach’s alpha. All scales indicated a high reliability in the range of alpha = .74 to .92. The study found positive relationships between leadership and organizational learning and leadership and student outcomes. The results reveal a t-score of .63 for leadership, second only to resources ($t = .65$) for having an overall effect on organizational learning. The study also finds that principals who practice transformational leadership promote organizational learning. These principal behaviors include: (a) having a clear vision and goals, (b) promoting a positive school culture, (c) supporting school structures, (d) encouraging intellectual stimulation, (e) providing individualized support, and (f) having high performance expectations for staff and students.

The strength of this empirical study was that the findings indicated that when teachers are encouraged by their principals to have an active leadership role at their schools, there were stronger tendencies towards greater leadership development. Mulford et al. (2002b) state “…in these schools organizational learning is promoted in which staff communicate with each other in an open and supportive way and actively seek information to improve their work” (p. 634). This statement, therefore, largely supports the premise there is a relationship between leadership and organizational learning.
The methodology and the sample size seem to justify valid and reliable statistics and the generalizability of this study. However, this study focused on secondary schools in Australia and may not be generalizable to the elementary schools in the case study district that are the focal point of this research study.

Summary

Over the past few decades the components surrounding and supporting classroom teaching have been extensively researched. The results have shown that leadership in education is a factor in the relevance of student achievement merited to be studied. Since the total effects of leadership on student learning account for one quarter of the total school effects, it is important to delineate the specific principal behaviors that have the most impact.

Although there are many leadership practices, building relationships, developing personal mastery and encouraging and supporting distributed leadership seem to be three foundational leadership practices that reflect an inquiry approach to leadership. The research suggests that principals who emulate these practices have better opportunities to influence teaching and learning and thus have greater impact on student achievement. There is significant evidence that specific leadership behaviors have a greater impact on student achievement (Duke, 1987; Marzano et al., 2005) and therefore greater emphasis on these behaviors should be noted.
Chapter 3
Methods

Research Design

This study explored how a district-initiated inquiry process affects principal and staff behaviors and is incorporated into school practices. To address this purpose, I used an exploratory and descriptive multiple case study design. A research design is a plan that guides the investigator in the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting observations. The five components of a research design are (a) a study’s questions, (b) propositions, if any, (c) unit(s) of analysis, (d) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (e) the criteria for interpreting the findings (Yin, 2003).

Yin (2003) emphasized case studies use a variety of data collection tools, including interview, survey, and document analysis. The case study inquiry also relies on the development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. In this study, I focused on the use of documents and interviews as sources of evidence and triangulated the evidence to substantiate the findings. Kvale (1996) emphasizes the interview as a tool that will assist in describing and interpreting themes in my participants lived world. I described and interpreted themes about leadership and teacher behaviors with regard to the inquiry process implemented in two schools in the case study district.

Rationale for the case study. Yin (2003) asserted the case study methodology is preferred in examining contemporary events when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated. In other words, the case study is a form of empirical inquiry that is
particularly useful when contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomena of study. When it is not clearly evident how a phenomenon, such as in this case inquiry, is practiced in a school setting, it is essential to explore the process of inquiry in depth. Yin (2003) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13). Yin (2003) further stated case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context. The rationale for calling this an exploratory study focused mainly on “what” questions. This type of question is a justifiable rationale for conducting an exploratory study, the goal being to develop pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry. This study is a descriptive case study since it traces the sequence of interpersonal events over time, describes a subculture that was not the topic of previous study, and discovers key phenomena. Merriam (1998) affirmed a descriptive case study has as its end product a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study. A thick description is a complete, literal description of the incident or entity being investigated.

The rationale for using a multiple case study design is considered more compelling and the overall study is more robust. The cases in aggregate may provide more adequate support for the initial set of propositions and general phenomenon. In a multiple case design, each case, or school, in this study, must be carefully selected so it predicts similar results, a literal replication, or it predicts contrasting results but for predictable reasons, a theoretical replication (Yin, 2003). In this case, I anticipated a
literal replication. I expected that the context would result in some differences in the findings between the two cases, but that there would be more similarities than differences because I selected two schools to study within one district that have similar demographics, characteristics and student outcomes.

_Importance of theoretical framework in case study research._ Yin (2003) stated the case study research design must account for construct validity, external validity, and reliability. In order to insure construct validity, multiple sources of evidence must be used. For example, using common documents describing inquiry, such as the components of the principal’s evaluation, school plan documents, interviews and surveys are used to promote construct validity. The uses of theory and replication logic in multiple-case studies, both of which will be used in the study, increase the potential for external validity. By using multiple cases, the study’s findings may be generalizable. Reliability occurs if the data collection procedures can be repeated with the same results.

Yin (2003) stated a case study must have a rich theoretical framework as a way to enhance its generalizability, which is often articulated in a proposition. The framework needs to state the conditions under which particular phenomena are likely to be found, a literal replication, and the conditions when it is not likely to be found, a theoretical replication. The goal of a case study is to expand and generalize theories. Furthermore, when multiple cases are studied, an “analytic generalization” is made when a previously developed theory is used as a template to compare the empirical results of a case study. Replication can be claimed if two or more cases support the same theory. The theory is the main vehicle for generalizing the results of the case
study. The theoretical concept explored in this study was that inquiry is an essential component of organizational learning and shaping principal leadership behaviors to be focused on student learning.

Research Questions and Propositions

Unlike quantitative studies, specific research hypotheses are not generated to be tested in case studies. Yin (2003), however, argued that propositions are key components to case study research design. Propositions are theoretically based and used to focus instrument design and data analysis. Propositions reflect theory developed from the literature review and guide the researcher to seek relevant evidence. Without such propositions an investigator will be tempted to cover everything which is impossible to do. “The more the study contains specific propositions, the more it will stay within feasible limits” (Yin 2003, p. 23). In this study, I developed a series of propositions relevant to my research questions. These propositions were used to anchor the findings.

Research question one. In what ways did principals and teachers perceive the implementation of the district’s inquiry process in their schools?

Proposition 1A: Planning teams, such as grade level teams or instructional leadership teams, used the inquiry process to solve complex problems and challenges faced by the school community.

Proposition 1B: The inquiry process was used to collaboratively engage staff members to find solutions to advance learning via instruction rather than blaming external variables.
Proposition 1C: The inquiry process included the critical questions outlined in the district policy to guide student centered decision making.

*Research question two.* How did principals and teachers perceive the effectiveness of the inquiry process on their own learning and the school’s work?

Proposition 2A: The inquiry process enabled the school community to focus on improving student learning.

Proposition 2B: The inquiry process promoted collective responsibility and higher trust.

Proposition 2C: The inquiry process promoted organizational learning and continuous improvement.

*Research question three.* How did the principals perceive their leadership behaviors changed from participating in the district’s initiation of an inquiry process?

Proposition 3A: The inquiry process enabled principals to (a) increase collaboration between principal and staff, (b) demonstrate leadership in facilitating professional learning communities, and (c) improve student achievement.

*Context of the Study*

*District context.* The Southern California School District was established in 1892. At the time of the study, it was the largest kindergarten through grade sixth school district in the state, with a population of 26,800 students in 43 schools. The schools were enriched with a multicultural population comprised of 64 percent Hispanic, 14 percent White, nine percent Filipino, five percent African-American, three percent Asian, and one percent Other. The most current Language Census showed that approximately 45 languages were spoken in the District, while more than one-third of
the student population consisted of English Language Learners. The district had approximately 37 percent of students who received free or reduced lunch. The district experienced growth in its eastern sector with a new school that opened in July 2007. Nine schools, or 22 percent of the schools in the district, were in Program Improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act. In this district, there were six charter schools, a Model Technology school, a PreService Bilingual Teacher Training Center, five Dual Language Acquisition Schools, three State-funded preschools, and two Family Resource Centers.

The superintendent of this Southern California school district served a nine-year tenure from 1993-2002. She fostered the implementation of numerous partnerships and school change models and created six charter schools during her tenure. These partnerships included Edison Schools, Comer Schools, Accelerated Schools, and a partnership with the Ball Foundation. She was nationally recognized for her work in redesigning central office roles and functions to better support teaching and learning.

During the initial stages of her tenure as superintendent in the fall of 1993, she hired an external team of key educational professionals to conduct a curriculum management audit that consisted of a systematic review of policy documents, decision-making processes, and practices (Gil, 2001). This team made a series of observations and conducted numerous interviews to determine the extent of resource-management alignment with instructional focus and student achievement. Their conclusions uncovered a paternalistic organizational model of “do as I say and I will take care of you” (p. 17). As a result, an extensive reorganization occurred at the district. The roles of the central office departments were redefined, resources were shifted to schools to
meet student needs, and the model of *site-based decision making* was reframed to a
*student-based decision making* model. This decision-making model was refined to meet
the needs of schools by creating a more purposeful framework when the word *student*
was substituted for the word *site*.

*Selection of School for Study*

There are two elementary schools that participated in this study. Two specific
criteria were used to select each school. Charter status and school demographics were
the criteria used for selection. These criteria were chosen to minimize confounding
factors yet allow some differences between schools to further understand the
implementation of the district-initiated inquiry process in the two charter schools
selected for this study. These criteria are described in detail below.

School demographics. Two demographic factors were used to select the two
schools in my study. Two schools with similar percentages of English Language
Learners (ELL) and students on free/reduced lunch were selected. The state of
California denotes the number of students receiving free/reduced lunch to reflect the
school poverty index. ELL refers to students whose native language is other than
English and do not meet the criteria for English Language Proficiency. These
demographic factors placed extra challenges on schools and may have affected
implementation of the district-initiated inquiry process. Filtering for these factors
minimized some confounding errors.

Charter School A. Charter School A reflected the diversity represented in the
Southern California district. The student population was comprised of 3% Filipino,
83% Hispanic, 5 % White, 6 % African-American, and 3% from other ethnic
backgrounds. With 80% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, the school was considered a Title I school. Approximately 54% of the student population was designated as English Language Learners (ELL), and the percent of ELLs continued to increase each year.

Charter School B. School B reflected the diversity represented in the Southern California district. The student population was comprised of 95.5% Hispanic, 1.4% White, 1.7% African-American, and 1.3% from other ethnic backgrounds. Approximately 55% of the student population was designated as English Language Learners (ELL), and 45% were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Study Participants

The primary participants in this study were the two principals and six teachers from each school. The teachers represented two grade-level groups, a primary and upper grade. In addition, a former principal in the district served as a key informant who provided access to the schools as well as needed background knowledge and a historical perspective of this district and its reform efforts since 1993.

Principal selection. As part of the school selection process, I factored in tenure length as a principal. An area of interest in the study was how the inquiry process was embraced and implemented in the school and how it influenced principal behaviors. I assumed that tenure length in the district and school might affect the level of implementation. The degree to which a principal internalized the district initiated inquiry process was determined by the number of years the principal had been employed in the district as a principal. A pilot study, conducted in the spring of 2006 by myself and two other researchers, revealed that explicit professional development on
inquiry ended after the departure of the superintendent in 2003. This finding indicated that formal training in the board-adopted inquiry model was not offered to principals new to the system or position. Therefore, in considering school selection, I also looked for a principal with three or more years of experience as a principal and a principal with two to three-years administrative experience in the district. The principal with three or more years of experience would have received explicit training in the inquiry process. In contrast, the one with only two to three years of administrative experience would have received informal support from peers in the inquiry process. These parameters allowed me to compare whether there was a difference in leadership behaviors between principals who received only informal introduction to the inquiry process. Although such a small sample did not adequately address the affects of tenure on implementation of the inquiry process, it provided interesting insights into the degree of institutionalization of the model in relatively new schools in the district. Furthermore, exploring the level of training and support for principals pointed to areas of further research in terms of sustainability of reforms.

*Study Participant A.* The principal, Mr. Edwards, was serving his second year as the school principal at Charter School A. He served as a district math resource teacher and a math consultant for program improvement schools. Mr. Edwards practiced inquiry, while at the district and received implicit training on how to support schools using this process. He supervised 66 staff members at this school, teaching grades kindergarten through sixth. Each grade level had a teacher leader, grade-level team, which met on a daily basis.
Study Participant B. The principal, Mrs. Chavira, was serving her tenth year as a site leader at Charter School B. She received formal training in the district inquiry process during her second year as school principal. She was also a national trainer for MicroSociety, which incorporated an inquiry model for students. She supervised 28 staff members at her school who taught grades kindergarten through sixth. Each grade level had a grade-level team that met on a weekly basis.

Grade level team selection. Grade-level team members were teachers, lead teachers, and/or other teachers selected as grade level or content area experts. A purposeful selection of a primary (grades kindergarten through third) and upper-level (grades four through sixth) team from each school was made for this study.

Data Sources Instruments and Collection Plan

Yin (2003) stated data for a case study design comes from many sources of evidence. I included documents, extant survey, archival records, physical artifacts and interviews as part of my data collection. Table 3.1 summarizes the data sources for this study. Merriam (1998) asserts using documentary material as data is not different from using interviews or observations. Yin (2003) describes the strengths and weaknesses of using documents and archival records. For example, the strengths of documents and archival records are they can be reviewed repeatedly, are unobtrusive, are exact, and include a broad coverage of time and events. The weaknesses in using documents and archival records are the reporting biases, low retrievability, and bias in their selection. The documents collected in this study included: (a) Harris survey, (b) Peer Evaluation, a published book describing the district’s principal peer evaluation, (c) charter documents, (d) Working differently: The professional development imperative, a video
highlighting the Ball Foundation’s district reform effort, (e) California Department of Education data sources, (f) principal evaluation tool (see Figure 2.7). I used a purposeful sampling of such documents and archival records from the past three years.

Table 3.1.
Document and archival record collection strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Retrieved From</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harris Survey</td>
<td>District Office</td>
<td>Verify teacher’s perspectives on school leadership and decision-making model;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Evaluation</td>
<td>District office or book store</td>
<td>Verify district’s focus and objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter Documents</td>
<td>Site principal or school site council secretary</td>
<td>Information on issues and decisions made at the school site; Decision-making processes used Verify district’s reform efforts with Ball Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working differently: The professional development imperative</td>
<td>Key informant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Department of Education Data Sources</td>
<td>CDE website</td>
<td>Obtain school achievement data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements from the case study district’s principal evaluation tool</td>
<td>Key informant</td>
<td>Detailed information about how principals are rated in their use of the inquiry process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews (principal and focus groups)</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Specific information on how principals and teachers implemented and perceived the use of inquiry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Extant survey.** The Harris Interactive School Poll has been administered at every school in the case study district since 1996. One of the purposes of the Harris Interactive School Poll is to measure the principal’s use of the inquiry process at the school site. This survey consists of four different components (student, parent, administrator, teacher), each survey is four pages in length, is anonymous, and takes 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Each survey asks students, teachers/staff members, or parents about their experience with the school as well as key overall measures of satisfaction. The survey employs a specific design which allows the Harris Poll to use a statistical model to analyze the data over time.

Relevant to this study, the Harris surveys contained three principal standards that are related to the use of inquiry. They were **Standard 1C**, Implementation Change Process, **Standard 2D**, Develop a culture of inquiry, and **Standard 4B**, Shared Decision Making. The Harris survey questions used to measure Standard 1C were “Teacher/Staff rating: Are you an important part of your school?” The Harris survey question used to measure Standard 2D “Teacher/Staff: Are you challenged to continually improve?” and “Teacher/Staff - involvement in decision-making? (A-F).” Finally, the Harris survey questions that addressed Standard 4B are “Do Teachers/Staff have a say in school policies that affect them?” “Do Teachers/Staff Demonstrate Collaboration/Team Work?” and “Teacher/Staff rating: Does Principal ask for your suggestions/opinions?” This is illustrated in Table 3.2.
Table 3.2.
Principal Standard Evaluation Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Title</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1C. Implementation Change Process</td>
<td>Single Site Plan Addresses Needs For All Target Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harris Interactive Survey:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher/Staff rating are you an important part of your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(% Problems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2D. Develop a culture of inquiry.</td>
<td>Evidence Whole School Reform Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harris Interactive Survey:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher/Staff-Are you challenged to continually improve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(% Problem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher/Staff involvement in decision-making?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A-F)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B. Shared Decision Making</td>
<td>Harris Interactive Survey:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do Teachers/Staff have a say in school policies that affect them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(% Problem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Do Teachers/Staff Demonstrate Collaboration/Team Work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(% Problem)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teacher/Staff rating: Does Principal ask for your suggestions/opinions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(% Problems)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Interviews.* Kvale (1996) stated knowledge is constructed through the partners in an interview conversation. He further asserted the research interview is based on conversations of daily life and is a professional conversation. Spradley (1979) reinforced language is a tool for constructing reality. Kvale (1996) stated the purpose
of the semi-structured interview is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena. The phenomenon described in my study is the district-initiated inquiry process.

Kvale (1996), Spradley (1979), and Patton (1990) all asserted a qualitative interview has a structure and purpose. Knowledge is constructed through the partners in an interview conversation. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. The research interview is theme-oriented. In my study, the interviews focused on the theme of the inquiry process.

Patton (1990) stated the quality of information obtained is highly dependent on the interviewer. He espouses a more structured interview approach where the interviewer has disciplined and rigorous inquiry based on skill and technique. Patton states that issues of legitimacy and credibility are minimized by carefully collecting the same information from everyone who is interviewed. He described good interview questions as open-ended, neutral, singular, and clear. He emphasized the interviewer must maintain control of the interview. He believed that asking focused questions in an appropriate style to get relevant answers for further understanding of the world is what interviewing is all about. For my study, I used what Patton described as a standardized open-ended interview which has specific wording and sequencing of questions. Although an interview has structure and purpose, Kvale (1996) cautioned in this type of interview, many decisions have to be made on the spot during the interview itself.

There are strengths and weaknesses of using interviews for data collection. Yin (2003) described one strength of interviews is they focus directly on the case study
topic, in other words, they are targeted. In this case, it was the district-initiated inquiry process. He also stated the interviews are insightful. Kvale (1996) asserted the interview is the raw material for developing meaning analysis. The quality of the interview is decisive for the quality of the later analysis, verification, and reporting. Yin (2003) outlined the weaknesses of interviews as: response bias; poor recall of information by the interviewee; bias due to poorly-constructed questions, and reflexivity, the interviewee gives the interviewer what he/she wants to hear. To minimize some of these challenges, a pilot study was conducted prior to undertaking the full dissertation study.

In the spring of 2006, two colleagues and I conducted a pilot study to test potential interview questions for this study. We collectively interviewed three principals in the case study district who would not be involved in the study. These interviews helped us develop our interviewing and probing skills. In addition, this pilot suggested a need to revise the interview questions. As a result, I used Price’s (2004) laddering approach in revising the questions, which helped to develop trust and a closer relationship with the interviewee so he/she was more candid with their responses, and thus created useful data to analyze. This laddering or dilation of interview questions, as Price (2004) stated, allowed me to be sensitive to the interviewee’s sense of intrusion. By flowing between low sense of intrusive questions (events and facts) and high sense of intrusive questions (feelings and thoughts), I worked my way up the ladder of questions and received more poignant responses.
**Principal interviews.** I interviewed each principal twice for approximately two hours. Each principal was asked a semi-structured set of questions to assist me in determining how they are implementing the inquiry process and if their leadership behaviors changed as a result of using this process (Appendix B). Each interview lasted approximately two hours and was digitally audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. By interviewing principals from the two different schools, I gained insight about whether or not receiving explicit training makes a difference in the implementation of the inquiry.

**Focus Group interviews.** Focus groups are used as a way to supplement the initial findings and add to the understanding of the inquiry process (Krueger, 2000; Morgan, 1997). The focus group interview allows multiple people to interact and create a more freeing environment for questions posed to them. Focus group interviews were conducted with grade-level teams in two elementary schools. The interviews included open-ended questions and assumed a conversational nature. The purpose of the focus group interview is to corroborate certain facts that may already be established (Yin, 2003). A primary level team and upper-grade level team comprised of a minimum of three teachers each were asked to share their perspectives on how the inquiry process was being implemented at their school and how it affected their own learning and the school’s work (Appendix C). The interview lasted approximately one hour and was digitally audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

**Timeline.** There were two major data sources for the data collection plan (see Table 3.3). I commenced my study by recovering similar documents from each site. These documents elicited additional questions for principal or focus group interviews.
Table 3.3.
Data Collection Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Research Questions Addressed</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Documents    | (I) In what ways do principals, teachers, and the site’s leadership team perceive the implementation of the district’s inquiry process in their schools?  
              | (II) How do principals and teachers perceive the effectiveness of the inquiry process on their own learning and the school’s work?  
              | (III) How do the principals perceive their leadership behaviors have changed from participating in the district’s initiation of an inquiry process? | (a) Harris survey, (b) Peer Evaluation, a published book describing the district’s principal peer evaluation, (c) charter documents, (d) *Working differently: The professional development imperative*, a video highlighting the Ball Foundation’s district reform effort (e) CA Department of Education data sources (f) principal evaluation tool | February–December 2008 |
| Interviews   | I) In what ways do principals, teachers, and the site’s leadership team perceive the implementation of the district’s inquiry process in their schools?  
              | (II) How do principals and teachers perceive the effectiveness of the inquiry process on their own learning and the school’s work?  
              | (III) How do the principals perceive their leadership behaviors have changed from participating in the district’s initiation of an inquiry process? | (a) One hour interview with four focus groups  
              |                                                                                                                                  | (b) Two, two hour interview sessions with each site principal          | February–November 2008  |
Data Analysis

Yin (2003) states data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, and testing qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a case study. Merriam (1998) asserts data collection and analysis occurs simultaneously. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe data analysis in three concurrent flows: a) data reduction, b) data displays during the collection, and c) conclusion drawing to explain the findings. The data reduction encompasses transforming the collective data into a conceptual framework. The data displays entail compressing the information to draw preliminary conclusions. The third step is the conclusion drawing and verification based on confirmable evidence. The overall goal of qualitative data analysis is to understand, provide evidence, and suggest inferences based on the data to make sense of a given situation.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state coding is the key component for data analysis. Codes are defined as tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are used to retrieve and organize chunks of information so the researcher can quickly find, pull out, and cluster the segments relating to a particular research question, construct, or theme. In my study, I coded the documents and interview transcripts. Lincoln and Guba (cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994) suggest “coding and re-coding are over when the analysis itself appears to have run its course – when all the incidents can be readily classified, categories are saturated, and sufficient numbers of regularities emerge” (p. 62).
Interview analysis. Kvale (1996) describes five main steps for interview analysis: (a) subjects describe their lived world during the interview, (b) the subjects discover new relationships during the interview, (c) the researcher condenses and interprets the meaning of the interviewee’s responses and conveys the meaning back during the interview, (d) the researcher interprets the transcribed interview and (e) the researcher re-interviews to clarify information. Patton (1990) further emphasizes the analysis of the raw interview data allows important themes to emerge, rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection.

Kvale (1996) describes meaning condensation as a way to interpret the transcribed interview by condensing it into a more succinct form. This process consists of five steps: (a) the whole interview is read through to get a sense of the whole, (b) the natural meaning units as expressed by the subjects are determined by the researcher, (c) the theme that dominates a natural meaning unit is stated as simply as possible, (d) meaning units are analyzed in terms of the specific purpose of the study, and (e) the themes are tied together into a descriptive statement. After the text is condensed, the natural meaning units of the subject’s answers are placed in the left-hand column and central themes are presented in the right-hand column. This empirical phenomenological method may serve to analyze extensive and often complex interview text by looking for natural meaning units and explicating their main themes (Kvale, 1996).

Kvale (1996) uses meaning categorization as a way to analyze qualitative data to quantify the categories created by the coding process or developed in advance. This process emphasizes quantification of facts. This technique serves several purposes: (a)
to test hypotheses, (b) quantification of behaviors, and (c) to investigate differences in behavior among different groups.

In the study, I used the process of meaning condensation described by Kvale (1996) to interpret the transcribed interview. I conducted two interviews of each principal, approximately two hours for each interview, and used a semi-structured interview protocol. I also conducted four, one-hour interviews with four different focus groups. I used Dragon Speak-Easy software program to transcribe the interviews and the N-Vivo software program to assist with coding and theme identification. The N-Vivo software program is a qualitative data analysis software package; it codes text files, presents data the way it was collected, and helps analyze and integrate cases from multiple study files. The process of meaning condensation was enhanced through the use of this software. The program enabled me to query key words, such as “collaboration,” “inquiry”, and “decision making.” This query command would search each incident the key word was mentioned by the interviewee and organize the interview data in themes. This technology tool allowed me to more objectively code the interview data and check any cross trends between principal and focus group data.

*Document analysis.* Merriam (1998) emphasizes content analysis as a systematic procedure for describing the content of communication. Yin (2003) maintains the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. From document review, new evidence may emerge that is contradictory to the original findings. Yin (2003) suggests further inquiry into the topic will resolve the problem. After gathering the documents listed in Table 3.2 from each case study school, I used the four essential questions from the case study district inquiry
model (see Figure 2.1) as a guide to review these documents to determine the extent to which the district inquiry model has been implemented.

Principal Peer Evaluation, an example of a document used in this study, described the change process undertaken to transform the role of the principal from implementing central office requirements to implementing the inquiry construct this study focused on. The selection further describes the process of developing the principal’s evaluation tool, which began in establishing principal standards developed to complement the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. Once standards were developed, a rubric outlining the indicators used to assess each standard were crafted. Each standard initially had four indicators, applying, emerging, innovating, and self-actualization. Later, self-actualization was omitted and innovating became the highest level. The selection ends with how each standard would be quantified for the purpose of using this tool as a vehicle for principal bonuses/merit pay. The following flow chart outlines the seminal aspects in the selection Principal Peer Evaluation, which shed light in answering some of our four research questions.
- Establishment of a new vision and values
- Strategic goals were established

- Mission of all central office departments is to support the school site.
  - "We are the district" is a key concept. Principals are responsible for the success of all children at all schools.
  - Structures are created to build on collaboration and establish a process of critical feedback.

- Assistant Superintendents are designated as coaches to support inquiry
- Small group of principals developed a new evaluation process

- Evaluation had to be ongoing and would reflect on open communication with immediate critical feedback.
- Practice of conducting multiple assessments during evaluation (i.e., surveys, longitudinal student data).
- Peer evaluation is added to support professional growth and a collegial atmosphere

- Rubric was created to link all standards to specific expectations
- 4 stages were associated for each standard: Emerging, Applying, Innovating, Self-Actualization

Figure 3.1. Highlights from Peer Principal Evaluation
Cross-case synthesis. Yin (2003) states a cross-case synthesis is likely to be more robust and is an excellent example of the important research that emerges by having multiple case studies. A major strength in my study was two other researchers were investigating the implementation of the inquiry process at four elementary schools in the case study district. The three studies in totality represent a district cross-section when comparing two demographic factors, namely, percentage of English Language Learners and students on free or reduced lunch. The percentage of the six schools combined is within ten percentage points of the case study district (see Figure 3.2).

The use of cross-case synthesis for my study aggregated findings from the two schools and strengthened each separate case study. These concurrent studies probed whether different groups of cases appear to share some similarities and deserve to be considered instances of the same “type” of general case. This raises the possibility of a typology of individual cases that can be highly insightful. Cross-case synthesis can be more complex and cover broader issues than simply analyzing single features (Yin, 2003).

Figure 3.2. Demographic Comparisons
Limitations of the Study

As Yin (2003) and Merriam (1998) both point out, there are many cautions for conducting a multiple case study. Yin states that the preparation of the research questions and the case study design is critical. For the interview protocols, the ability to codify or standardize my approach had a positive impact on the reliability and validity of my study. The use of multiple data sources helped to increase reliability, but it is not possible to eliminate all potential bias. This limited nature of the study, two out of 44 schools in the case study district, means that I was not able to generalize findings across the district as a whole or to other districts, but theoretical generalizations about how inquiry supports organizational learning may be possible.

Positionality of the researcher. I was a former district principal for a period of five years (2000-2005). This experience provided an insider perspective as well as facilitated access to the study sites. I was a participant during the early formation of the inquiry process and received training on how to use inquiry as a decision-making model. In addition, I was a former principal in one of the schools (Charter School A) in this study. Through my work as a principal I had insider knowledge and access to several key data sources that were important to this study. These included the peer evaluation tool, Harris survey results, charter documents from each school, Ball Foundation protocols, and access to a documentary on the district. During my principalship, I was an active participant in the Ball Foundation’s Community of Schools and Focus on Results training. This participation gave insider information on how these trainings may have helped to operationalize the district’s inquiry model. In spite of the advantages of being an insider, there are potential disadvantages that need to
be acknowledged. A potential issue is a bias that may enter in the interpretation of the data. I worked to bracket these bias by working with two fellow researchers and dissertation chair who challenged my assumptions and continually pressed for explanations and supporting data. Their outsider perspective helped see alternative perspectives and crystallize the many events that contributed to the inquiry process. In addition, we examined the multiple data sources available to ensure adequate support for the interpretations presented. Because multiple data were used, we were able to triangulate the findings to strengthen the interpretation of findings and conclusions drawn in this study.
Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study is to understand how a mid-sized elementary California School District promoted inquiry policy and processes were accepted and practiced in its schools. This study examined a specific inquiry framework used in a Southern California School District to solve problems and focus the work at district and school levels. This construct has been used as a means to enhance student learning, ethical responsibility and involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making. The focus of the study centered on the following student-based inquiry model created by this district, which uses four essential questions to guide discussions and deliberations:

1) HOW DOES THE DECISION IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING?
   - Rationale or evidence that it makes a difference for all children
   - Support our vision statement

2) IS THE DECISION ILLEGAL, UNETHICAL, OR IMMORAL?
   - Support our values statement

3) IS THERE ADVERSE IMPACT ON OTHERS?
   - Collaboration with staff, parents, community
   - Data collection/research
   - District included in problem-solving process
   - Fiscal and personnel impact

4) HOW ARE INDIVIDUAL NEEDS BALANCED WITH GROUP NEEDS?
   - Equity

This inquiry model was created in response to a curriculum management audit that consisted of a systematic review of policy documents, and decision-making processes, which took place in the fall of 1993, immediately after a new superintendent
began her tenure as the district’s leader. The inquiry model of Student-Based Decision Making was the district’s central focus when making district and school decisions. It was promoted through initial training of principals, incorporating inquiry into principals evaluation, creating posters with the four questions to be posted in every school, and forming a partnership with the Ball Foundation. During the period of 1995-2000, an extensive reorganization occurred at the district. The roles of the central office departments were redefined and resources were shifted to schools to meet student needs, and the decentralization became the new mode of operation (Gil, 2001). A variety of Comprehensive School Reform models were supported by the district to enhance the school site’s ability to support student learning above and beyond the assistance from the district.

Although this inquiry model became an expected decision-making construct for all principals, it was operationalized at the school level when a series of professional development initiatives were undertaken by the Ball Foundation and Focus on Results. The district’s partnership with the Ball Foundation started as an effort to unite schools throughout the district by establishing an inquiry approach to data analysis. Focus on Results partnered with the Ball Foundation, which assisted schools in establishing Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT’s) and developing protocols to conduct data-based inquiry. After Focus on Results finished its fourth cohort, the Ball Foundation established the Community of Practice (CoP), which was designed to help sustain the earlier training by heightened inquiry that linked instructional practices to student needs. A Community of Practice (CoP) evolved as groups of practitioners dedicated to learning with and from one another in pursuit of promising instructional, organizational
and leadership practices that would support increased student achievement. These major efforts had an effect on how both case study schools implemented inquiry and how teachers’ perceived its establishment. The following timeline describes the sequence of these influences that may have altered the initial formal inquiry process adopted by the district.
Figure 4.1. Timeline Describing the Inquiry’s Evolution Through a Series of District Initiatives.
Figure 4.1(continued)  Timeline Describing the Inquiry’s Evolution Through a Series of District Initiatives.
Figure 4.1(continued) Timeline Describing the Inquiry’s Evolution Through a Series of District Initiatives.
The case study district approved six charter schools since 1993. Charters are approved by the board for a period of 5 years, and each charter must meet academic goals and financial sustainability to continue charter status. My particular concentration was on two elementary schools serving similar demographic populations, and which have charter status in the district. Since charter status, even within districts, grant greater autonomy, it was important to explore how their school decision-making and work were influenced by a district-promoted practice. In this chapter, I present the findings; first presenting each school and then a cross-case comparison. Pseudonyms were used throughout the study. The findings indicated the extent to which the inquiry process influenced teachers, principals, and instructional leadership team decision-making. I also describe the conditions that seem to support and constrain the inquiry process.

**Charter School A**

*Description*

The mission of Charter School A was to provide a diverse cross section of children with a world-class education that will prepare them to be self-motivated, lifelong learners and successful students, workers and citizens. Charter School A intends to accomplish this mission by contracting with Edison Schools Inc. for the provision of educational and management services.

Edison Schools Inc., a nationally-based organization, spent substantial time and resources studying, implementing and refining a school design that was intended to prepare students to meet tomorrow’s challenges. During the summer of 1997, the case
study district and Edison Schools Inc. worked in partnership to build this school of the future. Charter School A’s charter incorporated Edison’s standards in the following ways Edison Charter, 2002):

1. The Charter School is a public school operated within the case study district.
2. The Principal of Charter School A has a group of staff members who meet regularly and serve as the leadership of the school.
3. The Leadership Team consists of, but will not be limited to, the Academy Director, the Business Services Manager, the Community Resource Director, the Technology As A Second Language Director, and the Lead Teacher from each of the school's houses (grade-level teams).
4. Each house team meets daily during a 45 minute block. The Lead teacher organizes an agenda that focuses on student achievement. Each day highlights a focus that influences student achievement. Data analysis, students concerns, bridging the family and school, curriculum, and team lesson planning are topics addressed weekly.
5. A focused, carefully integrated curriculum that inspires -- one that gives all students in-depth understanding across all academic core areas. Students who are English Language Learners (ELL) receive curriculum appropriate to their needs. Primary language instruction is provided for Spanish speakers.
6. More time for learning. Our school serves students for seven to eight hours a day (depending on the age of the child) for approximately 190 days. Over the course of a thirteen-year school experience, this schedule will provide the equivalent of five years of additional time for learning.
Student achievement. The purpose of the Achievement Performance Index (API) in California is to measure the academic performance and growth of schools. Historically, Charter A had been the lowest-performing school in the district until it was converted to a charter school. Using the API as an indicator, Charter School A has been the most improved school in the study district, and has been increasing in the Academic Performance Index (API) since its inception in 1999. However, the latest 2007 results indicated the first decline Charter A experienced since their partnership with Edison Inc. (see Figure 4.2)

Figure 4.2. Charter School A’s Academic Performance Index

Demographics. Charter School A reflects the diversity represented in the Southern California district. The student population is comprised of 3% Filipino, 83% Hispanic, 5% White, 6% African-American, and 3% from other ethnic backgrounds.
With 80% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch the school is considered a Title I school. Approximately 54% of the student population is designated as English Language Learners (ELL), and the percent of ELLs has continued to increase each year.

Document analysis

Charter School A’s principal evaluation, results from the Harris Survey, and a video entitled, Working differently: The professional development imperative, were the major documents used to understand how inquiry is practiced at the site level. The evaluation and survey documents are interrelated since the Harris Survey is used as an accountability tool for the Principal’s summative evaluation. The Harris Interactive School Poll program has been administered at Charter School A since 1996. One significant purpose of the Harris Interactive School Poll program is to measure the principal’s use of the inquiry process at the school site. Each survey asks students, teachers/staff members, or parents about their experience with the school as well as key overall measures of satisfaction. There are three principal standards that are related to the use of inquiry that are important to this study and are included in the Harris surveys (see Table 4.1). These standards are incorporated in Charter School A’s principal summative evaluation, which uses the Harris survey results as a measuring stick on how inquiry is implemented.
Table 4.1.
Harris Interactive Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Standard</th>
<th>Questions Asked</th>
<th>2006 Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Standard 2D,** Develop a culture of inquiry | • “Are you challenged to continually improve?”  
• “Teacher/Staff involvement in decision-making?” | • 94.8% of the teachers felt they were challenged to improve (no change compared to 2004)  
• 68.4% teachers believed they were involved in decision-making (a decrease of 14% compared to 2004) |
| **Standard 4B,** Shared Decision Making | • “Does principal ask for your suggestions?”  
• “Do teachers/staff demonstrate collaboration/team work?” | • 75.7% of the teacher stated the principal asked them for suggestions (a decrease of 8% compared to 2004)  
• 92.4% of the teachers stated they demonstrate collaboration this was not a problem (a decrease of 1% compared to 2004) |

The principal evaluation tool uses the survey results to help identify the level each principal is functioning at a particular standard. There are three levels identified on this rubric it starts at “emerging” then “applying” and ends with “innovating.” Developing a culture of inquiry is one of the standards included in this tool. The following table outlines each level of use.
Table 4.2.

Principal Evaluation Rubric Matrix: Standard Number 2D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Standard</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 2D, Develop a culture of inquiry</strong></td>
<td>Principal examines student work and analyzes data. Principal asks questions of staff that foster dialog and reflection on data.</td>
<td>Principal creates opportunity for staff to examine students work and analyze data. The principal creates opportunities for stakeholders to develop a plan of action based on inquiry. Principal asks questions of staff that foster dialog and reflection on data. Principal provides opportunities for examination of disaggregated data to reflect on instructional practices. Collaboratively, all stakeholders address areas of need, modify instructional practices and provide for a review of resources.</td>
<td>Through the inquiry process mistakes are viewed as learning tools and levers to the change process. Staff seeks input from community and “Critical Friends” i.e. experts outside of the school site to collaborate with them on supportive statements and critical questions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Edwards felt the evaluation tool had been valuable since each principal spends one day each month with a peer group for the purpose of supporting each school leader in improving leadership skills outlined in this tool. Each principal selects two standards and receives support from their peers. The level of support is described in the following quote:

I think my peers helped me [with the evaluation tool], because we shared the different ways that we do things. It is not right or wrong sometimes some things are better than others. Sometimes it works on one site and doesn't work on other sites. It helps us understand the issue on a number of perspectives. So it isn't a cookie cutter on one way to do the inquiry process. It really helps because I get a different perspective.
Although Mr. Edwards never selected the standard, “Developing a Culture of Inquiry,” he self-assessed himself as operating at an “applying” level. This is captured in the following statement:

I would rate myself as an applying going into innovative. I am not quite at innovating because we don't have critical friends or experts outside of the school. That is because we been a full management to school, and we rely on them [Edison]. We need to develop critical friends or community members to give us a different perspective and how the principal can engage in his life and what the school should be doing.

The video, Working Differently, was produced by Dave Hanrahan and Paulette Moore on February, 2003 and narrated by Richard Elmore. This film describes three districts undergoing systemic change as a means to accelerate adult and student learning. The film highlighted the case study district’s efforts at collaboration and describes inquiry practices occurring between principals and schools, which resulted in empowering principals (see Table 4.3). Charter School A was showcased on this film, and it described how the practice of walking through each classroom provided data that promoted conversations among principals as a means to improve instruction. The data gathered by the peer group during a walk-through focused on the standard identified on the evaluation tool the principal selected to improve as part of his/her professional growth.
Table 4.3.

Major Themes in Video: Working Differently

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Supporting quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of conducting a walk-through</td>
<td>• “The walk-through is a wonderful tool that helps principals stay focused on their major role, and their major role is teaching and learning” (superintendent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “The walk-through is just a tool. It is a tool to be able to identify what is going well and not going well in teaching efforts.” (Focus on Results consultant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “The walk-through is one lens. You are also looking at assessment data, doing walk-throughs, talking with teachers and looking at student work.” (Focus on Results consultant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry as a tool to promote learning and support</td>
<td>• “Sometimes principals are called upon to be instructional leaders, but we need the training and the tools to become instructional leaders. These walk-throughs help me hear different perspectives from different leaders. It allows me to see a classroom in a different way. These experiences and conversations allow me to be a better instructional leader.” (principal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Our senior cabinet leaders and directors need to support our principals. They don’t go around and tell principals what to do. They do inquiry and provide coaching and assistance and provide background information. They provide them with support to provide them information to resolve the very difficult process of providing good instruction.” (superintendent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “This structure helps me involve the staff and have a conversation with staff. The teachers begin saying now I know what I need in my classroom.” (principal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>• “We had to restructure on how the board was going to pay principals at a high quality level. Pay was going to be by merit and not seat time. We created a rigorous data process to ensure there is accountability.” (superintendent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “The principal is no longer a middle manager. The principal is a Chief Education Officer.” (superintendent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal perspective

I interviewed Mr. Edwards, Charter School A’s principal, two times for approximately three hours. Charter School A was the district’s oldest charter, which was celebrating its 10th year. Mr. Edwards was the third principal leading Charter School A and was completing his second year. During the interview, Mr. Edwards was asked a semi-structured set of questions to help determine how he had been implementing the inquiry process and if his leadership behaviors changed as a result of using the process (Appendix B). Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Through a constant comparative analysis themes were captured from this interview.

Defining the inquiry process. Mr. Edwards understood the inquiry model as a construct used to promote decisions centered on student needs. The following quote describes the tension which occurred at Charter School A when confronting decisions based on adults versus student needs.

It is not about the power of the principal that is making a difference for kids, it’s about the collaboration surrounding our inquiry process. I can see in the charter school how easy it would be to become just a site based decision making model. Because in a site based decision making model, it is what we decide to make it best for the staff, however, in a student based decision making model it is what we can do for the kids.

Two of the four key components of the district’s inquiry model seemed central to Mr. Edward’s concept of inquiry: (a) base decisions on student needs, and (b) ensure stakeholders are part of the process. There is little evidence whether the leader reflected on the ethical or equity relevancy during decision making. It is possible these remaining parts are either internalized or ignored.
Implementation or use of inquiry. Mr. Edwards used inquiry to elevate awareness of instructional practices when communicating with his teachers as evidenced in the following quote: “The inquiry process helped us enhance teacher's capacity and focus on instruction.” Leadership team meetings are another setting where the principal indicated he uses inquiry to resolve difficult operational and instructional issues. The leadership is composed of teacher leaders, classified staff leaders, and administration. The following quote describes how inquiry was used to change the teacher’s evaluation process:

We'd meet with all the leads together and talk about issues that are facing our campus. We asked inquiry questions. For example recently, teachers wondered about creating their end of year portfolios. We tried to be wise about that we asked. We took a look at the purpose and asked whether we can achieve our purpose but in a different way. We came up with what we call right now a student monitoring process. These are sessions were we meet with each teacher to discuss student achievement by quarter. So we came up with this process that the teacher feels better about the administration feels better about and we can basically benefit kids more.

Mr. Edwards use of inquiry assisted in moving the evaluation discussion to address processes for improved student learning. The annual process was transformed to ongoing sessions (quarterly) that focused on student achievement and instruction.

Factors promoting inquiry. The overall structure Charter School A used to schedule its day and organize teacher teams are attributes Mr. Edwards most frequently stated as necessary for inquiry to take place at his school. Each teacher belonged to a team, additionally these teams were identified as a distinct school within a school. The grade-level teams were given a name (i.e., Mozart House, Einstein House, etc.), and most events (i.e., Back to School Night) were conducted by each grade level. Each
team was assigned a lead teacher who met as a leadership team biweekly. At these meetings the lead teachers planned the instructional focus for their 45 minute daily meetings. Interview data strongly suggested that this structure supported staff using inquiry as a practice for decision making and leadership distribution as evident in the following quote:

Well, first of all we have a governance structure in every grade level, which has a designated lead. I would like to know if a particular decision has everyone's consent. This structure makes everyone feel they have input.

The importance of structures for organizational learning, in this case, learning the inquiry process, is supported in the review of literature. Crossan et al. (1999) suggested learning becomes institutionalized through systems, structures, strategies, and procedures. Systems and structures exist in the school setting to support organizational learning. Mulford, Silins, and Zarins (2002b) defined organizational learning applied to school settings as the way the school staff, collaboratively and continuously learn and apply their learning. Charter School A’s learning was promoted in schools in which staff members communicated with each other in an open and supportive way and actively sought information to improve their work. In these schools, staff members were looking for opportunities to increase their knowledge, improve their skills and have access to sufficient resources and time to develop professionally.

Formal and informal training in inquiry seemed to play some role in developing Mr. Edwards’ inquiry practice. Although Edwards did not receive direct district training on inquiry as a principal, his role as a teacher in a school that was interested in
becoming an Accelerated School influenced his understanding and application of inquiry.

The district years ago had a person in the district staff to help everyone with inquiry training and I still have my notes. That must've been about 10 years ago. This person now works for the Ball Foundation. This person's name is ________ and when the district was looking for alternative school models one of the models that they were looking at was the Accelerated School model. The Accelerated schools model uses the inquiry process as a method of teaching and to encourage teachers to use this with kids.

Mr. Edwards seemed to be passionate when speaking about district and site leaders who modeled the inquiry process. The following two quotes portray how the intensity these experiences affected his outlook on inquiry:

I also had an excellent model at the district office in ________. She would do a lot of asking. So I learned that this decision making process is just good leadership. It is when we broker the conversation and facilitate the decision. It is very important for these decisions to have integrity.

My former principal, __________ modeled inquiry, inclusion, ethics, integrity, and having this modeled for me made such a difference, because when I became a principal I wanted to be like him.

These quotes suggest that the actual application of the inquiry model by peers and superiors seemed to make more of an impression than any formal training in the inquiry process. The following response highlights this assertion, “it hasn’t been that the district has been training me, but people modeling the process.”

Mr. Edwards’ understanding and use of the inquiry process may be best described as a form of personal mastery. The concept of personal mastery as articulated by Senge (1990) describes it as continually clarifying and deepening one’s own personal vision. Mastery indicates a level of proficiency. Personal mastery begins with
the individual clarifying what really matters and living to reach his or her highest aspirations. Mr. Edwards was asked to rate himself on the district evaluation rubric. He indicated he was at the “applying” level, second from the highest level on a four-point scale. He feels integrating “critical friends” in the inquiry process was the only factor keeping him from the highest “innovative” rating.

The following table summarizes the conditions Mr. Edwards believed were necessary for inquiry to flourish at his school.

*Table 4.4.*

Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Why important</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational structures</td>
<td>Charter School A’s structure allowed all grade level teachers to meet daily</td>
<td>• “Conditions that make inquiry successful were the structures in place.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “This structure makes everyone feel they have input.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal training</td>
<td>Principals were given an outline on how to use inquiry as a decision making construct</td>
<td>• “The district years ago had a person in a district staff to help everyone with inquiry training”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal training</td>
<td>Modeling the inquiry process provides ongoing training and depicts the importance of using this construct.</td>
<td>• “Having this modeled for me made such a difference, because when I became a principal I wanted to be like him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “I also had an excellent model at the district office...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors inhibiting inquiry. Time was the most significant factor Mr. Edwards identified as an inhibitor to inquiry. This is significant since this charter school incorporated more time for teacher collaboration than any other school in the case study district. The following statement describes the impact of lack of time on the inquiry process: “I think I might have to say task analysis on inquiry process putting too many expectations without enough background information. This usually occurs when people do not have enough time to process.”

There is some evidence that unique charter responsibilities may add additional time constraints. The Southern California school district has approved six charters and requires an annual financial and academic report to its board. The district renews the charter every five years and supports their goals by providing instructional and operational services. Charters have the liberty to contract other public or private entities for services. Charter School A hired Edison Inc. to provide leadership and teacher professional development, while some operational services, such as gardening and payroll, are delivered by the district. Charter A’s cycle for its charter renewal is due by the end of 2007. During this time the community and staff re-writes its charter for board approval. The following interview data suggest items such as teacher salaries, charter renewals, and operational/transactional issues placed a burden on the charter school’s ability to allocate enough time for inquiry to take place: “We have issues with salaries. Teacher salaries and our charter renewal take so much time. It takes time away from inquiry.” The social conditions surrounding Charter A’s community places a significant strain on temporal resources as well:
These exceptional inquiry experiences do not happen often enough. The cycle goes to multiple challenges more multiple levels. Right now we're focused on achievement, yet we have situations at home to be taken care of. These issues [e.g. charter renewal] in the house meetings can be very demanding at this school.

Emotional turmoil associated with resolving issues may limit inquiry’s effectiveness. Time used for conflict resolution seemed to absorb an inordinate amount of time according to Mr. Edwards: “There are so many emotional issues they really invade the time for an inquiry process to occur. There's so much emotion attached to inquiry. It should be a three-day process.”

The time constraints placed on Charter School A may mean staff is engaged primarily in single loop learning. The high emotional responses associated with salaries and working conditions in the charter renewal process typifies Model I behavior and seemed to be taking the school away from its prior focus on improving student learning. Argyris and Schöen (1996) state that when individuals deal with issues that are embarrassing or threatening, their reasoning and action conform to Model I behaviors. The principal in Charter School A alluded to his defensiveness during these moments of time constraints, which was associated with a breakdown of communication. As a result, the members of the organization are left with a feeling of minimal control to initiate change. The following incident describes how lack of time created an environment overflowing with tension and paralysis.

I have an elevated sense of urgency that puts me in a situation that I need to make a decision "now," rather than checking with my people. That got me in trouble. For example when I first arrived at this school I looked at the school's achievement data and realized the achievement gap. I had no time for inquiry. This rung a panic bell. I felt we need to do something about this yesterday. So, I began telling teachers the many changes they need to be doing. The teachers
were freaking out! Teachers were letting me know why we doing this so, and they became angry.

The lack of communication in the organization accounted for some impediment in conducting inquiry in Charter School A. The principal described this problem as a catalyst that created negative emotions and a lack of sound decision making. The principal felt a smaller number of teachers participating in decision-making opportunities may have enhanced the quality of communication, as indicated in the following statement: “It [inquiry] works better in a small group rather than a large group people. In a large group, people get emotional and it becomes a free-for-all. Communication somehow is more difficult in large groups.”

The IRI model, described in Chapter Two, gave us an understanding of how the inquiry process may be thwarted by a lack or absence of important communication. The model asserted that a school is shaped by identity, the relationships that exist within it, and the transfer of information that occurs. If the transfer of information does not occur, trust, meaning and action would not take place, thereby stagnating the organization. Mr. Edwards indicated the importance of sharing timely information. He shared that he attended house meetings to monitor and supervise the lead teacher’s ability to inform grade level teachers about the information shared at leadership meetings. “So, inquiry breaks down when important information was not discussed. So what I needed to do was to attend more house meetings to monitor.”

The following table summarizes the conditions Mr. Edwards believed hindered inquiry at his school.
\textbf{Table 4.5.}

Checklist Matrix: Conditions Inhibiting Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Why important</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time constraints</td>
<td>Time constraints may lead staff to engage in single loop learning.</td>
<td>• “My number one wish to enhance inquiry is to have more time to focus”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “There are so many emotional issues they really invade the time for an inquiry process to occur.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meetings</td>
<td>Principal was not able to use inquiry in a large group setting.</td>
<td>• “It works better in a small group rather than a large group people…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “In a large group people get emotional and it becomes a free-for-all…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “Communication somehow is more difficult in large groups…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication</td>
<td>Information that is not shared may be interpreted as an act of withholding information by the principal.</td>
<td>• “Our model depends so much on lead teachers to deliver important communication to our grade level teams everyone with inquiry training”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “Inquiry breaks down when important information were not discussed”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter renewal</td>
<td>Emotional turmoil was attributed to the process associated to this renewal process.</td>
<td>• These issues [e.g. charter renewal] in the house meetings can be very demanding at this school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.4. Principal A’s Force Field Analysis Describing the Forces Surrounding the Implementation of the District-Initiated Inquiry.

Principal leadership behavioral change. There was some indication that Mr. Edwards adapted his leadership style to best adhere to the collaborative efforts inherent in the district’s inquiry model. Mr. Edwards stated that the staff initially felt intimidated by him, and as a result, he was perceived to be unapproachable.

I think this was important because whether I believe it or not key people have told me that I am intimidating. So, I have to own that and I need to help teachers to try to find a way to get past that. I seek the feedback I don't wait for it. I have to proactively invite teachers in and it's really great that I'm doing that because the number of teachers said that at first I didn't think you are approachable and now you're making yourself approachable.

I think we can be full of ourselves as a principal when you make a decision top down exclusively. If you realize you have shared the idea and information and given it to people, and allow them to review these decisions when they really matter usually they will come up with the decisions you would or sometimes even a better decision than you would make.
The interview data denote the act of inquiry assisted Mr. Edwards in participating in behavior commonly associated with Model II. The review of literature describes a leader who exhibits Model II behaviors as one who allows the exchange of valid information, promotes free and informed choice, and fosters internal commitment. The consequences of these leadership behaviors include minimally defensive interpersonal and group relationships, high freedom of choice, and increased risk-taking as depicted in the following statement: “The teachers were very excited because we began to craft an ideal situation. We were using our expertise. We focused on using our senior teachers as coaches and resource teacher and crafted these desires into a vision.”

Argyris and Schön (1996) insist when Model II action strategies are implemented, double loop learning and effectiveness are likely to increase. Mr. Edwards described an instance using inquiry that led to such learning: “This process helped us create a paradigm shift. We began to meet the needs of teachers, which translated to meet the needs of the kids. The inquiry process helped us enhance teacher's capacity and focusing on instruction.” Mr. Edward’s responses indicated he facilitated in leading Model II learning. “I became a facilitator in this inquiry process. I helped the group focus around the questions on what we're doing now and whether we were successful in how could we be more successful for the kids. So, I was basically a facilitator and a coach in this process.”

Teachers’ perspective

An instructional leadership team is defined as a grade-level team for the purpose of this study. The leadership team members are typically lead teachers, teachers selected as content area experts, and grade-level teachers. I interviewed a primary
(grade 2/3) and an upper grade (grade 5) team. Mr. Edwards, Charter School A’s principal, selected each team for a two-hour interview. Each team was asked a semi-structured set of questions to help determine how grade-level teams were implementing the district initiated inquiry process. Each interview session was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. A variety of themes were captured from these two focus group interviews.

Database inquiry. Neither focus group used language that indicated direct familiarity with the district initiated inquiry process, instead the following quote referred to the Edison design: “I make sure the Edison school design is implemented. The design makes sure we meet and is based on student needs. When we meet we focus on what is good for the team using our benchmarks.” These comments, however, suggest they were accustomed to making student based decisions using on-line monthly assessment data. In the Edison model, students were expected to take a computer-generated, standard-based assessment in Language Arts and Math during two forty-minute periods each month. Results of these assessments were instantly reported in an on-line database. Teacher-generated query reports were used for discussion when teachers met in grade-level teams. Teachers identified problem areas, and began making monthly plans, which promoted the school’s focus; in this case study, school writing was the school-wide focus. The following quote describes a typical outcome at these grade-level meetings: “Since we would collaborate looking at data analysis, which provided a lot of feedback. This interaction created consistency around each grade level and found consistency among student achievement among all groups.”
The focus group members cited many instances indicating the high use of monthly benchmark results as a medium to discuss student progress and generate plans for future teaching.

We look at benchmark scores. We look at writing scores and math scores. We talk about how students are progressing, and what instructional strategies we are going to incorporate to elevate student achievement. Student-based decision-making has to do with measurable results that guide our decision-making.

The method of inquiry practiced by Charter School A teachers closely resembled the Accelerated Schools and BASRC models described in the review of literature. Both models allowed for teams to solve complex school problems, through a specific inquiry process. Charter A’s grade-level team used the following steps to guide this process: (a) investigate the causes of the priority needs identified in the monthly benchmark assessments (needs assessment), as described in the following comment: “We have data from benchmarks throughout the years to help us plan each month. This helps us focus on specific areas each particular month”; (b) research potential solutions that will address the needs, as typified in the following assertion: “We can focus together and then everyone can contribute on how to continue our strengths and fill the gaps when needed”; (c) select improvement strategies that will best fit the unique needs of the student, as typified in the following comment: “This information helps us identify which kids are strong on specific areas instead of guessing”; (d) implement the plan; and (e) evaluate and reassess those strategies after each monthly assessment, as indicated in the following quote:

This process starts with the end in mind so we can collaborate and helps us focus. We can spend our time teaching everything, but these monthly benchmarks have made a difference. It is a time that helps us look where
students are going and time to reflect on what we need to do to get our students to the next level.

Figure 4.5. Teacher’s Conceptual Framework on How the District-Initiated Inquiry Process is Implemented in Charter School A

Factors promoting inquiry. Teachers strongly felt the culture at their school promoted communication and ideas to be shared freely as described in the following quote: “Our culture is very open. It is great to hear what other teachers do. In other schools there may be a lot of talent but it doesn't reach from one teacher to another. You don't hear about it, and if we have something that works here we immediately share it next door.” The formation of grade-level teams at Charter A reflects Leithwood and Aitken (cited in Argyris & Schön, 1996) definition of a learning organization as “a group of people pursuing common and individual purposes with a collective
commitment to regularly weighing the value of those purposes, modifying them when that makes sense, and continuously developing more effective and efficient ways of accomplishing those purposes” (p. 63). Leithwood (2003) also refers to organizational learning as learning that occurs in small groups or teams that then promote learning across the organization as a whole. Charter A’s schedule ensured each grade-level team met each day. Teachers intently collaborated on student learning as indicated in the following quote: “House [grade level] meetings are the best way we share. I think there's real communication in our school particularly because it's part of the tradition. The design makes sure we meet and is based on student needs.” These teams used both external (i.e., Harris Surveys) and internal (i.e., monthly benchmarks) sources of information, which allowed them to pay attention to important assumptions concerning the school.

A variety of communication venues in Charter School A seemed to support inquiry, especially the use of their intranet chat room (Staff News) capability. Each teacher at Charter School A was provided a laptop computer, access to school site intranet capabilities, and Edison’s Common, a web-based site offering teachers a variety of resources (i.e., lesson plans, webinars etc.). Teachers cited the use of Charter A’s intranet as a necessity to communicate across grade level considering the size of the school, as indicated in the following quotes, “We can also share ideas electronically. We used an e-mail intranet system [“staff news”] that allows all our staff to communicate and send notices on what we do about curriculum and special events.” This technologically-based ability to communicate allowed multiple voices to be heard that may not have occurred in a typical staff meeting setting. Inquiry created the desired
framing that allowed people’s “voices” to be heard and shared. Charter A’s use of technology seemed to have accentuated inquiry by enhancing a larger number of “voices” to be heard. The following quote frames this phenomenon:

> Anyone needs any help or if you need any information you can find it in our intranet. I think that's great because we are so big with such a large school. We don't get to meet all the staff members or even grade levels. There are so many teachers; electronic e-mail really helps us communicate.

Teachers at Charter School A felt the principal played a minor role in promoting inquiry, as captured in the following quote: “I think he supports in several positive ways. They (administration) personally let me know and give me suggestions on how to improve my craft.” The following quote indicates communication with the principal is filtered through a lead teacher: “This is something Rigo (a 3rd grade lead teacher) would probably talk to him. In fact Rigo is our lead rep that takes most communication to the principal.” This form of distributed leadership is instilled by the Edison Design, which placed the role of the lead teacher as the primary communicator, while the principal acted as a support for leads. The role of the individual principal is secondary to the role of the team. The Edison design seems to purport distributed leadership as a major vehicle to sustain organizational learning (Rutherford, 2006).

The following table summarizes the conditions teachers believed were necessary for inquiry to flourish at their school.
Table 4.7

Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Why important</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Teachers are placed in a setting that supports the exchange of ideas and questioning.</td>
<td>• “I can see sharing especially between grades that is part of our culture”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “I think there's real communication in our school particularly because it's part of the tradition.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Teachers are given the platform to share opinions and capture diverse perspectives.</td>
<td>• “I would be lost without our communication.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “I worked at the schools where everything is the secret. But here we organize our communication.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Principal</td>
<td>Allows the lead teacher take an active role in inquiry process.</td>
<td>• “I think he supports in several positive ways.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “We just informed him.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors inhibiting inquiry. The most significant barrier to inquiry was the redundant and abundant sources of data teachers needed to analyze as expressed in the following quote: “Then there is too much data that it's not useful. Perhaps we should have more knowledge with testing less items.” The quote reveals the teacher’s frustration with spending too much time analyzing data, while spending less time asking the critical questions on how to improve student learning: “It is sometimes too much information to ponder upon. We spend so much time with data collection that we analyze a tremendous amount of information. We don't have enough time to ask the right questions.”
The amount of time individual teachers spent analyzing data may have retarded the ability for grade-level teams to fully engage in organizational learning, as indicated in the following statements: “A lot of times we look at the data and we're not asking the right questions, we’re too rushed. It seems sometimes we are going through the motions of collecting data especially when the data overlap and we repeatedly come up with the same conclusions. Sometimes we haven't even prepared sufficiently for inquiry to occur; at times it is just too much.”

The 4I framework from our review of literature illustrates how teachers spend too much time in the “intuiting” phase, which is the level where individuals recognize patterns and possibility. Time limitations may not allow teachers to be involved in the three other processes of interpreting, integrating, and institutionalizing. The interpreting phase which occurs at the group level is about the refinement and development of intuitive insights primarily through conversation with others. Conversation allowed the interpretation to be richer and more robust. The process of integrating, which occurs at the group and organizational levels is developing shared understanding and taking coordinated action by members of the workgroup. The last step of the process, institutionalization, occurs only at the organizational level when routines become embedded. The amount of time to analyze the large amount of data seemed to allow Charter A teachers to start the interpreting stage, although time limitations did not allow for integrating and institutionalizing their efforts.

The amount of time used for transactional decisions also has some effect in inhibiting inquiry. The interview data revealed an inordinate amount of time staff had dedicated to formulate a charter petition as expressed in the following quote: “There
are times when we had to discuss paperwork and other managerial issues like staying in our house budget. Although this won’t help in the classroom, it is necessary. We also have been talking about the charter petition too many times.” Charter School A had been in the process of negotiating its charter renewal during the timeframe of this study. Two-thirds of the staff had to approve, refine or recreate the charter petition before the district school board voted for approval. According to interviewees, numerous staff and grade level meetings, forums, and school site council meetings were used to re-write the charter. As a result, it seems inquiry into specific student or grade-level needs has been compromised during this period. This focus away from student achievement is supported by the dramatic decrease in the 2007 API scores (-27 points). Mr. Edwards did admit too much time was spent on adult issues meaning salary and evaluation procedures, rather than student learning and instructional practices. The following quote related the principal’s perception on how inquiry had been practiced during the charter approval year:

I think for teachers it [inquiry] needs to get better. I can see our charter school how easily for it to become just site based decision making model. Because in a site based decision making model, it is what we decide to make it best for the staff, however in a student based decision making model it is what we can do for the kids. I do believe most teachers function during this time at a site based decision-making thinking out there. I think it creates entitlement.

The following table identifies the conditions teachers indicated as obstacle to inquiry.
Table 4.8.

Checklist Matrix: Conditions Inhibiting Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Why important</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Time constraints due to large amount of data    | Time constraints may inhibit organizational learning. | • “We spend so much time with data collection and we analyze a tremendous amount of information.”  
 |                                                   |                                                   | • “A lot of times we look at the data and we're not asking the right questions. We’re too rushed.”  
 | Time constraints due to transactional activities | Transactional activities takes time away from student based- inquiry. | • “We also been talking about the charter petition too many times.”  |

Figure 4.6. Teacher A’s force field inquiry analysis illustrating the opposing and supporting forces teachers perceive surrounding the implementation of the District-Initiated Inquiry Process.
Charter School B

Description
Charter B’s mission was to provide and implement a Dual Immersion Program that fostered student accountability, language learning, and critical self-reflection to prepare students for the future. In addition, Charter School B has incorporated the MicroSociety Program to assist students to involve themselves in a community and establish awareness of global perspectives. The MicroSociety Program is the only student-based whole school reform effort of its kind. This research-based education program transforms classrooms by providing a real world context for academic learning. Students collaborate with parents, business volunteers, and teachers to create functioning small communities. Traditional academic subjects are studied in the morning and then applied to “on the job” program activities. Students spend 45 minutes or one class period each day in their jobs where they learn to run businesses, apply technology, develop government and social agencies, and create cultural/arts organizations. Gradually, students become immersed in the realities of a free-market economy, replete with taxes, property concerns, income issues, and politics. MicroSociety enables teachers to answer two persistent questions students ask: “Why do I need to know this?” and “How do I fit in?”

Charter School B’s oversight was conducted by the Chula Vista Learning Community Charter Board (CVLC Charter Board). The board is elected by the community to provide leadership and guidance to the school. The board works in
collaboration with the CVESD Board of Education, school staff, parents, and community to fulfill its major roles, which include but are not limited to the following:

- Establish a long-term vision of the CVLC Charter Board
- Provide community leadership and advocacy at the local, state, and national levels on behalf of CVLCC’s long-term vision
- Ensure accountability to the local community for the education and advancement of CVLCC student body in accordance with the measurable benchmarks and standards established by the school staff and cognizant regulatory bodies
- Establish and maintain a basic organizational structure of the CVLC Charter Board and appointed committees
- Oversight and approval of all CVLCC activities
- Facilitate open dialogue and involvement on the part of parents, teachers, students and local community
- Monitor fiscal health of CVLCC and adherence to recognized accounting practices
- Establish complaint procedures that ensure due process and facilitate the satisfactory resolution of issues
- Work with the CVLCC Director/Principal to establish employment policies, practices and procedures

**Student achievement.** Charter School B had been in its third year of program improvement. Due to its status, the district threatened to not renew its charter due to a lack of student achievement. In the last two years the school increased 104 API points and resulted in moving out of program improvement (see Figure 4.7).
Figure 4.7. Charter School B’s Academic Performance Index

**Demographics.** Charter School B reflects the diversity represented in the Southern California District. The student population is comprised of 95.5% Hispanic, 1.4% White, 1.7% African-American, and 1.3% from other ethnic backgrounds.

Approximately 55% of the student population is designated as English Language Learners (ELL), and 45% are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

**Document analysis**

Charter School B principal’s evaluation and results from the Harris Survey were the major documents used to understand how inquiry is practiced at the school level. The principal evaluation and Harris Survey are interrelated since the survey is used as an accountability tool for the Principal’s summative evaluation. The Harris Interactive School Poll program has been administered at Charter School B since 1999. One significant purpose of the Harris Interactive School Poll program is to measure the
The principal’s use of the inquiry process at the school. Each survey asks students, teachers/staff members, or parents about their experience with the school as well as key overall measures of satisfaction. There are three principal standards that are related to the use of inquiry that are important to this study and are included in the Harris surveys (see Table 4.1). These standards are incorporated in Charter B’s principal summative evaluation, which uses the Harris survey results as a measuring stick on how inquiry is implemented.

Table 4.9.
Harris Interactive Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Standard</th>
<th>Questions Asked</th>
<th>2006 Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Standard 2D**, Develop a culture of inquiry | • “Are you challenged to continually improve?”  
  • “Teacher/Staff - involvement in decision-making?” | 100% of teachers felt they were challenged to improve (a 5% increase compared to 2004)  
  90.2% of teachers believe they were involved in decision-making (no change compared to 2004) |
| **Standard 4B**, Shared Decision Making | • “Does principal ask for your suggestions?”  
  • “Do teachers/staff demonstrate collaboration/team work?” | 100% of teachers stated the principal asks for their suggestion (an increase of 7% compared to 2004)  
  97.8% of teachers stated they demonstrated collaboration (an increase of 7% compared to 2004) |

The principal’s evaluation tool measures the leader’s ability to use inquiry. Although she received the highest measure (innovating) on developing a culture of inquiry at her school, she felt how inquiry is measured was not accurate. She felt the tool evolved into an instrument that depended too much on data and not enough on
establishing a collaborative environment for inquiry. The subsequent statement reflects her concern on this process:

I have a philosophical debate with the rubric of the inquiry on the evaluation. When you place yourself in a binder [data source] the process of thinking lessens. You lose for the purpose of inquiry, because it becomes more of a mechanical process rather than something organic. I typically go through the motions during my evaluation. We're getting binders with all the data, and we are supposed to look at them and reflect, which is totally different from asking a question.

*Principal Interview*

I interviewed Mrs. Chavira, Charter School B’s principal, two times for approximately two hours. Mrs. Chavira founded Charter School B, which opened its doors in 1999. She was asked a semi-structured set of questions to help determine how she has been implementing the inquiry process and if her leadership behaviors have changed as a result of using this process (Appendix B). Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. A variety of themes were captured from this interview.

*Defining the inquiry process.* Mrs. Chavira defined inquiry as a decision-making process used for meeting student needs as evident in the following quote: “I was always involved in the inquiry based decision-making process. It was looking at outcomes from the needs of students. The main reason why I came to this district was the belief that each individual child mattered, and I was really impressed with formation of the student-based decision making.” Mrs. Chavira broadened this definition to include the needs of the community and teachers by allowing the questioning mechanism to assist her to enter into a dialogue as depicted in the following quotes:
This process was designed to inquire how well or how effectively were you working with the community… When I question, it increases the discussion and dialogue. When a teacher talks about this is the way I teach, I would ask the teacher how can she keep deepening the teaching and allow her to reflect.

*Implementation or use of inquiry.* Mrs. Chavira has used the inquiry process during her session with her leadership team, which consisted of staff and community members in a forum she called a roundtable:

Every Friday we have a roundtable, it is a place were you can discuss or talk about the good things or about issues that you want certain people to take action on. We bring the discussion to leadership team and I like this system since it makes it a lot easier for us to communicate. We use the inquiry model to focus on students needs during this time.

Inquiry is also implemented at the classroom level. Each teacher was trained to incorporate the MicroSociety curriculum 60 minutes each day. MicroSociety incorporated a layer of inquiry that allowed students to ask questions relevant to the creation of their society, as depicted on the following quote: “The MicroSociety approach gives students the opportunity to apply the skills they learned throughout the day and help them create their own society. The questions allow students to inquire on how to start a business venture.”

*Factors promoting inquiry.* Mrs. Chavira strongly expressed her feeling on how the former superintendent influenced her in using inquiry as a decision-making construct, as noted on the following quote: “I remember with the previous superintendent. She would ask you what you think about your involvement with the community and how can you better improve and next time I would communicate my journey on how I made these improvements.”
During the superintendent’s tenure in the district, the Ball Foundation partnered with several schools, including Charter School B, to implement a Focus on Results Model, which provided training for instructional leadership teams, linked schools into clusters to learn from each other, fostered school walk-throughs by peers and central office staff, and assisted schools in collecting and analyzing student achievement data. As the cycle of training with Focus on Results came to an end, the Ball Foundation launched what it called Community of Practice. A community of practice is a group of practitioners dedicated to learning with and from one another in pursuit of promising instructional, organizational and leadership practices that support increased student achievement. Communities of practice can exist among peers within a school, across a district and across partnerships. Mrs. Chavira felt this model assisted in making inquiry operational at her site. The following two quotes elaborate on the effects of Focus on Results in instilling the seeds of inquiry.

The instructional leadership team was developed following the Focus on Result Model. We keep in mind the focus on students needs. Sometimes you know you have to let the process take its place. It has helped teachers to create dialogue within their classroom and even inquiry process within the classroom.

I think these avenues have been known and have been an open dialogue between teachers at this Focus on Results cohort. We have been able to articulate as colleagues at a different level in terms of what they perceive things to be like.

The review of literature describes the core process of community of practice is to enter into shared inquiry. Communities of practice begin with the questions, "What's working and why?" rather than "What's wrong and who is to blame?" Best practices are explored, greater knowledge is generated, rigor, consistency and innovation are by-products of this practice, as evident in the following quote, “I meet with them at the
beginning and at the end of the year. We sat down with each grade-level lead and discussed articles about collaboration and inquiry. Throughout the year we read about best practices, discussed it, and asked questions about it.” This inquiry construct supported the district initiated inquiry practice since it focuses on instructional practices, which directly affects student needs, while involving the important stakeholders.

Table 4.10.
Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Why Important</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MicroSociety</td>
<td>MicroSociety creates a structure that encourages inquiry at the classroom level.</td>
<td>• “MicroSociety allows students to inquire, develop and implement their society.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal training</td>
<td>Principal was part of a Ball Foundation sponsored cohort that used inquiry to enhance student achievement.</td>
<td>• “The district years ago had a person in a district staff to help everyone with inquiry training”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal training</td>
<td>Modeling the inquiry process provides ongoing training and depicts the importance of using this construct.</td>
<td>• “I remember the previous superintendent, she would ask [inquire] what you think about your involvement with the community..”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors inhibiting inquiry. Mrs. Chavira strongly felt the change of district leadership caused a shift in how inquiry was implemented at the district level. “Unfortunately, the inquiry process no longer happens the way it was meant to be. This is because of the transitioning of leadership at this district. Now, it's become very rules-
based. It is basically based on results and no longer an inquiry. No longer do we
engage in questioning everything, it is based on data alone.” Mrs. Chavira believed the
present superintendent was preoccupied in avoiding the No Child Left Behind
sanctions, which she feels has undermined the district initiated inquiry process. The
following two quotes describe her intense feelings on how inquiry has seemingly been
wiped due to NCLB demands.

The pressure of No Child Left Behind increases every year. We need to further
our belief system sometimes, there is such a push to do things right now that the
inquiry process gets pushed to the side. Inquiry is used for the sole purpose of
not becoming program improvement. We are now questioned on how to help
and manage students pass the test.

Systematically, you lose for the purpose of the inquiry process because it
becomes more of mechanical, rather than something organic. I go with the
motions would have to look at the binder and analyze whatever is in its place.
We're getting binders with all the data and we suppose to look at them and
reflect, which is totally different from asking a question.

Mrs. Chavira’s assertion on the effects of NCLB pressure on district is
supported by the review of literature. A recent national study of the impact of NCLB
reveals that indeed districts are allocating resources to increase the use of student
achievement data to inform instruction in schools identified as needing improvement
(Center on Education Policy, 2004). Studies of “successful” school districts show these
districts have invested heavily in data-driven decision-making (Cawelti & Protheroe,
2001; Doolittle, Herlily, & Snipes, 2002; Tognieri & Anderson, 2002). The
Southern California district has several program improvement schools; Charter School
B in 2006 was in year three of program improvement status. Mrs. Chavira claimed the
present superintendent met with the staff two years ago threatening to end the charter
due to not meeting NCLB standards. Fortunately, in 2007, the school exited from program improvement status.

*Table 4.11.*

**Checklist Matrix: Conditions Inhibiting Inquiry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Why important</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Child Left Behind Sanctions</strong></td>
<td>Charter School B is a program improvement school, and has been threatened to lose charter status.</td>
<td>• “We are now questioned on how to help and manage students pass the test.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• “Inquiry is used for the sole purpose of not becoming program improvement.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change of District Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Superintendent instituted inquiry as a decision making process. Her departure may jeopardize inquiry’s sustainability</td>
<td>• “Unfortunately, the inquiry process no longer happens the way it was meant to be”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.8. Principal’s B force field inquiry analysis illustrating the opposing and supporting forces Mrs. Chavira perceived as surrounding the implementation of the District-Initiated Inquiry Process.

*Principal leadership behavioral change.* Mrs. Chavira felt inquiry has enhanced her ability to communicate with staff, especially when providing feedback as stated in the following quote: “I've been able to question when I feel there is a need to question. I would ask the teacher how can she can deepen the teaching and allow her to reflect.” Her ability to address grade level teams also improved. This skill has assisted her in making programmatic improvements, particularly regarding how English Language Learners (ELL) were being taught in the upper grades. The following quote describes
her efforts, “I’ve been working with the sixth grade level team. Inquiry has helped me to improve my role as an administrator. I found out that I needed to have more conversations with them concerning how Spanish programs are taking out the opportunities for students to learn English. I meet with them [6th grade level team] during the beginning and at the end of our professional development day. We sat down and asked questions on an article concerning ELL students and discussed what was best for students.”

Mrs. Chavira’s use of inquiry to engage staff for the purpose of continual organizational improvement is supported by the review of literature. Copland (2001) states principals who ask questions, explore data, and engage faculty in inquiry successfully transform their schools. Leithwood (2003) states principals using inquiry to develop people forms the “basics” of successful leadership. Mrs. Chavira was able to develop people by influencing their beliefs on how to best improve English acquisition in order to improve student achievement.
Teachers’ Perspective of Inquiry Process

An instructional leadership team is defined as a grade-level team for the purpose of this study. The leadership team members are typically resource teachers selected as content area experts, and grade-level teachers. I interviewed a primary (grade 2) and an upper-grade (grade 5) team. Mrs. Chavira, Charter School B’s principal, selected each team for a two-hour interview. Each team was asked a semi-structured set of questions to help determine how grade-level teams were implementing the district initiated inquiry process. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. A variety of themes were captured from this interview.

Factors promoting inquiry. Both focus groups did not use language that supported familiarity with the district initiated inquiry process, instead MicroSociety, the Charter’s mission, and the Ball Foundation were referenced to describe the influences in using questions as a tool to making student-based decisions. The school seemed to have incorporated a four-tier inquiry process; inquiry between teacher and students, between teachers, between principal and teacher, and between teachers and parents.

Teachers strongly referred to the MicroSociety design as a major influence when describing inquiry between teachers and students as indicated in the following quote:

It [MicroSociety] totally applies to this inquiry-based program because students collaborate with the teachers at the end of the day. Each teacher facilitates and assists collaboration throughout the day in order for students to become effective as a society. The final hour of the day is dedicated for students to construct and thrive in a self made society.

One teacher stated: “The students collaborate among themselves to make this program successful. We [teachers] are modeling to the students so that when that program
[MicroSociety] starts as we take the facilitator role and we don't want to take control of the program. We prepare our students by involving them in inquiry.” Teachers provide a great deal of frontloading necessary skills and background information before students take charge of their own society. These sessions are delivered as university workshops, as indicated in the following quote, “Throughout the year we give the students university courses, a workshop based on the needs of establishing a particular type of society. This quarter we established my society [class] similar to a United Nations structure form of government.” After a government is established, students selected a business to run. Teachers invited a business owner, or took students to a nearby business. It is in this process of running an enterprise where teachers and students use inquiry to problem solve, as evident in the following quote,

They may run a coffee shop, which we first brainstorm or create some activities. Teachers become facilitators by using inquiry to help students develop their own skills, and interact with other students. They [students] become leaders in the classroom, and make decisions that will benefit their own business.

Inquiry among teachers revolved around the activity of looking at student work to ensure it measures to state standards. Each grade level team met weekly to collaborate on curriculum and student work, while meeting across grade levels each Friday as cited in the following quote: “We collaborate by grade level and meet once a week. We have planning and collaboration time probably for 2 ½ to 2 ¾ hours once a week. Then on Fridays, we’ll have our cross-articulation meeting and have our departments to collaborate.” Teachers strongly suggested inquiry be devoted to the purpose of enhancing the school’s curricular focus through a process of looking at student work as indicated in the following quote:
We look at student work to help with our collaboration. Analyzing the work helps us plan our next steps. At first this took some time, but it became automatic. We backwards map and breakdown the sample in order to make decisions relative to our future lesson plans, and doing these activities our students made phenomenal growth.

The teachers depicted the process of looking at student work and developing a school focus as a turning point in the academic success of the school. One teacher shared,

I think teachers have become more focused now. I have been here since the beginning [start of charter] and we didn't have a focus at all. I think we turned it around from a walk-through from the Ball Foundation. Their feedback was that we tried to be a school that has so many things to do for kids. Our students weren’t learning.

Teachers discovered the process of using an inquiry-based protocol (see figure 4.9) when reviewing student product during a professional development series conducted by the Ball Foundation. A teacher expressed the following:

Since we are part of the Ball Foundation, they create structures and systems that enhance inquiry. Each grade level attendees members go to the central office meeting, and they help us pick the focus, which is reading comprehension for this year. Our leads help create an agenda and facilitate the grade level to make important academic decisions in making lessons.
Figure 4.9. Looking at Student Work Protocol Used by Charter B’s Teachers

Inquiry between teachers and parents occurred frequently at Charter School B due to the commitment of the charter. A resource teacher was hired each year to act as the parent liaison. This teacher facilitated a body of parents called the United Nation of Parents. This group was composed of grade-level representatives. One teacher describes this entity as, “The United Nation of Parents is a place where parents establish a place to review their concerns collaboratively. These parents become a liaison between the school and the grade level. We meet once a month, and it becomes an open forum and parents have input on the decision-making process.” Each meeting was started by asking the question, How can we improve learning for our students? One teacher recounted a decision that enhanced the homework program:

We begin our talk on how can parents help us in making students learn. Since
we are a dual language school, parents brought the concern that they are monolingual and they don't know how to speak English or Spanish, and could not help their children. Parents decided to organize a homework lab that offered students support.

The parent-run homework lab became an instant success. The lab served 30-60 students and was open Monday through Thursday. One teacher reported, “So the parents now run a whole homework center I just find the facility and the materials for the parents. While some parents may help a student in Spanish homework, others do the same for the English homework.” Another teacher added, “The parents are empowered by making the decision about something that will benefit the students.”

Teachers strongly believed the norms and protocols learned by the principal when attending the Ball foundation workshops made a difference on how leadership models inquiry, as evident in the following quote,

She always uses everything that she learns especially from the Ball Foundation. One of the ways that I learned from her is the way she models inquiry during grade level meetings. I also feel comfortable questioning her. In fact, she is very open and allows us to practice inquiry on her.

Teachers believe this form of modeling created the expectation for the teachers and parents and provided the environment necessary to promote inquiry as stated in the following quote,

The principal provides a venue and the expectation in order to express what we need and what is expected of us. In one of our staff meetings we had to sit in different tables like the World Café. She had an over-arching question and we had to answer it as we went around different tables. The question was surrounding how to elevate student achievement at our school.

The importance of teacher beliefs in inquiry was supported in the review of literature, which found school leaders who incorporated inquiry, created trust, and fostered passion about the vision of the organization have higher student achievement (Marzano,
Waters and McNulty, 2005; Leithwood, 2003; Mulford, Silins, & Zarins, 2002).

Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted these conditions allowed principals to be successful when implementing the inquiry model in an organization.

The following table summarizes the conditions teachers believed were necessary for inquiry to flourish at their school.

*Table 4.12.*

Checklist Matrix: Conditions Supporting Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Why important</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MicroSociety</td>
<td>MicroSociety incorporates inquiry to assist students in creating and improving business.</td>
<td>“We prepare our students by involving them in inquiry”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball Foundation</td>
<td>The Ball Foundation gave teachers protocol to enhance inquiry practice when looking at student work.</td>
<td>“Teachers discovered the process of using an inquiry based protocol when reviewing student product”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>The charter promotes parents to become important decision makers. Their monthly meetings begin by asking the question: How can we help student learning?</td>
<td>“The United Nation of Parents is a place where parents establish a place to review their concerns collaboratively” “We begin our talk on how can parents help us in making students learn”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the Principal</td>
<td>Promotes and models inquiry during grade level meetings.</td>
<td>“She models inquiry during grade level meetings.” “She is very open and allows us to practice inquiry on her.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors inhibiting inquiry. In general teachers did not identify any specific barriers to the inquiry process in either focus group. One teacher expressed that one barrier to the process was teachers’ expectations for students. This teacher stated, “I think teachers at every level in this school need to believe that students can do it. Not everyone has high expectations. I really believe that if you don't see the end where they need to be then they will never get them there. Expectation is critical.” The belief that teachers require high expectations to promote inquiry is supported by the literature review, which describes Reeves’ (2006) study that supports the “Pygmalion Effect.” Educators who believed all students can learn with appropriate instruction had a positive correlation to student achievement. This concern for lack of high expectations was not echoed by her colleagues in the same focus group and was not mentioned in the other group.

Figure 4.10. Teacher B’s force field inquiry analysis illustrates the opposing and supporting forces teachers perceived surrounding the implementation of the District-Initiated Inquiry Process.
Cross Case Analysis

Although each school is a district partnership and charter school, there were differences and similarities in how each school implemented the district initiated inquiry process. Both principals believed the purpose of using inquiry was to solve complex student problems in order to meet their academic needs. Each principal implemented inquiry when meeting with staff; however Principal B’s inquiry use expanded to parents and students as a result of the charter’s specific structures (i.e., MicroSociety). In contrast, Principal A’s primary use of inquiry was linked to teachers and their use of Edison’s monthly benchmark system when communicating with grade-level meetings. Both principals valued formal and informal inquiry training, while strongly preferring the many mentoring experiences from their superiors on how to use inquiry. Each principal perceived unique pressures when applying inquiry. Charter B’s program improvement status may have experienced additional accountability mandates, which seem to have added pressure on Principal B. She also felt that when communicating with the district office there was little interest or effort by central administrators to use the inquiry process. Discussions were centered on test results. Nevertheless, the principal continued to practice inquiry at her school site.

In contrast, Charter A, through its work with the Edison Inc. Charter school model was already testing monthly. This approach seemed more in alignment with the current NCLB pressures and demands facing the district. The teachers indicated that the schools large size impeded the flow of communication. In addition, the monthly testing
regime, while recognized as valuable, seemed to sometimes get in the way of deep inquiry because the focus was on getting ready for the next test.

Both principals indicated they had a positive change in their leadership behavior as a result of using inquiry as a decision-making practice. They felt this practice enhanced their ability to be reflective and provide feedback to their staff members in a way that promoted growth in teacher and student learning. The following data table outlines the findings comparing each school across staff members with similar job roles.

Table 4.13.
Case-Ordered Meta-Matrix: Principal’s Perspective on Inquiry Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Definition of Inquiry</th>
<th>Implementation of Inquiry</th>
<th>Factors Promoting Inquiry</th>
<th>Factors Inhibiting Inquiry</th>
<th>Leadership Behavioral Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charter A</td>
<td>Inquiry is used to solve complex problems to meet student needs.</td>
<td>Principal uses inquiry to elevate awareness of instructional practices when communicating with teachers.</td>
<td>Charter A’s leadership and organizational structure, formal and informal trainings enhanced the use of inquiry.</td>
<td>Time constraints, large group settings, and communication break downs impeded inquiry.</td>
<td>Principal adapted his leadership style to best adhere to inquiry’s collaborative efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter B</td>
<td>Inquiry is used to solve complex problems to meet student needs.</td>
<td>Principal uses inquiry to elevate awareness on school issues when meeting with teachers and parents.</td>
<td>MicroSociety, formal and informal trainings enhanced the use of inquiry, especially by students.</td>
<td>NCLB sanctions and the change of district’s leadership.</td>
<td>Principal improved her ability to communicate with staff, especially when providing feedback.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teachers in both charter schools perceived inquiry practices in similar and unique ways. No group had knowledge of the district’s initial formalized inquiry process. I had to spend several minutes explaining the initiative, which was displayed prominently on the wall at each school’s office. When reading this document, both groups responded they were very familiar with one section of the process, which states: “Does the decision improve student learning?” It seems their training either provided by Edison School Inc. or The Ball Foundation provided procedures or protocols in providing key questions to help meet student needs. Based on the interview data implicitly, teachers also seemed to employ a second inquiry question, “Is there adverse impact on others?” There was little evidence that the last two formal inquiry questions (“Is the decision illegal, unethical, or immoral?” and “How are individual needs balanced with group needs?”) in the district’s initial four-question decision frame were explicitly used in the inquiry process at either school. The remaining two questions may be more value-laden and are ones teachers felt less comfortable discussing, or they may be perceived as understood and not needing discussion. For example, making instructional-based decisions is usually made for the good of all students and does not border unethical or illegal domains. The final question also may be perceived to be embedded in the activity of analyzing data. Teachers use data to determine whether instruction should be done in a whole group, small group, or individual setting. The interview revealed this decision is usually made during grade level meetings as teachers plan after their data analysis session.

Charter A teacher’s application of the inquiry process seems limited to their monthly data analysis activity, which takes place several times during the month.
However, Charter B teachers apply student-centered inquiry when teaching MicroSociety, which is part of the daily schedule, and conduct inquiry when meeting with parents during a meeting called, “United Nation of Parents.” Charter A teachers felt time recently spent with data analysis and transactional activities needed for charter renewal caused time constraints, thereby minimizing inquiry into student needs and instruction. In contrast, one Charter B teacher felt teacher’s low student expectations may impede inquiry.

Table 4.14.

Case-Ordered Meta-Matrix: Teacher’s Perspective on Inquiry Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Definition of Inquiry</th>
<th>Inquiry Implementation</th>
<th>Factors Promoting Inquiry</th>
<th>Factors Inhibiting Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charter A’s Focus Group</td>
<td>Inquiry is a tool used to improve student learning.</td>
<td>Teachers practice inquiry during grade-level meetings, especially when analyzing monthly benchmark data.</td>
<td>The Edison Design promotes a data-rich culture, distributive leadership and provides ongoing communication.</td>
<td>The inordinate time spent on data analysis and charter specific transactional duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter B’s Focus Group</td>
<td>Inquiry is a tool used to improve student learning.</td>
<td>Teacher’s use inquiry when examining authentic student work, during parent meetings, and during each afternoon when students are engaged with the MicroSociety curriculum.</td>
<td>The relationship with the Ball Foundation, Charter B’s governance structure, MicroSociety’s curriculum, and principal’s support.</td>
<td>Teacher’s low student expectations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5
Discussion

Introduction

The scope of this research explored how two elementary charter schools, their principals and teacher teams were using an inquiry process to promote desired organizational change and learning. I investigated how teachers and principals learn in systematic ways through the application of the district-initiated inquiry process. Since charter status even within districts grants greater autonomy, it was important to explore how their decision-making and work were influenced by a district-promoted practice.

Methodology review

In the study, I used the process of meaning condensation described by Kvale (1996) to interpret the transcribed interviews. I conducted two interviews of each principal, approximately two hours for each interview, and used a semi-structured interview protocol. I conducted one-hour interviews with four different focus groups, which consisted of primary and upper-grade teachers. I used the Dragon NaturallySpeaking software (Speakeasy Solutions) to transcribe the interviews and NVivo software (QSR International) to assist with coding and theme identification. The uses of this software allowed me to more objectively code and create themes.

Overview

As presented previously, the district initiated student-based inquiry process began with the local Board of Education adopting a prescribed series of focused questions that were to encourage discovery and reflection among teachers, parents, students and administrators in their decision-making process (see Figure 5.1).
Figure 5.1. District’s Inquiry Process describes the theoretical construct each principal was to follow when making a school level decision alone or shared with stakeholders.

This initial board policy was then supported through a variety of actions: principal evaluation, development of an inquiry rubric, principal survey of stakeholder satisfaction (Harris Survey), principal leadership training through Focus on Results, ILT training through partnership with the Ball Foundation. Figure 5.2 illustrates how several factors assisted in embedding inquiry as a decision-making process in each case study charter school. Evidence from documents and interviews indicated the district operationalized this formal process through its partnership with The Ball Foundation and Focus on Results. In addition, in each case study, the inquiry model seemed to have taken on new and unique dimensions through the charter programs adopted by the
schools (i.e., MicroSociety and Edison Schools Inc.). This myriad of district support created structures and processes at each charter school to successfully implement an inquiry process unique to its needs to enhance student achievement, as depicted in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2  Factors that influenced how inquiry was used in Charter Schools A and B. These forces contributed in successfully embedding inquiry in each school’s culture.
The significance of this study is that there are few, if any, studies of an inquiry model approved by a school board and implemented in a school district. It was important to understand how this process had been accepted, implemented, modified and sustained since its adoption in 1998. Propositions developed from the research questions and review of the literature anchored the research findings. The propositions and findings are discussed below in relationship to four key areas: inquiry, organizational learning, district reform, and leadership.

**Inquiry**

The inquiry process is about educators, parents, children, and other community members asking questions, sharing perspectives, and working collaboratively toward a common vision. The findings from our study helped construct a working model and added to the number of inquiry models introduced in our review of literature. The following proposition laid the foundation to investigate whether the district inquiry process was a theory in use in the case study charter schools:

Proposition 1C: The inquiry process will include the critical questions outlined in the district policy to guide student-centered, decision making.

Principal or teachers did not use all the critical questions outlined in the district policy to guide student-centered, decision-making. The question used explicitly by teachers at both schools (and parents in Charter School B) centered on meeting student needs and enhancing student learning. Although the question concerning equity (i.e., Are individual needs balanced with group needs?) was not used explicitly, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) brought equity to the forefront to be addressed by requiring schools to disaggregate student achievement data and ensure that each subgroup
achieves proficiency targets. Figure 5.3 illustrates how the district-initiated construct was practiced in Charter Schools A and B.

---

Figure 5.3. Principal’s inquiry process describes the prevailing perception on how the District-Initiated Inquiry Process is implemented at a school site.

Although the district-initiated model as originally designed did not seem to be an explicit theory in use in each charter school, a review of all the documents and principal interviews indicated it clearly jumpstarted the development of an inquiry process in each school. Evidence indicated that shortly after the model was adopted by the board of education the process became operationalized through leadership trainings. The professional development provided by the Ball Foundation established learning cohorts, in which both charter schools as well as other district schools participated. The review of literature revealed the Foundation contracted with Focus on Results to provide coaching and training for instructional leadership teams in partnership schools and the Instructional Services and Support Department, which enabled schools to focus
on improving student learning. Each cohort of schools received three years of intensive training from Focus on Results. Partnership schools, in addition, have participated in the Foundation's Partnership Learning Network. They have attended national meetings and made learning visits to other partnership sites. Through the professional development provided by the district, the inquiry focus seemed to have centered primarily on the first of the four inquiry questions. For Charter School A, the disaggregated look at student data on a monthly basis could be seen as a way to address student achievement and equity issues, while Charter School B used samples of student work to promote student achievement. Figure 5.4 describes the working inquiry model that is utilized in both charter schools.

Figure 5.4 Student achievement inquiry model used in Charter Schools A and B for the purpose of supporting student learning and increasing achievement scores.
This student achievement inquiry model closely resembles the Accelerated Schools and BASRC inquiry models discussed in the review of literature. Each model involves a continuous, cyclical structure where a problem is introduced, trends and patterns are investigated, possible solutions are discussed, a plan is created, and further data is gathered and the inquiry process begins again. While the Accelerated Schools and BASRC models investigated governance, budgetary and curricular problems, the student achievement inquiry model used by the case study charter school solely examined student work and achievement data.

Organizational learning

This study provided an opportunity to investigate the use of a district initiated inquiry process and how it created professional development supports for teachers to collaborate, and how it may enable schools to better meet the needs of students. Argyris and Schön (1996) defined organizational learning as individuals in an organization participating in an inquiry process resulting in a learning product. Argyris (1993) further asserts that organizations come alive through the thoughts and actions of individuals. However, Crossan, Lane, and White (1999) argue enduring organizations are made up of rules and routines that exist independently of any one individual. Crossan et al. (1999) further contends that organizational learning involves a tension between exploration of new learning and exploitation of what has already been learned. Findings from this study support Crossan et al’s. concepts: during cycles of inquiry teachers were regularly reviewing past learning, and then planning, based on data, what needed to be learned next by students and teachers. Responding to Proposition 2C, I explored the findings further in relation to the literature on organizational learning.
Proposition 2C: The inquiry process will promote organizational learning and continuous improvement.

There was some evidence suggesting organizational learning was occurring through each schools inquiry processes. The focus of Charter School A on frequent review of student assessment data and Charter School B’s focus on student work both provided important frameworks for inquiry. Furthermore, a review of documents and interview data indicate that the depth of the inquiry process was reinforced by the layering approach of the Ball Foundation partnership, which enabled inquiry to proliferate at multiple levels of the system (at the district level, in peer groups with principals, through walk-throughs, ILT training and networks of schools, and most importantly, in grade-level teams). The Foundation’s relationship with the district lasted for a period of six years (2000-2006), which involved two phases. The first phase focused on improving student learning through the services and professional development provided by Focus on Results, and the second phase involved in developing a local Community of Practice (CoP). The latter effort was instituted to create internal sustainability.

The partnership with the Ball Foundation involved both charter schools with the first cohort of CoP schools. The practice of CoP focused on intentional, affirmative conversation. Communities of practice began with the questions, “What’s working and why?” rather than “What’s wrong and who is to blame?” In other words, the core process of a CoP was conversation, and its design invited people to enter into shared inquiry (Ball Foundation, 2007). The learning began with valuing what was known and then working to take the next steps toward improvement. At the center of the practice of
a CoP was the assumption that the answers needed to a school’s most demanding questions already exist somewhere in the community or can be found together. This collaborative inquiry design suggests the schools were putting into place structures that would foster organizational learning (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Mulford et al. 2004, Crossan et al. 1999). The results of the Harris survey data suggest that organizational learning is occurring in these schools. Charter School A (94.8%) and B (100%) teachers believed they were challenged to continually improve at their site. Teachers also reported they used student data to change instructional practices individually and across the school. In addition, the strong achievement gains in both charter schools over a sustained period of time can be regarded as an outcome measure of organizational learning.

Organizational learning models

While new ideas and actions flow from the individual to the group and organizational levels, previous learning feeds back from the organization to the group and individual levels, thus affecting how people think and act, thereby linking cognition to action (Crossan et al.,1999; Argyris, 1999; Mulford et al., 2004). Through systems, structures, strategies, and procedures, the learning becomes institutionalized. Models on how organizational learning is institutionalized were reviewed in light of the findings attained from this study.

Model I and model II. Argyris et al. (1985) described Model I and Model II as two levels of organizational learning that help individuals in organizations reflect on their existing theories in use and learn alternate theories. Argyris and Schön (1996) stated that when individuals deal with issues that are embarrassing or threatening, their
reasoning and action conform to Model I behaviors. The consequences of leaders using Model I strategies often resulted in defensiveness, misunderstanding, and self-fulfilling prophesies. Argyris and Schön (1996) asserted that an enduring learning organization must relinquish its Model I design and implement Model II actions. A leader who exhibits Model II behaviors allows the exchange of valid information, promotes free and informed choice, and fosters internal commitment. The consequences of these leadership behaviors included minimally defensive interpersonal and group relationships, high freedom of choice, and increased risk-taking. The findings discovered in this study contribute to understanding how regular use of an inquiry process may be a significant way to promote Model II behaviors. The following provides a means to describe such behaviors in each case study charter school.

Proposition 2A: The inquiry process will enable the school community to focus on improving student learning.

There is clear evidence at both schools that principals and teachers used inquiry to help improve student learning. Since the inquiry model was adopted, each school had made significant student achievement growth as shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.7. These schools were heavily influenced by external entities, which provided protocols and/or procedures to assist in the examination of student data. These influences seem to reinforce the established district-initiated inquiry process at school, grade, and classroom levels.

After reviewing interview and document data, it became evident that the events that followed the adoption of the inquiry process (i.e., the partnership with the Ball Foundation) facilitated the operationalization of the student-based decision making
construct at each school. The level of inquiry implemented in Charter Schools A and B suggested they are functioning similar to Model II organizations. In other words, teachers seemed to not just address presenting problems, but were working to change their practices and in some cases, beliefs. Charter School A and B school principals also exhibited Model II behaviors, which allowed the exchange of valid information, promoted free and informed choice, and fostered internal commitment. The study highlighted how the principal and teachers in both charters actively exchanged information and made decisions that made a difference in instruction. Teachers highly regarded the time they collaborated on a weekly basis. During their collaboration time teachers shared ideas, analyzed data, and planned to improve their teaching craft for the single purpose of enhancing student learning. As a result, student achievement progressed appreciably in both charters.

**IRI inquiry model.** Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers (1998) reinforced the importance of inquiry as a factor for promoting organizational change. The Information, Relationships and Identity (IRI) model (see Figure 2.7), assumed that organizations are organic and, therefore, self-organize. It viewed the organization as a living organism where change occurred through the myriad of relationships that make meaning out of the work. This study confirms Wheatley and Kellner-Rogers assertion by showing that the three concepts in the IRI model are essential to the inquiry process. The data from each charter school illustrates how their inquiry processes promoted collective responsibility and trust.

Proposition 2B: The inquiry process will promote collective responsibility and higher trust.
The Harris survey data showed a significant majority of teachers felt they were involved in decision-making at their site (68.4% of Charter A teachers and 90.2% of Charter B teachers), suggested a high level of collaboration from the teacher perspective. As illustrated in Figures 4.3 and 4.8, the teachers at both schools were actively engaged in an inquiry process that forged relations and asked teachers to make meaning of student data and work to guide their practice. Similarly, teachers from both charter schools shared numerous examples which described their role in making important instructional and operational decisions. Findings from this study suggest that the significant time dedicated for teachers to collaborate was a major promoter in establishing collective responsibility and trust. Both charter schools scheduled over two hours per week for each grade level to meet, which fostered the important relationship component cited in the IRI (Information, Relationships and Identity) inquiry model (see Chapter 2). The importance of relationships is reinforced by Argyris (1993) who emphasized that organizations are highly dependent on the individuals who form the organization. Harris survey results indicate that the processes of relationship building and shared meaning making occurred in these schools, with 92.4% of Charter A teachers and 97.8% of Charter B teachers indicating staff demonstrates collaboration and teamwork.

The rich sources of student data used by teachers in these schools met the informational component embedded in the IRI model (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1998). With strong relational bonds created through time for regular collaboration and needed information, teachers in these two schools seemed to be able to create mutual
meaning and plan further action on the organizational structure and system to move the organization forward.

Although less explicitly addressed in this study, the data also suggests that identity was fostered by being a charter school and may have contributed to the depth of the inquiry process in these two schools. This study, however, helped to show that while relationships, information, and identity are essential to the inquiry process, also needed are internal and external structures (e.g., time dedicated for regular grade level meetings during the school day) and supports (e.g., professional development for the principal and instructional leadership teams, Edison or MicroSociety model).

**Professional Learning Communities**

Organizational learning is promoted in schools in which staff members communicate with each other in an open and supportive way and actively seek information to improve their work. In such schools, staff members are looking for opportunities to increase their knowledge, improve their skills and have access to sufficient resources and time to develop professionally. These organizational learning opportunities are substantiated in the review of literature. Senge (1990) uses the term *team learning* and emphasizes its importance because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations. DuFour and Eaker (1998) refer to the term *professional learning community* instead of learning organization. This study contributes to the literature by exploring how an inquiry process that focuses on student achievement may contribute to creating professional learning communities. Extant research (Folkman, 2003, Copeland, 2003) suggests that an inquiry process is the
preferred method to stimulate change in a professional learning community, but we
know little about how leadership teams use inquiry to facilitate change (DuFour &
Eaker, 1998). The following attempts to extend the knowledge on how grade teams in
each charter school used inquiry.

Proposition 1A: Planning teams such as grade-level teams or instructional
leadership teams use the inquiry process to solve complex problems and challenges
faced by the school community.

Principal and focus group interviews indicated an essential component of the
inquiry process was strong collaboration with grade-level teams. Grade-level teams
consisted of teachers, lead teacher and occasionally an administrator. These meetings
were used to solve problems centered on student achievement. These meetings were
embedded as part of the instructional day and used a questioning process that was
centered on student needs. The question on how the decision affects student learning
was strongly reinforced in the two case study schools. The interviews and document
analysis revealed external entities such as Focus on Results and Edison Inc., which were
used by the district to operationalize its inquiry frame and process, have trained
principals and teachers in specific protocols on how to look at student assessments or
student work and to question and change instructional practices. In addition, the
principal’s peer evaluation process created a critical system principals used to provide
external feedback to each other. These external groups seemed to focus most strongly
on Question 1 in the District’s decision frame, but did not explicitly support exploring
the other three questions (see Figure 5.1).
DuFour and Eaker (1998) have argued that a professional learning community places greater emphasis on relationships, shared ideals, a strong culture, and commitment. The two principals in this study supported professional learning communities by facilitating the participation of lead teachers and staff members in decision-making at the school site. This allowed all staff members to engage in collective learning, seek new knowledge, and apply solutions that addressed student needs. The district superintendent similarly modeled a professional learning community by asking district directors and assistant superintendents to redefine their roles as part of a team to assist and support principals using inquiry to enhance student learning, as opposed to engaging in more traditional roles of managing, monitoring and compliance review.

**District Reform**

This study contributes to the limited literature about the use of the inquiry process as a reform strategy within the context of a district initiated inquiry process. Previous studies of this district indicated that the change strategies implemented at the district level helped to raise student achievement (Togneri & Anderson, 2003). It is not clearly evident how the phenomenon, inquiry, is practiced and incites reform in a school setting. The following seeks to discover how each case study charter school focused on reforming instructional practices rather than attributing lack of achievement to outside factors outside.

Proposition 1B: The inquiry process is used to collaboratively engage staff members in finding solutions to advance learning via instruction rather than blaming external variables.
There is some evidence principals used inquiry to guide improvement in instructional practices. Interviews and document analysis indicated both principals used the walk-through to provide critical feedback, a tool learned through Focus on Results. Similar to other studies of high-performing schools and districts (Chrispeels, 2004; Elmore, 2005; Hord, 2004) findings from this study confirmed that teachers used inquiry as a process to question student achievement data. Teachers from both charter schools sought alternate methods of grouping, instructing, or changing curriculum. The focus group members from Charter School A cited many instances indicating the high use of monthly benchmark results as a medium to discuss student progress and generate plans for future teaching. Similarly, focus groups from Charter School B claimed using inquiry to backward map and plan for next steps. These focus groups claimed using the process of looking at student work and developing a school focus was a turning point in the academic success of the Charter School B.

Charter A’s teachers used the monthly benchmarks as a gauge to calibrate instruction and monitor student growth, while Charter School B’s teachers used student work to conduct the same process. Staff members at both charter schools were continually engaged in reflection, inquiry, problem-solving, learning and teaching together. This study supports the findings of Chrispeels & González (2006) and Massell and Goertz (2002) that key to achieving improvement and standards-based reform is increasing professional knowledge and skills; strengthening and alignment of instructional guidance; and the use of data to guide improvement in instruction (i.e., database inquiry).
The only evidence denoting blame on external variables came from the Charter B’s principal. She felt the superintendent was preoccupied in avoiding the No Child Left Behind sanctions, which resulted in undermining the district initiated inquiry process. During her interactions with the superintendent, she had to focus on discussing CST data rather than asking questions to provoke discussion as the previous superintendent had done. Interestingly, this concern did not arise when interviewing Charter B teacher focus groups. Perhaps, the timing of the interviews may have caused this. I started the principal interview before the 2007 CST scores became public, at that time, Charter School B had been in program improvement for three years. By the time of my interview with teacher focus groups, the CST results had been published indicating a significant increase in student achievement. Charter School B successfully met all NCLB goals, thereby moving the school out of program improvement. The feeling of relief and euphoria in not being required to restructure possibly influenced teachers in having a more optimistic outlook.

Leadership

The importance of leadership for promoting organizational and student learning is emphasized throughout the literature on school reform. The research also suggests improving leadership is the key to large-scale school reform. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) stated leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to student learning. School leaders incorporate inquiry when they inspire vision, create trust, and foster passion about the vision of the organization (Marzano, Waters and McNulty, 2005; Leithwood, 1998; Mulford, Silins & Zarins, 2002a). Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted these
conditions allow principals to be successful when implementing the inquiry model in an organization. Copland (2001) stated principals who ask questions explore data and engage faculty and the broader community in inquiry successfully transform their schools. This study makes a contribution to the leadership literature by documenting the kinds of district support and pressure needed as a way to change principal behavior (Fullan, 1999). This case study district provided considerable support in the form of professional development for the principal and instructional leadership teams as well as peer assistance over time to enable principals to understand and implement the district initiated inquiry process. Principals indicated that they learned most from the modeling and sharing by their peers. The district provided pressure through incorporating implementation of the inquiry process into the district’s evaluation instrument. In addition, the district periodically assessed stakeholder (parents, students, teachers, support staff) perceptions of principal performance on a variety of variables, including components of inquiry.

Proposition 3A: The inquiry process will enable principals to (a) increase collaboration between principal and staff, and (b) demonstrate leadership in facilitating professional learning communities

Both principals felt the practice of inquiry enhanced their ability to collaborate and provide feedback to staff, and thus assisted them in evoking distributed leadership. The review of literature reveals principals who use inquiry as a decision-making tool create a culture and environment for reflective practice (McLaughlin and Talbert, 2002). DuFour and Eaker (1998) have supported this notion by advocating, “Principals of learning communities make conscience efforts to promote widespread participation in
the decision-making processes at their schools. They understand they cannot do it alone”.

There is ample evidence principal practices changed as a result of the professional development activities to support inquiry. Crossan et al. (1999) suggested learning becomes institutionalized through systems, structures, strategies, and procedures. Systems and structures exist in the school setting to support organizational learning; however, Leithwood and Louis (1998) caution that the school setting is a complex social system. This complexity was observed when Charter School B was struggling to move out of Program Improvement and Charter School A needed to focus most of its attention on renewing its charter. These events did not derail the shared leadership or inquiry practices, but they seemed to have made them more difficult to execute. The ability of these principals and teachers to sustain inquiry in the face of external challenges appeared to be due in part to the ways in which inquiry has been institutionalized through the Ball Foundation’s Community of Practice and the principal evaluation instrument, in particular, the peer evaluation component. Principal and organizational learning was promoted when principals from these schools communicated with each other in an open and supportive way and actively sought information to improve their practices. These community of practices assisted principals to look for opportunities to increase their knowledge, improve their skills and have access to sufficient resources and time to develop personal mastery (Senge, 1990). The charter school principals developed personal mastery through reflection and inquiry on an action, and this process created an internal feedback loop. The principal
evaluation tool assisted measuring the degree of personal mastery of the inquiry process by the principals in each charter school.

**Proposition Summary**

The following table outlines the presence of support, which stemmed from interviews, Harris surveys, and document analysis data for each proposition.

**Table 5.1.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1A:</strong> Planning teams such as grade-level teams or instructional leadership teams will use the inquiry process to solve complex problems and challenges faced by the school community.</td>
<td>Principal and Focus Group Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Charter Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Evaluation Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video: <em>Working Differently</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1B:</strong> The inquiry process is used to collaboratively engage staff members in finding solutions to advance learning via instruction rather than blaming external variables.</td>
<td>Principal and Focus Group Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video: <em>Working Differently</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1C:</strong> The inquiry process will include the critical questions outlined in the district policy to guide student centered decision making.</td>
<td>Principal and Focus Group Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Evaluation Tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2A:</strong> The inquiry process will enable the school community to focus on improving student learning.</td>
<td>Principal and Focus Group Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CA Department of Education Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2B:</strong> The inquiry process will promote collective responsibility and higher trust.</td>
<td>Principal and Focus Group Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harris Survey Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2C:</strong> The inquiry process will promote organizational learning and continuous improvement.</td>
<td>Principal and Focus Group Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CA Department of Education Website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harris Data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1. (continued)

Presence of Support for Propositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositions</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3A: The inquiry process will enable principals to (a) increase collaboration</td>
<td>Principal and Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) demonstrate leadership in facilitating professional learning communities</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Evaluation Tool</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video: Working Differently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusions

Several important conclusions can be drawn from this study that can help to inform practice. First, each charter school’s unique charter status shaped the design, processes and implementation of inquiry at each school. However, there seemed to be more similarities than differences in how inquiry was practiced at each school. The inquiry process at both schools was clearly focused on how to meet the needs of students and how to change instruction in ways that promoted increased student achievement.

Second, the four-question decision frame adopted by the board jumpstarted inquiry in the district. It became a powerful instrument for principals when it was embedded in the evaluation process. The evaluation instrument clearly defined how an emerging, developing and innovating school leader would use inquiry. This suggests that districts interested in making an inquiry process meaningful should create a certain measure of accountability on how it is implemented and practiced by incorporating the implementation of an inquiry process into a principal’s evaluation.

Third, although the four questions were not found to be operating at the school level as articulated in the initial board policy, the first question regarding what will
improve student learning seemed to be fully embedded in the culture of both schools. This study suggests that the board adoption of a student based inquiry process was an important first step in changing district culture.

A fourth conclusion to be drawn from this study, is that although the four questions were not found to be fully operating at the school level as articulated in the initial board policy, the first question regarding what will improve student learning seemed to be fully embedded in the culture of both schools and served as a focus for a continuous learning process. As can be seen, the evolved inquiry processes are similar to ones suggested by Accelerated School or Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC). Most importantly, at both schools, teachers and the principal were deeply involved in their version of an inquiry process. An important implication for practice from this conclusion is that the district set the direction, but greatly benefited from third party intermediary organizations to help it operationalize the direction. Furthermore, the length and depth of the partnership seemed sufficient to bring about cultural changes and should increase the sustainability of the inquiry process as a way of conducting school life. The ten-year effort of this district (which is still continuing today) suggests that policy makers and foundations are often too quick to withdraw support. This study shows that significant and long-term learning gains are possible for students who face “at risk” conditions such as poverty and language diversity, but the time frame is not three to five years but five to ten years, and that support and retooling must be ongoing as principals, teachers and students come and go in the ebb and flow of school life.

A related conclusion is that it is unlikely these schools would have made the achievement gains without the dedicated time, professional training, and technical tools
to implement the inquiry process. The district’s initial training laid a foundation for moving principals to shift from school improvement to leadership improvement. The degree in which the inquiry process was embedded in the evaluation, peer meetings, and school walk-throughs became a powerful learning experience for school leaders. Based on the principals’ description of their own practice, they reflected on how using inquiry changed their leadership behavior. Through repeated workshops and sustained engagement with the Edison Inc. model and the MicroSociety, there is ample evidence that teacher grade-level meetings embedded inquiry processes when looking at student achievement and student work. This promoted teacher’s reflecting on their own instructional practices and sharing best strategies with each other.

These two charter schools demonstrated that change is possible and that students from low-income families, with limited English speaking ability and diverse backgrounds can be taken to high levels of learning when teachers engage in an ongoing weekly inquiry process and steadfastly pursue the question, how does the decision (practice) improve student learning?

Recommendations for further research

The district’s peer evaluation system established to support principal learning seemed to promote and sustain the principal’s use of inquiry. During the study, it was not fully clarified how the district office and principal peer teams interacted and promoted inquiry. Further probing the structures inherent in this accountability system would be valuable to understand its possible influence on organizational learning and sustainability of the inquiry process.
Since the Ball Foundation ended their partnership with the district, there is a question of how grade-level collaboration efforts will be sustained in the coming years. Furthermore, change in school and district leadership has the potential to revert the system to function in a traditional model, especially with the press of NCLB and current high-stakes testing. During the study, we discovered the district was reorganized to support collaborative efforts; however it was not clear how this restructuring influenced the school. The question of what district’s processes or structures need to be in place to sustain the Foundation’s community of practice merits further study.


Lambert, L. (2003). Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement. ASCD.


Appendix A

Chula Vista Elementary School District

PRINCIPAL STANDARDS

Timeline/Standards/Worksheets

“Principal standards are a tool to look at honest and reflective feedback.”

**Purpose:** The following protocol is proposed to help keep common language: How have you ethically performed your job across the standard areas and specifically to the chosen goals? Identify the specific strategies and interventions needed to accomplish the chosen goals. What evidence is there to show growth in chosen goals? What did you learn? How did you learn it and how will you use the most important learning in the future? What are the challenges or next steps to improve? Upon completion of full cycle this process shall be reviewed for effectiveness.

**Timeline:**

**Jul-Aug:** Each Principal will complete a self-evaluation in August to formulate two goals. First goal will be in the area of student achievement and a second goal will be in a self-selected area. It is understood that over time goals should reflect a variety of the standards.

**Aug-Sept:** Share goals Superintendent/Cabinet. Goals will be in writing, include a rational for selection as well as ideas on how you will accomplish them. Share goals and data with peers – peers will collaborate on ways to accomplish. Goals will be based on both trend and prior year data.
**Midyear:** Midyear formative evaluation with peer group. Where are you? How are you doing? What evidence do you have at this point? What support do you need to accomplish goals?

**Spring:** Reflection piece will be draft of final narrative. Last week of contract after students leave with peers/peer input will be incorporated in the final narrative).

**Summer:** Final narrative self-reflection by standards and goals by start of new contract year. Meet with Superintendent/Cabinet in the beginning of the year. After the first year this meeting will also be used to share goals for the new year.
Principal Standard: #1 The **principal is accountable for staff performance that impacts student achievement.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A. Supervision/ Evaluation of Staff</td>
<td>Supervision is performed by administration and in strict compliance with the contract. Appropriate forms and documentation are in place. All timeline requirements are met. In addition to formal and informal supervision by the principal, Peer Coaching is encouraged, but a well-defined structure for sustained collegial work is not in place. There is on-going dialog between administration and staff regarding performance in relation to student achievement. The principal spends 1-2 hours daily doing classroom observations, visitation or walkthroughs.</td>
<td>Administrators participate in the evaluation process and their assessments add to a performance portfolio rather than defining it. The portfolio includes self and peer assessments, student and parent feedback, and research findings. Elements of the SRI Teacher Perceiver, which focus on talents and attributes, are utilized to provide feedback to staff. Through collaboration with principal, a Peer Coaching model is clearly developed with well-defined next step benchmarks in place that include teachers observing teachers and principal modeling instruction. The principal spends 2-3 hours in classrooms daily. The principal promotes a learning community by establishing staff meetings that focus on research and “Best Practices.” Walkthroughs are a part of the principal’s process for evaluation.</td>
<td>As a way of challenging the status quo, all staff including the principal, will be evaluated by a representative panel of all stakeholders including students. As part of the ongoing efforts to improve student achievement, self reflected processes such as protocols, fish bowls, and data analysis will be used to assess the effectiveness of performance. Walkthroughs are systematic and staff and principal conducts these at the school site and other schools sites on a regular basis to as a process of self-reflection. The principal and staff will be recognized for innovative practices beyond the school site, i.e. District, County, State and National levels. Surveys from all including students will be part of the evaluation process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. Instructional Strategies</td>
<td>Principal observes teacher and provides feedback on observed instructional strategies. Principal reads, analyzes and discusses with teachers, information on research-based practices that result in increased student achievement. Lesson design and instructional strategies are aligned with standards and assessments. Principals conduct walkthroughs on a regular bases to inform instructional strategies.</td>
<td>Lesson design and instructional strategies are aligned with standards and assessments. Principal assists teachers in becoming effective instructional leaders by providing staff development and demonstrating instructional strategies that reflect best practices that result in increased student achievement. Principal holds teachers accountable for implementation of research-based practices to address needs of all students resulting in increased student achievement. Principals and teachers participate in walkthroughs on a regular basis.</td>
<td>Principal holds teachers accountable for the implementation of differentiated educational learning plans with long and short-term goals specific to each child, which may include virtual web-based learning opportunities. The entire learning community team takes responsibility for each child’s learning. Walkthroughs are systematic and institutionalized at the school site. The staff, principal and stakeholders conduct walkthroughs at the school site and other schools sites on a regular basis to inform instructional strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C. Implementation of change process for continuous student improvement</td>
<td>Principal identifies need for systemic change based on data collection, analysis and inquiry. Principal investigates avenues of change with all stakeholders. Principal has the ability to communicate and prioritize information to facilitate the change process.</td>
<td>Principal facilitates the implementation and maintenance of the change process with all stakeholders. Principal has the ability to articulate, implement, and demonstrate a unity of purpose.</td>
<td>As evidence of systemic change all stakeholders have assumed responsibility and ownership for ensuring that school reform continues to meet the diverse needs of all students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1D. Achievement Goals Met</td>
<td>Principal focuses on testing and test results.</td>
<td>Principal facilitates a shift from focus on testing to focus on powerful learning and achievement for all students.</td>
<td>Principal has created an environment dominated by powerful learning that creates improved achievement trends for all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Principal Standard: # 2 The Principal is accountable for building Leadership Capacity.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2A. Hire personnel with capacity to do leadership work.</td>
<td>Principal facilitates a process to select employees based on screening and interview only. Principal facilitates a process to select employees based on screening, interview, and observation of a teaching demonstration lesson.</td>
<td>Principal facilitates a process to select employees based on screening, interview, and observation of a teaching demonstration lesson and has the candidate describe how he or she perceives his or her role as teacher, how he or she improves his or her craft of teaching. Uses simulations for candidates to interact in problem solving activities and also asks candidate to respond to a case study. SRI Teacher Perceiver is a tool used during the interview process. Interview teams are trained as to what to look and listen for during an interview.</td>
<td>Principal is a connoisseur of talent and hires for attitude and trains for skill. The principal dares to collaborate and to hire based on values and dreams over experience and years of services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B. Assess and monitor staff and school capacity for leadership</td>
<td>Principal surveys/observes staff for leadership capacity. Principal surveys/observes staff for leadership capacity and uses data to summarize staffs’ highest needs.</td>
<td>Principal assists staff in prioritizing and selecting options for participating in leadership opportunities and uses data to summarize staff’s current leadership status. Provides time, resources and opportunities for staff to chair committees, lead staff development and participates in collaborative action research. Principal acknowledges staff for self-assessment and encourages active involvement of all stakeholders.</td>
<td>Principal uses multiple methods to develop leadership capacity for each teacher. A representative of all stakeholders will design the criteria for measuring staff and school capacity for leadership. An Individualized Leadership Growth Plan that includes activities, which promote staff leadership beyond the school site and may include the SRI, will be developed. Leadership skills are focused on engaging reluctant staff and parent in leadership roles. <em>Principal implements a leadership team approach where staff members promote the school vision and values.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2C. Building student, parent and community leadership</td>
<td>Principal encourages students, parents and community members to participate in established organizations that require their involvement and encourage them to volunteer. Parents are actively recruited to participate in mandated committees, and their input is valued. Principal models</td>
<td>Parents, students and community members are involved in all facets of the school governance structure and are a part of all student-based decision-making. Parents, students, and community members represent the school in community and district organizations. Parents, students, and community members</td>
<td>The principal collaborates with staff, students, and community to create a new service model that will meet the needs of all students, their families and the community, such as Spirit of Caring, or Healthy Start. <em>There is a focus on providing such services within and beyond the schoolhouse walls.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2D. Develop a culture of inquiry.</td>
<td>Principal examines student work and analyzes data. Principal asks questions of staff that foster dialog and reflection on data.</td>
<td>Principal creates opportunity for staff to examine students work and analyze data. The principal creates opportunities for stakeholders to develop a plan of action based on inquiry. Principal asks questions of staff that foster dialog and reflection on data. Principal provides opportunities for examination of disaggregated data to reflect on instructional practices. Collaboratively, all stakeholders address areas of need, modify instructional practices and provide for a review of resources.</td>
<td>Through the inquiry process mistakes are viewed as learning tools and levers to the change process. Staff seeks input from community and “Critical Friends” i.e. experts outside of the school site to collaborate with them on supportive statements and critical questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2E. Organize school community for collaborative work.</td>
<td>Principal shares decision making with small groups; i.e., leadership team, School Site Council, PTA/PTC and other governance groups. Principal responds reactively instead of proactively.</td>
<td>Principal promotes and practices collaborative student-based decision-making that provides options to meet diverse individual and group needs of the school community. Principal is proactive and participates in community service organizations. The principal promotes school-wide</td>
<td>To ensure student success the entire learning community consistently seeks and collaborates with others to create new models that foster increased collaborative work. Staff and students give back to the community through service oriented activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Principal Standard: # 3 The Principal is accountable for Customer Satisfaction.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3A. School Culture</strong></td>
<td>The principal is responsible for and collaborates with staff in establishing a culture, which fosters mutual respect, fairness, pride, collegiality, trust and excellence within the school community. The principal fosters a welcoming atmosphere. The principal makes positive connections with students as demonstrated by their interactions with him or her.</td>
<td>The principal takes responsibility for creating a student leadership team representative of all that develops an on-going process to address student rights, to hear student voice, and to ensure student-based decision-making. The principal fosters a welcoming atmosphere for all staff, students, parents, and community.</td>
<td>The entire school community demonstrates a willingness to continuously examine their assumptions, beliefs, and practices in doing the work required for high levels of personal and organizational performances. The school culture reflects a customer driven environment. There is an established process for addressing problems and mediating conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| <strong>3B. Communication</strong> | Principal communicates effectively, understanding the unique needs of community and channels information in specialized ways to fit the traditions and expectations of community. The principal uses basic communication skills, i.e. electronic mail. Principal listens and responds to selected stakeholders. | Principal facilitates the effective flow of information to all customers to ensure a sound communication loop with all stakeholders including ESSC. Principal carefully plans, systematically manages and continuously refines the communication throughout the organization and between the school and its stakeholders. The principal applies active listening techniques to all stakeholders. Communication is proactive and timely. | There is a commitment to create opportunities for dialog with parents, community members, business/service organizations, and colleagues. Concerns and issues are depersonalized and handled in a professional manner. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3C. Parent Involvement</td>
<td>Principal communicates to all stakeholders respect for the important role parents play as partners in educating their children, which has a direct impact on student achievement.</td>
<td>Principal instills the value of parent participation in the school and also models inclusiveness in his or her interactions with parents, staff and students. As a result of principal leadership, all staff, parents and community agree on a Home/School Contract, which will be monitored by a panel of staff, community and parents.</td>
<td>All stakeholders embrace the value of inclusion in all decision-making. The school is the center of the learning community, which provides parents, requested services such as: GED classes, ESL, training and utilization of technology, welfare to work program, and parenting classes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal Standard: #4 The principal is accountable for acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical and legal manner at all times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4A. Shared values</td>
<td>Principal refers to the vision and values, strategic goals, and student-based philosophy when reviewing the school plan.</td>
<td>Principal makes a commitment to the vision and values, strategic goals, and student-based philosophy when reviewing the school plan on a consistent basis in dealings with students, parents, staff and community. They are embodied in day-to-day operations.</td>
<td>Vision will be implemented through action reflecting deep core values and beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B. Shared decision making</td>
<td>Under the leadership of the principal, a committee is investigating a process for shared decision-making. When shared decisions result in negative impact on children, the principal takes responsibility for leadership.</td>
<td>A structure has been established for shared decision-making and can be articulated by all stakeholders. There is willingness by the principal to accept responsibility for all the decisions made. The principal, through a process of evaluation, guides the shared decision making process so results will have a positive impact on children.</td>
<td>Through cognition and instinct, principals consistently implement the steps to good decision-making.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Principal Standard #5:** The principal is accountable for managing the school site to be a safe, efficient and effective learning environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>5A. Safety Plan</strong></td>
<td>Principal develops and implements school-wide safety and discipline plans.</td>
<td>Principal includes all stakeholders as well as students in the development and implementation of the school-wide safety and discipline plans.</td>
<td>Safety and discipline is a part of ongoing learning focused. Students are self directed and made a safe learning environment a top priority as demonstrated by their actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Element</strong></td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5B. Awareness</strong></td>
<td>Principal understands the physical and emotional needs for safety and the maintenance of the physical environment is sustained with a preventative eye. Data collected is shared with staff.</td>
<td>A process is in place to gather data regarding the safety plan. This data is shared with all stakeholders. Everyone is responsible for the safety of all children.</td>
<td>Students are more involved in the process of gathering data and monitoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Element</strong></td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5C. Safety of physical plant (this is from school operations element)</strong></td>
<td>Principal maintains security and safety measures and oversees the daily care of the physical plan by working collaboratively with facilities, transportation, food services, and other appropriate ESSC departments.</td>
<td>Principal collaborates with ESSC departments in order to maintain a secure and safe learning environment.</td>
<td>Principal shares expertise and provides assistance outside the school walls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Element</strong></td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5D. Conflict Resolution</strong></td>
<td>Principal demonstrates ability to facilitate and successfully resolve conflict at local level. Principal leads students, staff and community in development of skills in problem solving and conflict resolution. Principal sees conflict and disequilibrium and manages it.</td>
<td>Principal provides ongoing opportunities and establishes an infrastructure supporting student based decision-making using learned mediation skills and processes. Principal successfully manages conflict in a proactive manner. Principal institutes a student conflict resolution coalition that promotes school-wide peace,</td>
<td>Divergent opinions that create conflict are valued and treated with respect and dignity by all stakeholders. The principal seeks disequilibrium and creates conflict with purpose and meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Element</td>
<td>Emerging</td>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Innovating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respect and understanding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STANDARD #6: The principal is accountable for the integration of technology in the school curriculum and use in school operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6A. Data management</td>
<td>Principal uses technology to effectively manage site data and generate district reports or information according to required district timelines</td>
<td>Principal involves staff in making reports and presentations to community using technology. Staff is required to submit student data using different computer programs.</td>
<td>Principal initiates the challenge of change in technology and creates models to motivate the staff and students to acquire the necessary skills to compete in the 21st century.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6B. Instructional Implications</td>
<td>Principal monitors that students and staff are routinely utilizing technology as a tool for instruction. In collaboration with stakeholders, Principal develops and implements a plan, and demonstrates to staff how to integrate technology into the curriculum.</td>
<td>Principal builds on staff and students’ strengths, and community and student interests to move the school forward in the use of technology to generate school reports and student products and provides necessary staff development. Principal works with staff to utilize data to inform instruction. Technology is a tool used to magnify and enhance instruction.</td>
<td>Technology is utilized as a tool for learning and focused on instruction and achievement. The use of technology is seamless and unnoticed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard #7: The principal is accountable for managing the school site budget.

Use what is written under school operations EXCEPT The final sentences of each area (Those sentences were added to the “safety” standard)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element.</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7A. School Operations</td>
<td>Principal understands District and site budgets and uses them to meet long and short-term instructional program goals. Principal understands the intent, rule, regulations and limitations of appropriate categorically-funded programs and provides for staff and community involvement in budget preparation. Principal maintains security and safety measures and oversees the daily care of the physical plant by working collaboratively with facilities, transportation, food services, and other appropriate ESSC departments.</td>
<td>Principal demonstrates expertise in utilizing site budgets to meet long and short-term instructional program goals. Principal actively seeks additional staff development in budget design and understanding by their participation in District Budget Committee, ACSA Business Managers Academy, and other budget related inservices. Principal develops an inclusionary budget process to involve all stakeholders. Principal collaborates with ESSC departments in order to maintain a secure and safe learning environment.</td>
<td>Principal assumes responsibility and is accountable for implementation of a direct-funded model. Principal facilitates a process that involves all stakeholders in budget decision-making. Principal works with the ESSC and makes decisions that will not negatively impact others. Principal creates an environment that enables staff to choose alternatives to employee representation. Principal shares expertise and provides assistance outside the school walls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Principal Interview Questions

1) When did you become an administrator in Chula Vista, can you give me a little bit of background?

2) Can you tell me a story of a time when you had an exceptional experience with the inquiry process? In other words, a time you knew you made a difference in the lives of those you are serving.
   a. What was your role?
   b. What was the role of the teacher?
   c. What was the role of other stakeholders?
   d. What were the conditions that made this experience possible?
   e. What did you do that made it possible?
   f. Who else contributed to it?
   g. What decisions led to or flowed from this exceptional experience?
   h. How often does this process happen in your school?

3) If you could make three wishes for this school in the use of the inquiry process to have more of these exceptional engagements, what would they be?

4) Tell me all the ways staff members can share their ideas or opinions in this school?

5) In what ways has the inquiry process influenced the approach to evaluation of program and people in this district?

6) In what ways does the inquiry process shape the way you conduct classroom observations, your evaluation processes or your work with teachers?

7) In what ways has the inquiry process supported collaboration and teachers working together?

8) How have your peers and superintendent supported the development of your inquiry skills?
   a. Have you had formal training in the inquiry process or did you learn this on the job?
   b. During your self-evaluation, did you ever select inquiry as one of your goals?
i. What did you do?
ii. Where do you place yourself on this rubric and why? (Show the rubric for inquiry as a model for decision-making – 2c)

9) Tell me a story of how your leadership practice has evolved as a result of using the inquiry process?
   a. How about for teachers? (Probe - Have all the teachers bought in? Are most teachers familiar with the process? What evidence do you see?)

10) Tell me what types of decisions are not suitable for the inquiry process?

11) In 1998, Chula Vista shifted from a site based decision making model to a student based model. How has this made a difference for student achievement at your school?
Appendix C

Focus Group Interview Questions

I am just fascinated that your district has adopted this inquiry process that is posted in the school office. I want to know more about it. I realize some are new here. Don’t worry if you don’t know the answer to these questions.

12) Chula Vista school district uses a site-based decision-making model to collaborate in a grade level team. How long have you been participating in this grade level team?

13) Can you tell me a story of a time when your grade level team (or school as a whole) had an exceptional experience with the inquiry process? In other words, you knew you were making a difference in the lives of those you are serving.

   a. What was your role?
   b. What was the role of the principal?
   c. What was the role of other stakeholders?
   d. What were the conditions that made this experience possible?
   e. What did you do that made it possible?
   f. Who else contributed to it?
   g. What decisions led to or flowed from this exceptional experience?
   h. How often does this process happen in your school?

14) If you could make three wishes for this school in the use of the inquiry process to have more of these exceptional engagements, what would they be?

15) Tell me all the ways staff members can share their ideas or opinions in this school?

16) How has your principal supported the development of your inquiry skills? In what ways has the principal used this inquiry process with you? (Perhaps, as he/she observes your classroom, discusses instruction with you, or helps you make important school or grade level decisions?)

17) Tell me a story of how your teaching practice has evolved as a result of using the inquiry process?

18) In what ways has the inquiry process supported collaboration and teachers working together?

19) In what ways has the inquiry process supported teachers in taking leadership roles?
20) Have there been times when you found that the inquiry process was not helpful?

21) In 1998, Chula Vista shifted from a site based decision making model to a student based model. How has this made a difference for student achievement at your school?

22) Hand the group the rubric. If evaluating the school, where would you place it (on inquiry rubric)? Ask why if we have time.